PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 122

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1987-88

COMPRISING PERIOD
9 NOVEMBER—20 NOVEMBER 1987

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9 November 1987

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 122

FIFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1987-88

House of Commons

Monday 9 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL

Order for consideration read.
Lords amendments agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

WAYS AND MEANS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the City of Westminster Bill, it is expedient to authorise payments into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

RAF St. Mawgan

1. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to give financial assistance to the building of an air terminal at the St. Mawgan Royal Air Force air base.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We expect any proposed development of the civil facilities to be dealt with on a commercial basis.

Mr. Taylor: Does the Minister agree that virtually every economic report on Cornwall has accepted that customs and freight facilities at RAF St. Mawgan are vital to many industrialists in Cornwall and to those who might come to Cornwall? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is unlikely that the Ministry of Defence, which is responsible for RAF Mawgan, will help in that regard, and does he agree that it is important to encourage both customs and freight facilities at RAF St. Mawgan? Will he comment on the fact that aircraft diverted from Plymouth to Newquay because of fog or other adverse weather conditions are currently unable to bring in any freight cargo that they may have on board?

Mr. Bottomley: The most helpful thing that I can say is that I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's comments to my right hon. Friends. They are not matters for the Department of Transport.

Mr. Harris: When my hon. Friend consults other Ministers, will he have a word with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces and persuade that Ministry to scrap the ludicrous proposal to increase landing charges on Brymon, an important regional airline, by no less than 42 per cent. while the runway at St. Mawgan is being repaired?

Mr. Bottomley: The general point about the importance of developing local airports is very well taken. I know that the Ministry of Defence will answer the point relating to its responsibilities.

Cabotage

2. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the eventual introduction in the United Kingdom of cabotage in the road haulage and road passenger transport industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received nine written representations. I met a deputation from the Transport and General Workers Union on 22 October. I have nothing to add to my reply of 28 October to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown).

Mr. Marshall: Does the Minister realise that cabotage poses a threat to jobs in this country, to safety on the roads and to the environment? Has he answered the specific question put to him by the Transport and General Workers Union, and what positive measures will he take to protect jobs and to prevent overloaded lorries, perhaps carrying dangerous substances, battling it out for business on our roads?

Mr. Bottomley: The Government take very seriously the point about enforcing the law, and we hope that the rest of the European Community will do the same. We will agree to cabotage if our operators have free and fair access to the markets of all member states. We have much more to gain than to lose from the liberalisation of cabotage if our hauliers grasp the opportunities.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Nevertheless, will the Minister accept that there is much concern about the approach of cabotage? By the Department of Transport's own admission about 3,000 continental hauliers driving on British roads are found to be overloaded and flouting our safety regulations every year. Given the rules on toxic waste and other dangerous substances, does the Minister accept the need to look carefully at the matter before 1992, to ensure that we protect our citizens, rather than simply benefiting road hauliers who want to travel overseas?

Mr. Bottomley: We do not intend to wait until 1992 to continue to improve our enforcement effort, whether on foreign or domestic hauliers. We do not want different safety standards between now and then. The Polytechnic of Central London report showed that about 1 per cent. of the United Kingdom haulage market was likely to be taken by non-United Kingdom hauliers, whereas if the highly protected German market was opened up 20 per cent. of it could be secured by non-German hauliers. We have more to gain than to lose.

M40 Extension

3. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the date for the completion of the M40 extension.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): Subject to the outcome of the public inquiry currently under way into the Waterstock-Wendlebury section, I hope that the whole of the M40 from Oxford to Birmingham will be completed during 1991.

Mr. King: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware of the widespread concern felt by many of those living in the midlands and elsewhere about the restrictions that his Department is planning on the lane width of the Wendlebury to Waterstock section of the M40? It is felt that building a two-lane motorway in this day and age is unacceptable in terms of the traffic flows which most people expect on that road. Are the experts who predicted those traffic flows the same as those who predicted traffic flows on the M25?

Mr. Channon: The answer to my hon. Friend's latter point must be no, because it is about 20 years since the M25 forecasts were made. My hon. Friend asked whether I was well aware of the concern. My goodness me, I certainly am aware of it from my recent visit to Birmingham and other parts of the midlands. Of course I am well aware of that concern. The published proposals are for a dual two-lane motorway, with widened structures at that point. The proposals are currently before the inquiry. I have made no final decision, but shall reach it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in the light of the inspectors' report.

Mr. Boswell: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Does he accept that even those of us who find that the motorway is to pass through our personal property are anxious that, after this long history of nearly 20 years, work should be pressed ahead as soon as possible, providing a three-lane standard from beginning to end?

Mr. Channon: I get the impression that that is the general view of my hon. Friends. I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Fry: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the latest figures on the increased use of our motorways, showing a 47 per cent. increase between the second quarter of 1986 and the second quarter of 1987, bring into doubt, not only the wisdom of having a two-lane M40, but whether the M40 will be sufficient to relieve the already much overcrowded M1?

Mr. Channon: I believe that it will have that effect. My hon. Friend has drawn attention to an important point. I am sure that he will enthusiastically support me when I tell him that there will be a £2 billion programme of new construction for motorways and trunk roads during the next three years.

Air Traffic Control

4. **Mr. Michael Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the problems of air traffic control in British airspace.

Mr. Channon: I meet the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority frequently to discuss matters of common interest. I next plan to see him on 16 November.

Mr. Colvin: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the enormous contribution to this country's balance of payments made by civil aviation and of the industry's growth. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that our air traffic control system can cope with that ever-increasing growth? Will he avoid taking any action that will merely add to ATC problems, such as the imposition of an unrealistic night-flying restriction at London's airports?

Mr. Channon: I am well aware of civil aviation's contribution. It has been one of our most successful industries, and I think that that is generally recognised by both sides of the House. Night flights are a different matter. I have sent out consultative documents on this matter in the past few days. I should be interested to have the reactions of my hon. Friend and others to them. As for the general adequacy of the Civil Aviation Authority's ability to deal with air traffic control, the CAA has received investment allocations sufficient to meet planned needs. A total of £125 million has been spent on improvements to systems over the past five years and the CAA plans to increase the rate of spend in the future. The answer to my hon. Friend's question is, therefore, yes.

Ms. Quin: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is great public disquiet about the crowded air space above London? Does he agree that the best way of tackling the problem is by a planned expansion of Britain's regional airports and better services between the regions and other parts of Europe?

Mr. Channon: There has been rapid growth in Britain's regional airports, and I strongly support their development. There have been outstanding success stories. The air space over London is crowded. The CAA has a duty to deal with that overcrowding. I have outlined the vast sums of money that the CAA is spending and will spend. No sensible proposal from the CAA has ever been turned down by me or by my predecessors.

Mr. Higgins: Does my right hon. Friend accept that air traffic control and the subject of night flying cannot be divorced? Does he agree that it is intolerable that flights landing between 5 am and 6 am should be able to wake potentially millions of people for the benefit of a few hundred passengers? Will he seriously consider restricting landings until 6 am?

Mr. Channon: I believe that when my right hon. Friend studies my detailed consultative proposals he will find much to welcome, particularly the restriction of night flights into Heathrow if the proposals are generally agreed.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Secretary of State raise with the chairman of the CAA the procedures and safety regulations to be adopted by the authority in relation to the new London City airport, which the right hon. Gentleman visited last Thursday? The right hon. Gentleman is directly responsible for these matters in relation to shipping, but with regard to air traffic they are the responsibility of the CAA. Is he aware that vague, bland assurances that cannot be verified are not satisfactory? Will he ensure that the CAA provides facts and figures in answer to questions and letters from hon. Members? Is he aware that if the authority does not do that its sloppy procedures will be made public and open to criticism, and will deserve to be changed?

Mr. Channon: I will, of course, discuss that with the chairman if the hon. Gentleman wishes. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, like me, wishes the airport to be a great success. The CAA assures me that it is wholly satisfied with procedures within the airport and with its operation. It is also evaluating how the airport traffic can be properly integrated in the future, and is satisfied with that aspect.

Mr. McCrindle: In addition to discussing matters of air traffic control, will my right hon. Friend reassure himself in forthcoming meetings with the CAA that related safety matters, such as the provision of smoke hoods and adequate exits from aircraft, are pushed ahead by the authority at all possible speed as it is now some two and a half years since the Manchester disaster?

Mr. Channon: I have, of course, discussed those matters with the chairman, and I shall do so again. With respect, I believe that they go a little wider than the question on the Order Paper. Nevertheless, they are extremely important.

Bus Services (Deregulation)

5. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is having with London Regional Transport as to the policies to be followed in relation to the deregulation of London bus services.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I am currently discussing with the chairman new objectives for London Regional Transport for the next three years. I expect those objectives to include reference to our policy of extending the benefits of deregulation to bus users in London.

Mr. Cox: I note that reply, but is the Minister aware of the increasing concern expressed by people in London about the future of their bus services and specifically about the effects of deregulation? Will he assure the House that high on the list of priorities will be the protection of services, the conditions in which staff have to work and the safety of passengers? Will he give an assurance that items of that kind will be discussed in the House and in local communities, and not just with people seeking to run bus services in London?

Mr. Mitchell: I can well understand people in London expressing concern about the bus services and looking forward to the time when they can enjoy the benefits that other parts of the country have had, including the introduction of minibus services, hail-and-ride services and a whole tranche of innovation which London has only just begun to experience. Safety and other matters remain, of course, of prime importance to the Department of Transport.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend agree that a non-dogmatic view of deregulation suggests that there have been some disadvantages as well as advantages? Before proceeding to consider full deregulation in London, will my right hon. Friend consider the effect of coach deregulation, which has taken away local authorities' power to direct traffic on to particular routes and has led to great parking problems, increased pollution and the use of unsuitable roads? Will he give full consideration to those aspects before reaching a final decision on bus deregulation?

Mr. Mitchell: I hear what my hon. Friend has said and I will consider his point. However, coach deregulation has brought enormous benefits to a large number of our fellow citizens who can now travel at prices that they never dreamt would be possible. Indeed, the competition has sharpened British Rail considerably.

Mr. Foot: Will the Minister be discussing with the management of London Regional Transport the kindred subject of the further introduction of one-man-operated buses? Is it really the management's intention to proceed with that programme? Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me that any figures given by LRT showing that such a programme is popular with the public must be cooked? Is it not true that the only purpose of the programme—apart from increasing the jams in London—is to throw a few more people out of work?

Mr. Mitchell: London Regional Transport is not committed to 100 per cent. one-person-operated buses in London, although that is the norm in other major cities in the world. Each major route that is converted to OPO saves £250,000 a year for the ratepayers of London.

Indeed, OPO is safer for the crew because there are fewer assaults on staff and there are also fewer boarding and alighting accidents.

Transport Supplementary Grant

6. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider the guidelines for transport supplementary grant to enable more schemes costing less than £1 million to be supported.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Transport supplementary grant allows extensive support for schemes costing under £1 million. There are no plans to change the grant criteria. A guide to TSG is in the Library.

Mr. Bowis: While accepting that some schemes cost under £1 million, may I ask my hon. Friend to note that most schemes cost more? When schemes have sped traffic through the countryside, it tends to end up in bottlenecks in areas such as mine. Will he therefore reconsider giving more money to small schemes, where comparatively small sums for comparatively small jobs could bring joy unconfined—not to mention transports of delight—to travellers in my part of London?

Mr. Bottomley: We aim to give environmental relief by taking unsuitable traffic off residential roads, by giving greater chance of economic development to badly served areas and by reducing casualties. There are those who want more spent on small schemes, but a significantly greater number want more spent on large schemes. We think that we have the balance right and we have the opportunity to review it each year.

Road Safety

7. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further efforts are being made by the Government to reduce road casualties.

Mr. Channon: A major review of road safety has been completed. This makes it clear that we must give priority to those measures which will do most to reduce casualties. That means concentration on urban roads, vehicle design and research into driver behaviour. My target is to reduce annual casualties by one third by the year 2,000—a reduction of 100,000.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that some of the appalling carnage that occurs on our roads every week could be greatly reduced, especially on motorways, if advisory speed limit signs were mandatory?

Mr. Channon: That is something that we are discussing with the police. The important point is that whether speed limits are mandatory or advisory people must obey them. They are there for a purpose and those who disobey them are behaving dangerously. Mandatory limits involve police enforcement. Some signs are mandatory, but others are not. The police must decide on the level of enforcement and the priorities that they give to that as opposed to other aspects of motorway enforcement. However, if they decided that that was the priority, I would not stand in the way.

Mr. Cryer: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that a major way to improve road safety would be to attract more passengers and freight to the railways? Therefore, will he assure British Rail that he will give it the fullest support and, in particular, agree to preserve the Settle-Carlisle railway, so that that important and beautiful railway retains full passenger——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is ingenious, but a little wide of the main question.

Mr. William Powell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that drink is a major factor in many accidents on our roads? Will he confirm that, under the existing law, a constable may require a specimen of breath for analysis if there has been an accident, or a moving traffic offence, or if he has reasonable cause to believe that somebody has been drinking? Does he also agree that the courts have held that such reasonable cause need not arise until after a person has finished driving? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the widest possible publicity is given to that provision in our law so that, if random breath tests as such are not acceptable, at least that step, which is little short of it, is well known to the public?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has done a useful service in pointing out that fact. He was right on all the points that he raised. In fact, there is considerable misunderstanding about random testing. Police already have wide powers under the legislation. They can stop people at random. They can then test if there is reasonable cause to suspect alcohol in a driver's body, if a moving traffic offence has been committed or if someone is involved in an accident. Two recent cases in Sussex have shown how wide police powers are.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Has the Minister seen the report that Mr. Bill Gillan, the co-ordinator of the Prometheus project into road safety, has told university researchers that there is no point in proceeding with work which does not in some way follow vehicle companies' aims? Is that not crass and insensitive in view of the fact that 2,000 pedestrians were killed last year, that 35 per cent. of deaths on roads involve pedestrians, and that the number is rising? Will he give an assurance that no inhibitions will be placed on any research into road safety under the Prometheus project?

Mr. Channon: I am not in favour of any inhibitions on research into road safety. I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about accidents involving pedestrians. In fact, he will be pleased to see that recent figures show that there has been some improvement. There is no need for complacency in the House, but it is extremely important that hon. Members should understand that the 1987 casualty trends are encouraging and that child casualties and motor cyclist casualties are down substantially. In fact, our road safety record is perhaps the least bad in the whole of Europe. I am determined to build on that record, and the House should be aware of it.

Sir Anthony Grant: Although I welcome the fact that our record is not as bad as that in Europe, will my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot afford to be smug when the number of deaths is equivalent to those in a jumbo jet crash every month of every year? Is he aware that a substantial cause of accidents is vehicles, particularly heavy goods vehicles, driving too fast too close behind each other? Is he further aware that there are well known technical means of preventing that? Will he bring in regulations to achieve it as soon as possible?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has raised an important point. We have had special publicity about keeping one's distance. I am experimenting with special signs on motorways about keeping one's distance and keeping left except when overtaking. Insufficient attention is paid to that matter on motorways. I shall look into the point that my hon. Friend raised.

Network SouthEast

8. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take on the findings of the inquiry conducted by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into Network SouthEast.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am discussing the report with British Rail, which will be making its formal response in the new year.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister must be aware of the report's key recommendation that substantial new investment is required to resolve the chronic problems of overcrowding, cancellations and unpunctuality which plague 400,000 daily commuters in London and the south-east. Does he propose to ignore the recommendation or sweep it under the carpet?

Mr. Mitchell: It is not for Ministers to propose investment to British Rail; it is for British Rail to propose investment to Ministers. There are no proposals from British Rail that I have turned down that it has not been able to re-present in any acceptable form. The hon. Gentleman may like to know that the average annual investment in British Rail at 1985-86 prices was £112 million in 1970-79, £153 million in 1980-86 and the projected level is £175 million.

Mr. Moate: Does my hon. Friend agree that he has considerable influence with British Rail? Does he accept that there is serious concern about deteriorating standards in the south-east after many years during which services had improved progressively? Will he talk to British Rail about the need to implement some of the recommendations of the report to ensure decent travelling standards for hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, I shall discuss the report with British Rail and, of course, take account of my hon. Friend's points. However, we are sometimes a little unfair to British Rail and its staff, especially in the Network SouthEast area, because punctuality has increased from 84 per cent. of all trains arriving within five minutes in 1979 to 91 per cent. last year. Reliability has also increased with cancellations decreasing from 4·9, to 1·6 per cent. Several other quality standards have been improved.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that this is the second such inquiry in seven years and that, like the previous one, the main recommendation of this inquiry has been the need for greater investment in rail services in Network SouthEast? Does he accept that Opposition Members blame, not British Rail and its staff, but the hon. Gentleman and his right hon. and hon. Friends?

Mr. Mitchell: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to seek to do that, but he must know that British Rail proposes investment decisions and that I dispose of them —or, rather, the Secretary of State and I do that—and that in disposing of them I have given approval time after time. I think it is fair to say that no other Minister in a similar period has given as much approval as I have done. For good measure, I advise the hon. Gentleman that I have just approved £59·5 million for new electric multiple units for the great eastern lines.

Bus Services (Deregulation)

9. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest information on the effect of deregulation on buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: Bus mileage has increased by almost 12 per cent. over the last year, with 85 per cent. of the mileage now operated on a commercial basis; the number of operators has grown; operating costs and subsidies have been reduced; and the private sector has increased its share of the market.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: I welcome the tone of that response and express pleasure especially at the fact that 85 per cent. of road mileage is now supported on a commercially viable basis, but will my hon. Friend comment on what I might describe as predatory subsidies? He may be aware that some local authorities are inserting a subsidised frequency into what was a commercially viable network, thereby destroying that commercial network. That cannot be the object of the Bill nor in the interests of the public at large. Will he also note——

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman should ask only one question.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has, with great perception, highlighted an area that causes some concern. If local authorities have so much money that they can afford to waste it by providing duplicate services with existing commercial services, that is a matter for the Audit Commission.

Mr. Janner: Is the Minister aware of the chaos that has been caused by deregulation and the fact that more buses on the road does not mean that there is more efficiency? Is he further aware that, in effect, deregulation means more buses on profitable routes, but fewer on routes that are unprofitable, leaving people in outlying areas, not only in Leicester, but throughout the country, suffering as a result of that profit-based and awful scheme?

Mr. Mitchell: I am glad that the hon. and learned Gentleman recognises that there are more buses in many of our towns and city centres——

Mr. Janner: Only in the centres.

Mr. Mitchell: I accept what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said, but I am sure that he will not object to my saying yes to his question. In rural areas socially necessary services that are not profitable are provided by subsidy from the county or passenger transport executive concerned. They have saved £40 million in providing such services. If there is an area in which and the hon. and learned Gentleman feels that there is some under provision, perhaps a small percentage of that £40 million could be devoted to putting that right.

Mr. Sackville: Does my hon. Friend agree that the deregulation of buses in Greater Manchester has been a success, but that since the control of a major bus operator, Greater Manchester Buses, has been left with local politicians, who have not the first idea of how to run a bus company, the job has been left half finished? When will he introduce legislation to ensure that management buyouts can take place and control can pass to the employees of municipal bus operators?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has referred to the success of bus deregulation in Greater Manchester, and he is right. Greater Manchester Buses has reported that costs per mile have decreased by no less than 23·3 per cent., that miles per employee have increased by up to 23 per cent., that miles per bus have increased by 17 per cent., and that its costs have come tumbling down as a result of improved efficiency. If, on the back of that improved efficiency, there is pressure for a staff buyout, I hope that local politicians will respond to it.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister accept that over Christmas last year there were no buses in Greater Manchester——

Mr. Sumberg: Or the year before.

Mr. Snape: That is not true.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was not part of the question.

Mr. Snape: If these interruptions are going to be picked up by *Hansard,* I hope that for once the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) will get his facts right.

Does the Minister accept that there will be no buses in the west midlands on Christmas day and Boxing day this year, that there will be no train services either and that the main beneficiaries of deregulation in and around our major conurbations are likely to be the manufacturers of breathalysers because of the increase in drink-driving problems that will be caused? The hon. Gentleman, like all Conservative Members, knows the price of anything when it comes to deregulation, but he has never appreciated the value of services in and around our major conurbations.

Mr. Mitchell: I am glad that this time the hon. Gentleman has chosen to sing that tune and not to say how much the bus staff look forward to having the time off over Christmas. The opportunity was there for the Greater Manchester PTE to seek to have services provided over the Christmas holiday period if it wished. It did not make such arrangements, and that is why the services were not provided.

British Rail

10. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail; and what issues were discussed.

Mr. Channon: Last week. We discussed a variety of railway matters.

Mr. Jones: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of British Rail, will he discuss with him the state of the north Wales railway line between Holyhead and Crewe? Will he stress the importance of that line, not only to passengers, but to industry, in view of the expected increase in the volume of road traffic from January 1988 when B and I shifts part of its operations to the port of Holyhead? Will he use his influence with the chairman of British Rail and urge him to include in his medium-term strategy plans to electrify the north Wales line and in the short term to include plans to upgrade the line and improve the quality of the rolling stock?

Mr. Channon: As the hon. Gentleman asks me to do so, naturally I shall discuss that matter with the chairman of British Rail, but, as my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, for any programme of electrification—I know that the hon. Gentleman has been in correspondence about this —it is for British Rail to make proposals to me. I have received none, but naturally I shall be happy to approve any proposal that offers good value for money.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the arguments in favour of electrifying the north Wales railway line have been greatly strengthened by the imminence of the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Channon: I hope that the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend will put those arguments to the chairman of British Rail. I repeat that we shall naturally be happy to accept any proposal that offers good value for money.

Driving Test

11. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the report on the future of the driving test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope to receive a report on the Department's examination of ways of improving the efficiency of the testing system in the next few days.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister take this opportunity to deny that he is going to privatise the driving test, and ensure that there are sufficient inspectors to undertake it, especially in view of the problems that the trade unions believe there will be with this extension?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman and I play in the same football team, Mr. Speaker.

I do not think the hon. Gentleman would expect me to prejudge the report. I should be surprised if the trade unions and driving instructors would either. We want better value for money and better services for the customers. Half the 2 million tests conducted each year are taken by people who have already failed the first time. If people prepare themselves properly for the first test, more of them will pass and there will be less of a queue.

Mr. Holt: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not necessary to have a report to know that it is common sense that people should have a secondary test after they have passed the basic test before they are allowed to drive on the major motorways? It is foolish to allow people who have merely passed in daylight on slack roads to go out on major motorways and compete with the traffic thereon. The Government should do something about that now and not wait for any report.

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will be interested to know that at about the age of 24 people start to have more accidents and injuries on motorways than on other roads. Most accidents on motorways happen to so-called experienced drivers—usually the 90 per cent. of us who regard ourselves as being in the top 10 per cent. of those with driving skills.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

"Spycatcher"

65. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he is considering bringing any prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act arising from the "Spycatcher" episode.

The Attorney-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): No, Sir.

Mr. Allen: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us why he is not yet prosecuting Lord Rothschild?

The Attorney-General: My answer as to why no prosecution was being brought was given several months ago. To bring such a prosecution would not have been in conformity with the Attorney-General's published guidelines for prosecutors.

Mr. Fallon: Does my right hon. and learned Friend find it extraordinary that, even after yesterday's outrage, the Opposition still do not support the need to uphold the duty of confidentiality of those who work in our security service in order to defend the country from terrorism and subversion?

The Attorney-General: I very much agree with what my hon. Friend has said. There seems to be a certain ambivalence in the attitude of Opposition Members to that litigation. I venture to suggest that if we were not prepared to incur the cost of litigation to uphold the duty to which my hon. Friend has referred, the cost would very soon be more than money.

Project Zircon

66. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects to reach a decision on the possible prosecution of Mr. Ducan Campbell for alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act in relation to Project Zircon; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: In consultation with the Director of Public Prosecutions, I expect to have completed my consideration of all relevant matters shortly.

Mr. Dalyell: That was the answer of some months ago. How, in conscience, does the Attorney-General, who, left to himself, is a decent and humane man, justify dithering about a decision that has been awaited for nine months? Why cannot Duncan Campbell be told one way or the other? Why is the BBC still waiting for the return of the Zircon material from the authorities?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful for the compliment, but I must make it clear that in matters affecting my prosecution function I am always left to myself. This is a complex matter in which short-cuts would not have been appropriate. They might even have been criticised by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Sackville: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that any money spent on deterring employees or ex-employees of the security services from betraying the trust placed in them is money well spent? It is important to establish——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has the hon. Gentleman read the question? It is about Zircon.

"Spycatcher"

67. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General how much in total Her Majesty's Government have allocated for future expenditure on trying to prevent the publication of the book "Spycatcher".

The Attorney-General: No specific amount for future expenditure is allocated in respect of any particular case.

Mr. Winnick: Has Wright expressed his gratitude to the British Government for helping to boost the sale and publicity of his book? Would not all the public money that has so far been spent, and probably the greater amount that will be spent in future on this farcical exercise, be better spent on scrutinising the security service and having a parliamentary Select Committee reporting on the matter?

The Attorney-General: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will bear in mind two factors. The first is that in litigation it is the ultimately successful party that is normally awarded costs. Secondly, we are claiming an account of profits against Heinemann and Wright in Australia and against newspapers in New Zealand, Hong Kong and here. If those claims are ultimately successful — [HON. MEMBERS: "If".]—that will cause money to flow back to the Treasury. In those circumstances, I would expect the Opposition, with their notable concern for reducing public expenditure, to rejoice.

Mr. Lawrence: Is my right hon. and learned Friend considering any changes in the law or in the terms of contract of security service men to stop those who may be tempted to betray their country's secrets for money from doing so?

The Attorney-General: The present legislation remains in force and work has been in hand for some time on devising provisions that would be an effective, enforceable and reasonable alternative. This is not without difficulties. As my hon. and learned Friend is aware, the Official Information Bill 1979 was found to be unacceptable, although it closely followed the recommendations of the Franks committee.

Mr. Fraser: As Mr. Wright's disclosures are now about as confidential as a stage whisper, and if the Government are sensitive about the expenditure of public money, why does the Attorney-General not simply pursue Mr. Wright and his publishers for an account of profits? Why is it necessary to proceed with these extraordinarily expensive proceedings in the courts in many countries? The Attorney-General is presently reviewing the legal aid system. Will he be as indulgent to the ordinary citizen pursuing his rights as he is to the Government in pursuing Mr. Wright?

The Attorney-General: By now it must be understood that it is as important to uphold the principle in this jurisdiction, as it is in every other jurisdiction where it proves possible to do so, that when somebody retires from a position in our security service he continues to owe a duty of confidentiality. If the Government do not take all the steps that are properly open to them to enforce that obligation, they will not be able to do so in any subsequent and perhaps even more serious case.

Actions for Discovery (Immunity)

68. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will introduce legislation to confer immunity from actions for discovery in criminal and civil cases upon all correspondence between Members of Parliament and their constituents; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I am aware of my hon. Friend's very conscientious efforts to preserve the privacy of certain letters sent to him by a constituent who was to be a witness in a criminal trial. Those letters became the subject of a subpoena issued by the High Court judge trying the case.

Nevertheless, my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor is not at present persuaded of any need to change the law in this area, which is of long standing.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the case that he has mentioned cost me £2,500 and that that was without choice on my part? Could the same thing not happen to any hon. Member, and would that not effect and inhibit future relations between hon. Members and their constituents? If it did, would my right hon. and learned Friend be kind enough to think again and either seek amendments to the law to give immunity to correspondence between hon. Members and their constituents, or allow reimbursement if a case such as the one that I have just gone through were to occur again?

The Attorney-General: The whole House will have great sympathy for my hon. Friend, but he will know that we are faced with a conflict between two important interests. One is the interest of preserving privacy in correspondence between a constituent and a Member of Parliament, and the other is the importance of not withholding from a court of law material that may be necessary to enable justice to be done in that court. I shall, of course, draw the attention of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor to what my hon. Friend has said, but I should be misleading him if I were to hold out hope of a change in the law.

Judges

69. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Attorney-General how many High Court judges and circuit judges, respectively, there are currently in England and Wales; if the Lord Chancellor has any proposals for increasing their establishment; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: As at 1 November there were 79 High Court judges and 394 circuit judges in England and Wales.

An Order in Council has been laid in draft to increase the statutory maximum number of High Court judges from 80 to 85. If it is approved, the Lord Chancellor intends to recommend the appointment of two additional High Court judges as soon as practicable.

The number of circuit judges needed to dispose of the work load is reviewed regularly. The Lord Chancellor recommends such additional appointments as are considered necessary.

Mr. Carlile: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for that answer. However, does he agree that there are still far too many people spending far too much time in custody between remand and trial at Crown courts, and that more circuit judges should be appointed from both sides of the legal profession, especially including more women judges, to deal with the cases that are awaiting hearings?

The Attorney-General: My noble Friend the Lord Chancellor makes no distinction between male and female candidates for the bench. He is very anxious to recruit as many as can be recruited without diminishing the judicial quality.

The hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that the average waiting time in the Crown court has diminished from 17·3 weeks in 1979 to 12·4 weeks in 1987. I agree that delay is always undesirable. I believe that what I have said about the increase both in the establishment and in the number of judges is reassuring.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Overseas Aid

70. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to reach the United Nations target for aid of 0·7 per cent. of GNP.

73. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has yet set any target date for increasing United Kingdom overseas aid to match United Nations guidelines as a percentage of gross domestic product.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Chris Patten): The Government accept the United Nations target in principle. As with previous Administrations, they have not set a timetable for achieving it, but aid is now planned to grow in real terms.

Miss Lestor: Does the Minister agree that, despite the small increase that was announced last week, the amount of GNP now allocated is still well below what many of our major EEC partners give and well below the amount achieved by the previous Labour Government when they left office in 1979? Would it not be an encouragement to all those working in aid and development if he were able to state categorically that the increase will be maintained and that it will reach the United Nations target within the next year or two?

Mr. Patten: I believe that it should be an encouragement to the sort of people to whom the hon. Lady has referred that, on the figures for this year, the aid budget will be increased by £70 million next year, by £140 million the following year and by a further £185 million the year after that.

Mrs. Ewing: Has the Minister looked at early-day motion 257, which points out that the aid budget has fallen by 15 per cent. since 1979? Why are the Government so loth to set a target? What is the difficulty in naming the date?

Mr. Patten: We take very much the same view as our predecessors about this. I repeat that the aid budget did fall between 1979 and 1982, but since then it has been maintained in real terms, and this year I was extremely pleased that we were able to announce an increase in real terms.

Mr. Soames: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the increases that he has achieved in the aid programme. Does he agree that what matters is not targets but the effectiveness of the aid that is delivered? Will my hon. Friend assure the House that the great burden of the aid that we give will go towards enabling people of the poorer countries to become more self-sufficient and more reliant on their own resources?

Mr. Patten: I agree with my hon. Friend about the quality of our aid programme. I am delighted that, not long ago, the OECD complimented us on the quality of our aid programme and pointed out that 75 per cent. of our aid goes to poor countries, as against an average of about 60 per cent. for other OECD donors. I believe that we should continue to concentrate on the quality and effectiveness of what we are doing.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) has just said, it is not so much the volume of the aid as the effectiveness with which it is used that is crucial for development? Does my hon. Friend also agree that it is often much easier for charities and voluntary bodies, which do not have to work through local host Governments and become entangled to the same extent with local bureaucracy, to provide the most effective contribution to development?

Mr. Patten: I wholly agree with what my hon. Friend said. That is why I am pleased that recently we were able to announce a 50 per cent. increase for next year for the joint funding scheme, which assists non-governmental organisations, and why I am also pleased that we have been able to announce an 18 per cent. increase in the amount of money available to help British volunteers to go overseas.

Sir Russell Johnston: While we welcome the increases, we must not forget that they are increases on decreases. Is it not a matter of profound regret that in 1979, when the Government came to power, we gave more in overseas aid than France, Germany, Italy and Canada, and now all of them give more than we do? Is the Minister saying that that means that the quality of their aid has declined?

Mr. Patten: We still have the sixth largest aid programme in the world. It is extremely effective. In 1979 we were undergoing a structural adjustment programme with the support of the International Monetary Fund. Now we are able to go to the IMF and help other countries to go through structural adjustment programmes.

Immunisation

71. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress in the UNICEF global immunisation project and the United Kingdom contribution to it.

Mr. Chris Patten: UNICEF says that there is a slow but steady increase in contributions. The British Government have contributed £5·31 million bilaterally to the immunisation programme, and some £2 million through the European Community. Other British contributors, the United Kingdom National Committee for UNICEF and the TUC, have pledged a further £2 million over three years.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the initiative and the contribution by Her Majesty's Government towards that United Nations special project, which I am sure has universal support, and recognise that the programme to immunise all the world's children against the six preventable diseases must take some years, but will my hon. Friend look sympathetically at the need to announce a five-year special contribution by the United Kingdom Government to ensure that the programme is given that necessary lift and to encourage other countries to follow the lead given by our Government?

Mr. Patten: We shall, of course, consider special appeals by UNICEF. It is important to note that our contribution to the core budget of UNICEF has increased to £7·5 million for next year, which is more than the increase in the rate of inflation. It is also important to remember what we are doing to support primary health care in aid recipient countries, which has a considerable bearing on the problem to which my hon. Friend referred.

Overseas Aid

72. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of public expenditure was devoted to overseas aid in 1979 and in 1986.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1979, 1·1 per cent. of public expenditure was devoted to overseas aid. In 1986 the figure was 0·83 per cent.

Mr. Fisher: Does not that decline underline the point that our aid budget is now below the OECD average of 0·36 per cent. and that it has been cut more than any other area of public expenditure apart from housing? Is not that underinvestment in aid morally wrong and economically nonsensical?

Mr. Patten: It is not entirely clear to me which public expenditure programmes the hon. Gentleman thinks should fall as a proportion of public expenditure overall. I am sure that he must have been as delighted by the real terms increase in the aid programme as he was by the real increase in the arts budget.

Mr. Yeo: Does my hon. Friend agree that not only is it welcome that the size of our aid programme is now increasing in real terms and that its effectiveness has been improved in recent years, but that there is a role for this country to play in influencing the policies of other countries? In that context, will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the initiative take by our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in adopting a fresh approach to the debt problem, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa?

Mr. Patten: Thanks to this country's economic strength we have been able to take the initiative in trying to help the most debt-distressed countries in Africa. As my hon. Friend will know, the Chancellor's initiative was endorsed by the Commonwealth Finance Ministers and the Commonwealth Heads of Government.

Sri Lanka

74. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present level of aid given by Her Majesty's Government to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chris Patten: In the calendar year 1986 aid to Sri Lanka totalled £13·4 million, including expenditure of £7·8 million from the aid and trade provision. An additional £2 million was disbursed by the Commonwealth Development Corporation in that year.

Mr. Cox: I note the Minister's answer, but, in view of the tragic events in Sri Lanka, will fresh aid be given? Is it the Government's policy to work with the Sri Lankan Government to rehabilitate and ensure that confidence returns to that country? Will he, or a representative of his Department, attend the special aid meeting in Paris at the beginning of next month?

Mr. Patten: We have announced a contribution of £1·5 million for immediate relief work in Sri Lanka. Much of it will be disbursed through non-governmental organisations, such as Oxfam. We will be attending the meeting in early December, held under the auspices of the World Bank, when we shall consider what more we can do to help with long-term reconstruction in Sri Lanka. I am sure that we will be in a position to make a substantial contribution.

Terrorist Attack (Enniskillen)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): I will, with permission, Mr. Speaker, make a statement on yesterday's terrorist attack at the war memorial in Enniskillen.

This occurred shortly before the parade arrived for the formal wreath-laying ceremony. I should explain to the House that the normal procedure in Enniskillen is that the parade forms up and marches to the war memorial where the act of remembrance takes place and then marches to the cathedral for the Remembrance day service.

At 10 45 am, as spectators were gathering near the war memorial, a bomb exploded in the St. Michael's reading room, outside which a number of people were taking up their normal vantage point. No warning whatsoever had been given. The explosion demolished the gable wall, which fell, crushing the waiting spectators. Eleven people were killed and more than 60 injured. Of the injured, 21 were detained in hospital overnight, of whom five are very seriously injured. Among those killed are three elderly couples, a young nurse, and an off-duty policeman.

I know that I speak on behalf of the whole House in expressing our deepest sympathy to those bereaved and injured, and to all their relatives and friends, at this appalling outrage. I also pay tribute to the absolutely outstanding way in which all the emergency services responded to their terrible task.

It is clear from the location chosen for the bomb and the absence of any warning that those responsible for this monstrous act set out deliberately to kill and maim ordinary members of the public: people from both communities who had come together on a sunday morning, young and old, like thousands upon thousands of others throughout the United Kingdom, to honour the memories of those who had died in two world wars and since. In all the tragedy of the terrorist campaign, this outrage stands out in its awfulness. To perpetrate such an outrage against people, for many of whom the occasion was already one of sorrow and remembrance, betrays a total lack of human feeling. Nor could there have been a more deliberately provocative act, more calculated to stir up sectarian hatred, than this outrage on this special and solemn day.

There is a deep sense of anger and outrage felt throughout Northern Ireland today. I know that many will call for retaliation. I say to them most urgently that they most not be provoked. Further acts of violence will only play into the hands of the terrorists and make more difficult the task of the security forces. What we must do instead is to determine that every possible assistance is given to the RUC and the security forces in their continuing fight against terrorism and in particular to bring those responsible for this atrocious crime to justice, wherever they may be. There must be some who have in the past given tacit support to the terrorists, or who have preferred too often to look the other way, who must be horrified at yesterday's outrage. If they or anybody else have any information at all to identify the culprits, and if their revulsion at this terrible crime is genuine, they must ensure that they give the RUC any help they can, whether by using the confidential telephone or by whatever means they choose.

Since my visit yesterday afternoon to Enniskillen, I have had initial meetings with the Chief Constable and also the General Officer Commanding and the Commander Land Forces. I shall be meeting them on my return to Northern Ireland. In addition, in the light of the serious recent events in security both north and south of the border, and the successful seizure of the major arms shipment and the implications that flow from that, I shall be having further urgent talks with Irish Ministers abut security. In this connection I appreciate the strong message of support and co-operation that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has received from the Taoiseach.

There are those who believe that this latest, most foul attack is a measure of the frustration of the terrorists in the light of the considerable recent successes of the security forces. Whatever their motive, the courage and resourcefulness of the security forces, backed up by the same courage and steadfastness of the community, and aided significantly by international co-operation, have inflicted severe blows on the terrorists. None the less, yesterday's outrage shows the evil threat that they still pose and the vital need for the whole community to continue to stand steadfastly against them.

There are two messages that I wish the House to send today. The first is to the people of Northern Ireland of our resolve to stand firmly with them in the fight against terrorism and to assure them of our full support. The second is to make it clear to the men of violence that no threat or outrage destroys our resolve, but makes us all the more determined to rid the Province of the evil of terrorism.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The whole nation shares the feeling of revulsion caused by this horrible and obscene act. In the past, even the most barbaric have accepted that people should be allowed to honour their dead in peace. It is particularly horrific when we recall that hon. Members were yesterday before their local cenotaphs, not just honouring the dead but, more particularly, welcoming the reconciliation that there has been since two world wars.

Our sympathy, as expressed by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, and our prayers go out to the families and the relatives of the bereaved and injured. Those who heard Mr. Wilson, the father of the nurse who died, on the radio this morning could not have had a better or a more moving insight into the personal tragedies that have resulted from this dreadful deed, nor a finer example of Christian charity.

Equally, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is correct to urge that the best method of defeating these men of violence is not by taking retaliatory action or by over-reacting, no matter how understandable that may be. We must react with a cold anger, with a determination to support the forces of law and order, and the RUC in particular in its efforts to bring these criminals to justice. In this way we can ensure that the rule of law for which those whom we were all honouring at cenotaphs yesterday, and in particular at Enniskillen, died, is upheld.

We join in the tribute that the Secretary of State paid to the emergency services, in especially tragic circumstances, and to the courage, resolution and determination of the ordinary citizens of Enniskillen, who were faced with tremendous tragedy. Their immediate reaction was to help those who were sick, injured or dead.

There is a particular message that comes from this tragedy. It gives the lie to any suggestion that any Democrat can flirt with those who support the policy of the bomb and the ballot box. For Democrats, it is the ballot box that matters.

The people of Enniskillen have the knowledge of our sympathy and of the resolute determination of the House that they should be able to live their lives secure and in peace. It is our duty to ensure that that is achieved.

Mr. King: I know that the House will appreciate what the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has said on behalf of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition, on his own behalf and on behalf of his right hon. and hon. Friends generally. I am sure that the House will appreciate especially his comment that no Democrat can flirt with anybody who espouses the cause of terrorism.

Anyone who heard Mr. Wilson this morning—it was one of the most moving broadcasts that I can remember — gained some insight into the amazing courage and wonderful quality of the people of Fermanagh. That came across so clearly in that most moving broadcast.

I think that we in this place can appreciate the horror of this outrage as well as anyone anywhere in the country. Those of us who were involved in Remembrance Day ceremonies in our constituencies saw the sorts of people who were killed in the outrage; for example, parents, old servicemen and others with memories who have regularly attended Remembrance Day occasions. We find that targets for terror are the parents of those with children in the Girl Guides or the Boys' Brigade who go to watch their children take part in a traditional ceremony. I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members will understand all too keenly the appalling nature of this outrage.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I add my words of congratulation to those that have already been uttered to the emergency services for the way in which they worked in Enniskillen yesterday to bring comfort to the injured and for the way in which they have rallied round the bereaved. I thank right hon. and hon. Members of both sides of the House who this morning offered support to me as well as to my constituents.

I was devastated yesterday by the death of another 11 of my constituents, bringing the total death roll in Fermanagh and South Tyrone to 194, but I was doubly devastated to hear the Secretary of State's statement this afternoon. It is an insult to the House yet again to be offered platitudes. It is a let-down for my suffering people.

All that we have been offered is a further abdication of the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Office and of the Government to the Government of a foreign state. We who live close to the frontier in Northern Ireland realise that if we get any co-operation on security matters from the Irish Republic that is a bonus and is not the basis of proper security for our people. Instead, the basis of proper security lies in the Government's hands. In other words, it is the Government's responsibility.

I remind the Secretary of State that the death toll of 47 in the year before the Anglo-Irish Agreement has now risen by 70 per cent. to 80 this year. We would do better to tell everyone in Northern Ireland, including the SDLP, that they can no longer get away with simple condemnations of violence and that they must accept responsibility for the welfare of the community in which they live. Will the Secretary of State consider how tragic it is that 169 deaths at the hands of the IRA have resulted in only 14 convictions through the due process of law—a miserable 8 per cent.? Will he therefore not simply encourage, but demand of the SDLP that it turns its words of sympathy into action to protect the people of Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I know that the whole House will understand the great emotion with which the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) speaks at this moment. We all know the tragic history and the scale of casualties that his constituents have suffered over the years of the terrorist campaign, and this has been a further appalling blow for them. We understand that entirely. Nevertheless, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will fairly recognise the very determined efforts that have been made, and the successes in recent months, in bringing a number of people to justice and in preventing other terrorist incidents—most recently in preventing an attack on the police station at Loughgall, quite close to the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

The hon. Gentleman will have noted that I said in my statement that it was time for everybody to give full support to the RUC and the security forces. I say that very clearly indeed, and look to every party in the House to play its full part. This is a time when there can be no halfway house. There can be no chance of deciding whether to sit on the fence. In the fight against terrorists of such depravity and viciousness, those who are not for us are against us. We need the fullest support of every Democrat in the country and of every Democrat in Northern Ireland, to defeat the terrorists.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Without apology, Mr. Speaker, I rise with deep anguish of heart and deep anger at the massacre that took place in Enniskillen yesterday. As the elected representative of the area in Europe I can also speak in a representative capacity.

I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree with me on one thing, if we agree on nothing else. Someone who has seen a founding member of his own party so brutally murdered, as John Megaw was, and who has visited in hospital members of his congregation who have been barbarously mutilated, must speak with the deepest possible feeling and conviction if there is a spark of manhood in him. If hon. Members wish to condemn the strength of emotion of Northern Ireland representatives, I remind them that I have seen their emotions stirred on other occasions. We feel the same as they would feel. If the House has to receive from Northern Ireland Members some contributions with which it may not agree, it must recognise that as elected representatives we are bound to put to the House the feelings of our constituents.

Is the Secretary of State aware that no amount of condemnation or sympathy from him or the Government whom he represents will allay the real fears of the people in Ulster about the increasing number of IRA terrorist murders in Northern Ireland? The people in Northern Ireland do not want sympathy from the Government or condemnation of this violence. They want action to put this violence down, so that they may live in peace and get on with the ordinary aspects of everyday living.

Does the Secretary of State appreciate the deep anguish of an exasperated population who have seen murder piled upon murder, and massacre piled upon massacre — all

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

carried out without effective action to stop it? This is not the first time that the Houe has heard a similar statement and similar words of condemnation, yet the violence has increased. Does the Secretary of State not now realise that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not brought peace, stability and reconcilation, but, rather, has brought polarisation, war and increasing bloodshed and violence?

Will the right hon. Gentleman now consider that the signal failure of the Garda recently to deal with the gang of the so-called "border fox" means that the Garda is likely to give him little assistance when he turns to it at this time for help to put down the IRA? Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise that it is an insult, as the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) said, even to mention in the House the help of Mr. Haughey, who helped to spawn the IRA? Anyone who doubts that should read the debates that took place in the Dail in Dublin.

I should like the Secretary of State to explain why the reading room was not searched and why the police were not permitted to search it when they went into the area. Last night, when I was in Enniskillen and visited the hospital, the police put it to me that if they had dared to go into that convent property and put in a sniffer dog they would have been at the receiving end of stiff Nationalist opposition and downright condemnation. The police should have had that building searched, because it was a vital place in which a bomb could be laid. I should like an explanation on behalf of the people of Enniskillen.

Mr. King: No hon. Member will resent the hon. Gentleman expressing his feelings and those of his constituents, however emotionally, in the face of the scale of the tragedy and horror that we are reviewing. It is his duty to put those feelings as clearly as he can. I hope he accepts that it is our duty, as elected representatives and as people in positions of responsibility, to ensure that those emotions that inevitably are aroused by an occasion of this kind are channelled into ways that are genuinely helpful and will not lead to further disillusionment, bitterness and hatred.

Since I prepared this statement—I have not yet had further information about this—I have been informed that a member of the minority community in Belfast was murdered this afternoon. I hope that there is no connection, but, as we all know, it is a clear warning of the tragic and destructive way in which emotions can be aroused.

I have no knowledge that anyone in any sense refused permission to search the reading room. It is the practice, I understand, of the security forces to clear the route and perhaps to examine those buildings that might present a real threat to the security forces. The recent terrorist campaign has been targeted directly against the security forces. To anyone who knew the normal arrangements for the parade at Enniskillen, this building was a place from which ordinary members of the public watched the parade, so there was not much risk to the security forces. I think that that may have been part of the thinking. Awfully, that truth proved correct and it was ordinary members of the public who were killed. Certainly there was no question of a search being forbidden.

In dealing with the challenge of terrorism, one must remember that the parade marches for a mile or more from the assembly point to the war memorial and the cathedral. Moreover, there is a whole range of Remembrance Day parades in Northern Ireland, so the challenge to the security forces in terms of what is realistically possible is very great. I know that all possible precautions were taken. Indeed, I have spoken to the Army officers concerned, who played a major role in clearing the route before the parade took place.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Secretary of State convey to the relatives of the murdered and the injured the condolences, prayers and sympathy of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself? Does he agree that the most lasting memorial to the innocent victims of the Enniskillen atrocity will be redoubled determination and resolve to strengthen co-operation between the British and Irish Governments?

To that end, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that on 1 December, in the Dail, progress must be made on a full extradition agreement? Does he further agree that there needs to be simultaneous enactment by the Dail and by Westminster of joint anti-terrorist legislation and the establishment of joint courts? Does he also accept that there can be no room for ambiguity about Catholic support for the security services, and that Catholics in Northern Ireland who wish to see an end to violence must desist and support the RUC?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks on behalf of his right hon. and hon. Friends and himself. He referred to co-operation. What I believe will come out of the outrage is a better chance of much closer co-operation within Northern Ireland. I believe that many people who perhaps felt that they could somehow stand aside now realise the awfulness of the menace that threatens every decent person in the Province. The universality of condemnation that has come from right across communities leads me to hope that that will be reflected in the strongest support.

I apologise to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) for not replying to his point about co-operation with the Irish Government. Although it is within Northern Ireland that these matters have first to be tackled, the security forces who have had to cope with the challenge of terrorism over the years operate to a highly sophisticated and professional standard and we are, of course, keen to find ways for co-operation with the Garda. If any hon. Member who knows the geography of the island of Ireland seriously suggests that we will make the best progress in fighting terrorism by somehow doing it in separation from, rather than in co-operation with, the Government of the Republic, I must make it very plain that I could not disagree more.

On the need for there to be no hiding place within the island of Ireland, I have made my views very clear as to what I hope will happen. The Irish Government are well aware of our views and it is vital that we stand together.

As we are talking about a European convention, I pay tribute to the international co-operation that we have had, and I believe that it is the countries of Europe in particular that must stand together in the fight against terrorism.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I wish that the distraught and hard-pressed people of Ulster could have heard the warm and supportive words of sympathy from hon. Members from all parties that greeted me when I arrived at Westminster this morning. It would give them hope for the future.

I preface my question to the Secretary of State by repeating what I have said before—that I hope that there will be no retaliation in Northern Ireland as a result of this obscene act. However, it should be remembered by all hon. Members—and I hope that the Secretary of State will pay the appropriate tribute—that the people of Northern Ireland have for 17 years suffered grievously at the hands of the Provisional IRA, whose systematic, ruthless campaign of murdering Protestant men, women and children has been going on for far too long.

Instead of a war of words from the Despatch Box and press releases from Stormont Castle, will the right hon. Gentleman now wage all-out war against the Provisional IRA? It will not be beaten by any other means, and certainly not by concessions, weaknesses or the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I believe, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman agrees, that in Northern Ireland there must now be a proclamation of martial law, the introduction of identity cards for every person—with fingerprints and photographs stored in a central computer, and anyone moving from an address must notify the authorities—the abolition of the 50 per cent. remission for terrorists who have been sentenced to prison, the restoration of the ordinary remission terms that apply to the remainder of the United Kingdom and the introduction of internment—something with which I disagree, but which is necessary.

The Secretary of State said that there should be no hiding place, but there is a hiding place in the Irish Republic, and there is a hiding place in Northern Ireland. I have been told by police and Army officers that they can identify the IRA men wandering around, but they cannot arrest them because they do not have sufficient evidence to sustain a conviction in court. Those men are planning operations and training youngsters to carry out atrocities, but they can defy the law while walking past police and UDR officers.

Perhaps I have become cynical after 17 years of violence in Northern Ireland, but there is no sign of its coming to an end. The Government, unfortunately, show weakness to the IRA in many ways. May I give the House a prediction? I hope that I am proved wrong, but I believe that within a few weeks—yes, even a few weeks—representatives of Republicans, both north and south of the border, will be engaging in bogus criticism of the police, Army and UDR if they kill or capture some IRA terrorist. Let us ensure that if they make such a criticism, this House will give them its answer.

Mr. King: I very much appreciate the hon. Gentleman's support for the call for no retaliation, which was very well put. He mentioned a number of specific items that he wants to see pursued further. We keep a number of matters regularly under review. I do not propose to comment on any of them today, but I have taken note of the hon. Gentleman's comments.

I was struck by the hon. Gentleman's opening comment about the warmth of welcome and words of sympathy that greeted him when he arrived at the House today. Other hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, had a similar experience. The awfulness of this outrage is how counter-productive and stupid it is. The incident has, in fact, drawn together all those for whom Remembrance Day is a very special day, and the outcome of the incident is that it will enlist substantial support for hon. Members, their constituents and those who have to face the horror of terrorism. In that respect, the whole country has drawn together in its feeling of outrage.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): I join other hon. Members in expressing abhorrence at the appalling atrocity yesterday, which was an act of sheer savagery. The choice of the occasion yesterday, when people were commemorating the dead of two world wars, who came from every section of every community of both islands, was cold and calculated and designed to stir and hit the deepest emotions of the Unionist and British people. It was the deepest act of provocation against the Unionist people that has taken place in my lifetime. I sincerely hope that no one will fall into the trap that has been laid by retaliating, because the doctrine of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind.

This House can do no more today than endorse the Prime Minister's statement yesterday that there should be no hiding place anywhere in these islands for those who committed the atrocity. We should also endorse the Irish Prime Minister's statement that every step should be taken by his Government, together with the British Government, to ensure that those who committed the atrocity are brought to justice.

There is a lesson to be learnt by the representatives of Northern Ireland. It is clear to me, as it must be clear to anyone, that it is the past attitudes in Northern Ireland that have brought us to where we are today. Unless we are prepared to re-examine those attitudes, we will stay the way that we are. If we are to live together, the first lesson that we must learn is that we need each other. We will discover how much we need each other, and how we are to live together, only when we sit down and talk about it.

Mr. King: The whole House will have listened to the hon. Gentleman with great interest. He obviously has an important role to play in the process. If, out of all the misery and tragedy, one benefit might flow, if it brings forward closer co-operation, a united determination to fight against evil men and the commitment of men of good will to work together, that, at least, will be some not entirely tragic epitaph to this awful incident.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Were not the word of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) a welcome lead? However, when he said that the atrocity was deeply provocative to the Unionist people, should he not also have said that it was deeply provocative to Irish people as a whole? At remembrance time at our war memorials, do we not commemorate the many Nationalists who fought and died with our forces?

Mr. King: Of course, I accept what my hon. Friend said. Many from both communities have served and died in two world wars and since, as I said in my statement. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point absolutely clear.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Secretary of State accept from my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself our sympathy for the bereaved and injured and our revulsion, shared with people throughout the length and breadth of the realm, at such a cowardly attack upon those gathered to commemorate those who lost their lives in defence of freedom? We note

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

with satisfaction the right hon. Gentleman's expression of determination to bring to justice those who perpetrated this atrocious deed, wherever they may be.

Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that there is practical and effective co-operation on the ground between the security forces in the border areas — especially in the light of the report this afternoon of the discovery by the Garda of a battery and command wire connected to an unexploded bomb in Donegal? Does he believe that such co-operative activities can play a more effective role in preventing such a tragedy? We are convinced that terrorism and such acts serve only to strengthen the determination of our people to sustain, or to secure, by democratic means, the peace and government of Northern Ireland.

Mr. King: I make absolutely clear our determination to bring to justice the perpetrators not merely of these crimes but of the other awful crimes that have been committed. I hope that the sheer awfulness of this outrage will assist that process. There will be many for whom it is so intolerable that they may at last, as I said in my statement, abandon what one might see as an ambivalent view and understand the importance of supporting the security forces. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his remarks. The cross-border incident is still under investigation. It appears as though it was an attempt to commit another attack at the same time as the attack yesterday. It will be the subject of close co-operation between the Garda and the RUC.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever other motives may have lain behind yesterday's tragedy and outrage, two victories were sought by the perpetrators? The first was an undermining of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the second was the return of capital punishment for terrorist murders. Will my right hon. Friend set his face against the undermining of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and, from his great office, do his best to urge the House to resist the second, which would give terrorists the propaganda victories which their outrages so deservedly refuse them?

Mr. King: I certainly accept — all my information confirms it—that the people who most fear the Anglo-Irish Agreement are those in the IRA. They will do everything that they can to smash it. They perceive that truth which the House endorsed a few moments ago. I made the point that the greatest threat to them lies in closer co-operation between the two Governments. There may be those critics who do not believe that such co-operation can be achieved, but I trust that nobody will say that co-operation is not a prize well worth striving for.

On the second point, I recall that when my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary spoke on the subject of capital punishment he quoted the views of the Chief Constable of the RUC. The Chief Constable made it clear to my right hon. Friend, my predecessor in the office that I now hold, that, in his view and in those of his senior officers, it would make the RUC's task of fighting terrorism more difficult. My right hon. Friend asked me whether that was still the view of the Chief Constable and senior officers, and I confirmed that it was.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagàn Valley): Does the Secretary of State accept that the time for the platitudes of the past 18 years has now expired? Does he also accept that hon. Members have a duty to bring forward, debate and implement political decisions? Is it not our first duty to deprive terrorists of the hope and expectation that they will achieve their objectives? They were given such hope and expectation exactly two years ago. In response to what the Secretary of State said—if I did not misinterpret the words that he used in a broadcast this morning—can we not now get together within the United Kingdom to reverse the disastrous and fatal message of 1985?

Mr. King: I have tried to make it clear to the House already that, with the responsibility that I hold, I should not think it the least bit wise somehow in isolation to seek to pursue the interests of security and to make a real improvement in security in Northern Ireland. From my experience since the Agreement was signed, I strongly believe in the progress that has been made and in the relationships that are being established. In the long term, they can prove to be of great benefit to the people of Northern Ireland and, indeed, of great benefit to the people on both sides of the border in the island of Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Will the Secretary of State allow me to record my appreciation of the multiplicity of expressions of condemenation and sympathy from hon. Members during the course of the day about the events that occurred in Enniskillen? It would be difficult for any Northern Ireland hon. Member to go back to the Province unable to carry such messages with him, but will the Secretary of State accept from me that it will be equally difficult to go back to the Province without a message from him that demonstrates a new initiative or a new resolve on the part of the Government to defeat terrorism?

Will the right hon. Gentleman also accept from me that there is a widely held view in Northern Ireland that the doctrine upon which the British Government's security policy is based is that if we take tougher action we might drive Nationalists further towards the IRA? Rather than take tougher action, the Government choose to make concessions to what they describe as constitutional Nationalists, in the hope of winning the Nationalist community away from the IRA.

After Enniskillen, does the Secretary of State accept that that policy does not work? It causes the IRA to step up its campaign of violence and to believe, as it has some justification to do, that more violence brings more concessions. Will he tell us that he is prepared to have a resolute policy against the Provisional IRA which hunts and harries its members, which corners and captures them, and, when they are caught, makes sure that they are sentenced to sentences that fit the crime that they have committed?

Mr. King: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's opening remarks about the expressions of sympathy that have been given to him. It widely reflects feelings right across the United Kingdom.

On the second point, the hon. Gentleman's criticisms fly totally in the face of the reality of the situation. If he examines the facts he will find that, in terms of losses and casualties, this has been the most serious year for the IRA, certainly in recent times, and that the number of terrorists lost is substantial indeed. We must look at the incidents and the successes of the security forces. In terms of recovered weapons and explosives, prevented attacks and arrests—including one last night in Belfast in connection with a bomb which, arguably, was destined for the centre of Balfast — the hon. Gentleman will note that the activities of the security forces have been extremely energetic. I certainly give him a clear pledge. We shall not rest until we carry forward the fight. We can point to some successes, but, as I warned the House, we still fight a dangerous, evil adversary. Of our resolution let there be no doubt.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Last night I called on the elderly widowed mother of a former RUC member who was murdered at Enniskillen. She said:

"They got him this time."

He has previously been shot and ambushed.

I ask the Secretary of State, on reflecting upon Warrenpoint, Birmingham, Ballykelly and Enniskillen, to undertake to resign if another such incident occurs in Northern Ireland and he fails to take advice from Ulster Unionists. We have been ignored. Our advice is of no account in the House. What do we find? We find that death, murder and maiming continue. In fact, it is escalating. There were two extraditions in the two years prior to the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. No persons have been extradited in the two years since it was signed.

We live on promises. I and my constituents in the east of the Province, and people across the Province, accept the sincere expressions of sympathy and the condemnations of violence and the retaliatory action that we have heard about. I shall be pleased to convey them to those with whom I make contact, but we cannot go on endlessly ignoring the views expressed in the House on behalf of Unionists, who are being selectively butchered and murdered. It is genocide. It is war. The Government have failed miserably to use their power with their own security forces. This summer I visited Cyprus, where I saw an attempt to create a border that appeared to be working. I have travelled almost to Dublin and along many of the byways across the Province, from north to south, but there is no evidence of security. Until attitudes change in the House, and especially that attitude of the Secretary of State and his Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office, regrettably we can look forward to yet another similar incident in the not too distant future.

Mr. King: I would welcome the hon. Gentleman's co-operation, the opportunity to listen to his views on the security situation and to hear any ideas from him. I confirm that my door is open, as are those of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Northern Ireland Office. We are ready to work in any way that we can and to consult Unionists who would like to put forward their views. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that my complaint has been the lack of that advice and the lack of Unionists who are willing to put forward their views. It would be overwhelmingly in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, including those whom the hon. Gentleman represents, if we could work more closely together.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I join many other hon. Members from Northern Ireland in expressing my appreciation to those who genuinely feel for the deep hurt and anguish of the people of Northern Ireland. I speak as a member of a family that has been savagely hurt during the troubles by the murder gangs of the IRA. I pay tribute to the excellent services of those who assisted and helped in Enniskillen during the great crisis about which my hon. Friend the Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) spoke.

Many of the people of Northern Ireland find that much of the sympathy rings hollow when they consider that the troubles have been going on for 19 years. We have listened to expressions of sympathy for 19 years and have been told continually that the resolve to defeat terrorism is there. Surely, after 19 years the Secretary of State must believe that if a policy has not succeeded in destroying the curse of the IRA that policy has failed and needs to be changed. There is nothing wrong in a person admitting that a policy has failed and in realising that life is at stake and that British citizens are suffering. Coffins will be carried out, and when I return to Northern Ireland my constituents along the border will ask not how many expressed sympathy but what the Government are going to do to stop it.

How many more coffins containing the cream of Ulster will have to be carried out before the Government wake up to the fact that one cannot negotiate away terrorism? One cannot defeat terrorism by sitting politicians around a little conference table, as I have heard some hon. Members suggest. It can be defeated only by military means. As is known, we were commemorating previous wars yesterday. The enemy of freedom and liberty was destroyed, not by a little conference, but by military might. Therefore, I ask the Secretary of State what measures he believes will defeat the murderers and bring an end to this tragedy in our Province. When will the Government have the courage to act on the Prime Minister's conviction that the death penalty should be restored in the United Kingdom? With the greatest respect to certain hon. Members who represent seats far away from the murder gangs, I would rather have a dead terrorist any day than a dead British subject who wanted simply to live in peace in the Province.

Is it not interesting that certain hon. Members are missing from their places today? Last week in the Central Lobby of this House those hon. Members greeted with open arms a member of Sinn Fein and his deputation. Is it not hypocrisy that hon. Members on the Labour Front Bench should tell the people of Ulster how sorry they are, when other hon. Members of Her Majesty's Opposition flirt with that terrorist organisation of Sinn Fein? Instead of giving such people the respectability of holding positions in local government, is it not time that Sinn Fein was turfed out? It is time that the House realised that many members of Sinn Fein hold high positions and office in district councils in Northern Ireland with the support of the Social Democratic and Labour party. I name Magherafelt district council and Omagh district council. With the support of the SDLP a member of Sinn Fein was elected to the key position of the chairmanship of the latter council. Let us have a bit of honesty, because the people of Ulster have had the reality of murder and destruction for 19 years.

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have made my views on those who support terrorist organisations absolutely clear. I have made clear also my concern about the present unsatisfactory situation in the council chambers, which we are not prepared to tolerate. Appropriate action needs to be taken.

With the resources and the scale of the involvement of the RUC, the regular Army and the UDR, nobody can

[Mr. King]

doubt the Government's commitment to providing the resources necessary to the fight against terrorism. Yes, we shall face terrorism with the security forces in every way that we can. However, we should also undermine and wean away those who might be inclined to allow terrorism to continue. That means the greatest effort by all those in Northern Ireland who are in any responsible position to try to show some understanding of and respect for the other community and the two traditions. In that way, they can back up the policing activities of the security forces and give them the support that they deserve.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): Is the Secretary of State aware that, if the truth were told, in the aftermath of this latest tragedy the people of Northern Ireland are just as cynical as the House and officials in the Northern Ireland Office, because one tragedy is piled on another, and perhaps therein lies our greatest danger?

On the basis that hope is perhaps one of the ways in which we can avoid retaliation, and that the responsibility for giving that hope must lie with the Secretary of State, what hope can he offer people in the Province this afternoon? What hope can he offer to the people who have said to me, "You are wasting your time going over there. They are not going to listen to you"? When this ritual is over and the dead are buried, it will simply be a matter of my colleagues and I waiting for the next time.

Mr. King: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman's first point. I do not think that people in the Province are cynical about what happened yesterday or about what will happen in the future; nor are hon. Members or people in this country cynical in any sense. I agree with Bishop Hannon, the Bishop of Clugher, whom I heard speaking this morning. When asked about the scale of the outrage and the difference that it made he said that every death is a tragedy for the family and relations. Northern Ireland has had to face too many such tragedies. As I said in my statement, I believe that there is something about this incident and its awfulness that will prove hugely counterproductive for the terrorists who perpetrated it. That is my first hope.

Secondly, we are determined, and we are slowly and steadily getting results. It is easy to disparage every success of the security forces, say that it is merely a flash in the pan and point to another murder or atrocity that has been committed, but, considering the figures over the past few years, we can see that there has been an overall improvement. With ever-closer international co-operation, and with a growing and widening realisaton of the evil of terrorism, we can at last see the platform from which the final assault can be made against that evil.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Does my right hon. Friend accept that all hon. Members on this side want to associate themselves with his opening statement and hope that no one masquerading under the title of Loyalist will resort to terrorist methods which that person would be the first to condemn when employed by the IRA? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would never have been signed unless it had been preceded by a prolonged campaign of terrorist violence? As a consequence of that agreement, predictable and predicted, has been still greater terrorist violence, will my right hon. Friend now consider activating article 11 of the agreement?

Is it still my right hon. Friend's belief that it is only by giving the Irish Government the right to put forward views and proposals about the government of Northern Ireland that we can obtain greater co-operation from the Republic for the defeat of terrorism? If that is the continuing belief of my right hon. Friend, would it not be strengthened if the Irish Government had not connived at the payment of ransom money to terrorists, if they had acceded to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, and if there were greater signs of competence and security on the part of the Garda?

Mr. King: I have no detailed information on that kidnapping, and my hon. Friend will understand why it is not possible for me to comment. I have made my views on the European convention, some would say, abundantly clear. I propose to leave it at that, because I have made my views absolutely clear.

I respect the sincerity with which my hon. Friend holds his view on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but I believe that the agreement can be of benefit to the people of Northern Ireland. Because it addresses the concerns of the minority, some Unionists think that it is somehow to the disadvantage of the majority. If ever there was a clear illustration of the importance of addressing minority community concerns, this is it. Those who will gain the greatest possible benefit from a minority community that feels that its issues are fairly addressed are the majority community.

I would not consider it appropriate to accelerate the review period for the conference, which will come at the end of three years.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of my hon. Friends in the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru, may I also extend our sympathy to the families and friends of the maimed, dead and injured in Enniskillen? As constitutional Nationalists, we have always believed that constitutional change can come only through the ballot box and democratic negotiations. We have always said categorically that violence, far from advancing a cause, devalues the principles of freedom and democracy. Therefore, we shall support all steps that will bring this problem to the negotiating table, both cross-boundary and internationally.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, speaking with her particular insight and from her particular viewpoint, for her clear endorsement of the constitutional path for any Nationalist politics. The House will have listened with respect to what she said.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Important though the matter is, I must bear in mind that we have another debate ahead of us. I shall allow two further questions from each side.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): May I ask my right hon. Friend, whose personal agony the House will understand, some questions which I know to be in the minds of those to whom we are now looking—the men and women of the RUC—not only to catch the butchers of Enniskillen, but to prevent a bloody backlash from the majority community.

First, is my right hon. Friend satisfied that the professional and technical support from the Garda are sufficient? If not, will he take what steps he can to improve them? Secondly, will he seek to ensure that more Army support, particularly in the form of helicopters is available to the RUC? Thirdly, will he re-examine the Prevention of Terrorism Act to see whether it is right to include some form of preventive detention so that men who have killed and whom the police know will kill again are not free to walk the streets of Belfast and plan further atrocities? Finally, will my right hon. Friend consider publishing through British posts abroad a brochure setting out the true horror of Enniskillen, with photographs, so that those who misguidedly provide money and arms to support terrorists will recognise the full horror of what they are doing?

Mr. King: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. He referred to a potential backlash, but I am sure that there is no question of that. The Unionist community is most courageous and resilient and I have absolute confidence in the steadfastness of a people who have shown such courage in the face of such provocation. Nevertheless, a few on the margin could cause serious damage.

My hon. Friend will understand that I cannot comment on the technical support and back-up from the Garda, but I take careful note of what he said. He will understand that we, particularly my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, take a particularly close interest in his view. We have increased the number of helicopter hours, and we shall certainly keep that under review. I am grateful for the support of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on that.

My hon. Friend raised the fundamental issue of preventive detention. That is something that we keep under review, and we have always made it clear that we shall keep it under review. The House knows of its difficult history, but the power remains in certain circumstances for the Government to invoke it if they thought it right to do so.

My hon. Friend referred to increasing international understanding of the real awfulness of the terrorist threat. The House will have seen the message to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister from the President of the United States, showing clearly American understanding of this matter, and I shall certainly take up my hon. Friend's helpful suggestion.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): May I support one of the points made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), namely, the need for British missions to do more in European countries and the United States to publicise the horror of what occurred yesterday? Is it not encouraging that the Soviet Union has made the response that it has done, bearing in mind that until now it has painted a somewhat distorted picture of what has been happening in Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: I believe that I am right in saying—hon. Members may correct me if I am wrong—that this is the first occasion on which the Soviet Union has made such a comment. It is significant and, clearly, did not happen by accident.

A most significant step, to which I attach importance and in which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is closely involved, is European co-operation in the fight against terrorism. The development of this co-operative approach is of enormous importance. Anybody who studies recent events and issues, such as arms availability and procurement, knows the international nature of the challenge of terrorism and the need for international co-operation between democratic states to fight it.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, at our Remembrance service yesterday in Cambridge, we also honoured and remembered the tens of thousands of young men of all Ireland who served and suffered in the British armed forces in two world wars—with my father in the first and my brothers in the second? They fought together for the cause of democracy. Is he also aware that the agony of the people of Enniskillen is our agony, and that their cause is our cause? Has not this barbarous act demonstrated that we are at war together again against another tyranny, that of terrorism?

Is it not time that all the British people and Irish people realised the mortal peril to both nations—a peril that must be fought and defeated? Surely, in the exigencies of war, some of the constraints that we have in times of peace must be reviewed.

Mr. King: The House will appreciate the eloquent way in which my hon. Friend put his very personal feelings about Remembrance day and the people from both our islands who fought and lost their lives in the cause of freedom.

I also take note of my hon. Friend's other comments. We shall take all the necessary and possible steps that we believe could be helpful in the fight against terrorism. I choose my words carefully, and the House will understand why. Let no country doubt our resolution in this matter.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): When I was elected to this House I was proud, for two reasons. First, I was proud to have been elected to the mother of Parliaments; and, secondly, I was proud to represent my 60,000 constituents. I came here with high hopes to listen to the mother of Parliaments, but unfortunately, since I was elected in 1983, and through all the tragedies, murders and bombings that have taken place in Northern Ireland in that time, I have found the House wanting. I have found that it is not capable of restoring their British citizenship to the British citizens in Northern Ireland. The House does not seem capable — with all the power that it has throughout the world—to restore peace and security to the people of Northern Ireland.

It is said that politicians merely talk, and I have heard politicians talking here again today. The people of Northern Ireland do not want talk. They want action to restore the peace and stability that have been promised them by this House. I reliase that those who exercise power have a tremendous responsibility. However, sometimes when I look at Conservative Members a certain amount of time after the beginning of questions or a debate, I see them seeming to relax and saying to themselves that that little bit is over and they can look forward to getting back to normal business.

The real tragedy is that 11 people will be buried, and a greater tragedy is that others will follow them. What message will the Secretary of State give to my constituents, who phoned me continually for two hours yesterday evening, about the action that will be taken to resolve the position?

Mr. King: I have tried to give the House those messages today as clearly as I can. I hope that the hon. Gentleman

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will study what I have said and see that the path we must follow is that of co-operation in Northern Ireland and internationally, and of determination together in the face of terrorism. That offers us the best prospect of the improvement that the hon. Gentleman longs for.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell hon. Members whom I have not been able to include in the questions on the statement that I shall bear in mind their position when we come to Thursday's questions on Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland (Terrorism)

4.44 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the increase of IRA terrorism in Ulster and the massacre at Enniskillen yesterday."

I know, Mr. Speaker, that I must not argue the case, but simply establish to the House that an important and specific matter should have its consideration, but I want to give the House some facts to establish that. In Northern Ireland there were 47 murders in 1984, in 1985 there were 86, and this year—I hope that all hon. Members will listen carefully—there have been 79 deaths. Two thirds of the deaths of which the Army was accused were resolved in the courts in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. Of the 22 deaths of which Protestants were accused, 11 were resolved. Of the 169 of which the IRA was accused, only 14 have been resolved. Those figures speak for themselves.

The House would do well to hold a proper debate on this matter so that the views of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies, and those of all hon. Members, could be heard. I trust that if you, Mr. Speaker, cannot see your way to accepting what I propose today, we may have a proper, full-scale debate on this urgent matter at a future time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the increase of IRA terrorism in Ulster and the massacre in Enniskillen yesterday."

I have listened with great concern to what the hon. Gentleman had to say and, indeed, to Question Time, which has now continued for well over an hour. As the hon. Gentleman — and the House — knows, my only consideration when looking at a Standing Order No. 20 application is to see whether it meets the criteria laid down in the Standing Orders. I regret that I cannot find the matter appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 8845/87 on toy safety be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Document No. 11063/86 (Part 3) on pre-packaged liquids (bottle sizes) be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Orders of the Day

Licensing Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.48 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It happens quite often that the House moves from dramatic business to ordinary business—we have a way of doing that. It is particularly difficult to do so this afternoon because of the tragedy we have just been discussing, and the way in which everyone, including those who have some personal knowledge of Enniskillen and its people, joins in the sadness and anger that have been expressed. However, the people of Northern Ireland have to carry on their ordinary lives today—that is one of the badges of their courage—and we have no option but to do the same.

Over the past 30 years the English pub has become a much more cheerful and welcoming place. I do not suppose that that fact has been recorded anywhere in *Hansard*, but it certainly should be on the record. Here and there we complain about the architecture and the furnishings, or we press for better beer, but the improvements in style, standards of food and friendliness, and the general feel of pubs, are among the most striking social changes in our cities, towns and villages since the war. The pub, with its range of food and soft drinks as well as alcohol, now compares favourably with the average French, Italian or American bar.

There is one considerable oddity. On a normal weekday a pub is compelled to stay shut between 3 pm and 5.30 pm. The central purpose of this relatively modest Bill is to put that right and to open up the forbidden afternoon. Clause 1 will allow licensed premises to open from 11 am to 11 pm, thus removing the present restriction on afternoon opening from public houses, hotels, wine bars and other licensed premises as well as registered clubs. There is, of course, no requirement to open for longer hours; the provision really removes the obligation to close.

I cannot think that anyone settling down to devise a system for regulating the consumption of alcohol would light upon our present law as a sensible way of doing so. It is worth looking for a moment at the origin of the law. Through the 18th and 19th centuries there were various attempts to control drinking hours, but they were almost entirely directed at keeping drinking places closed on Sundays. The substantial legislation of 1872 and 1874 left it possible for a public house to remain open on weekdays for up to 19½ hours. The position changed dramatically as a result of the growth of the temperance movement, its links with the Liberal party and, above all, the conclusion reached during the great war that too much drinking was harming the production of munitions and was thus a threat to national security, especially near war establishments and naval ports. The forbidden afternoon which we are now proposing to abolish was established for that wartime purpose in 1915.

Much has changed since then. I cannot see why it is acceptable to drink at lunchtime, wicked to drink in the afternoon and acceptable to drink again in the evening. We must remember that most drinking nowadays does not take place in public houses. Scottish evidence suggests that less than one third of drinking takes place in pubs. It is perfectly possible for someone to walk into a supermarket and load himself up with liquor to be consumed at any hour that he wishes. I would guess—though it can only be a guess—that someone is, on the whole, more likely to drink himself into a state of violence or ill-health or misery or nuisance to others if he drinks outside a pub than if he drinks sociably in one. Let me make it clear that it is no part of the Government's case that alcohol abuse does not exist or that it is not serious.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): As a result of what the Home Secretary calls this modest measure, does he expect alcohol consumption to increase or decrease?

Mr. Hurd: The Scottish evidence on that point shows that the extension of opening hours does not add to the dangers of misuse. I shall come to that in a moment. The hon. Gentleman has fired his shot a little too early.

As any Home Secretary must know, alcohol abuse is a serious and continuing threat to the individual and to society. I shall shortly examine what we are doing about it. If I felt that by opening up the afternoon in the way that we propose we were increasing the dangers of alcohol abuse, I would not move the Second Reading of the Bill and we would not have put it in our manifesto. The evidence does not support such a fear. Let us look at the position in Scotland where afternoon pub opening is not, in effect, forbidden.

Since the Scottish Act of 1976 came into force there has been widespread use of extensions to allow licensed premises to open during the afternoon. Incidentally, this gives some indication of the demand from the public.

I now come to the matter raised by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). Total consumption of alcohol by men in Scotland determined by surveys by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys did not differ significantly before and after the 1976 Act, although the average time spent drinking increased by over an hour. There was a significant increase in the consumption of alcohol by women who drank for an average of one and a half hours longer. However, in view of the figures for men, the OPCS concluded that this seems more likely to be due to changes in attitudes towards women drinking and is unlikely to be a consequence of the changed law. It is also worth noting that only 18 per cent. of women did most of their drinking in public houses.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): There has been much correspondence about the increased consumption of alcohol by women following the relaxation of the licensing laws in Scotland. It would help the House a great deal if my right hon. Friend would tell us whether there is any evidence about what has happened during the same period in England and Wales.

Mr. Hurd: I do not have that figure, but I shall ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to supply it if he can when he replies to the debate. As I have said, there is no reason to suppose that the clear increase in Scotland in the total consumption of alcohol by women is related to the change in the licensing laws—especially when one considers, as I have said, that less than one fifth of Scottish women do most of their drinking in public houses.

Figures for drunkenness offences in Scotland show little change, either in the number of offences recorded or the

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charges proved, before and after the passage of the Scottish Act. The statistics for drunk-driving offences do not provide any evidence that flexible licensing hours have had any significant effect. Because of changes in recording and procedures, the figures are not easy to interpret. Police procedures have changed during this time. If anything, there appears to be little change in the trend in Scotland and an increase during the same period in England and Wales.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): The Minister mentioned two matters. He said that no danger had resulted from the change in Scotland and that there has been no difference in convictions for drunken driving. How does he explain the fact that the peak for drunk driving in Scotland occurs in the late afternoon which is not the case in England and Wales?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures before and after the change in the licensing hours, he will see that he will be unable to show that there is any relationship between the incidence of drunk driving in Scotland and the change in the licensing law. As I have said, he will find that, although the trend in England and Wales was upwards in this period, there has been little change in the trend in Scotland.

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): My right hon. Friend will be aware that some road safety organisations are worried that the Bill may increase the amount of drinking and driving. He will also be aware that they consider that as a quid pro quo there should be a clear Government statement allowing random breath testing. Could he touch on that?

Mr. Hurd: I shall cover that aspect later. I was speaking about the evidence from Scotland. It is true that alcohol-related health problems have for a long time been higher in Scotland than in England and Wales, but the proportionate increase since the Scottish Act was passed in 1976 has been smaller in Scotland than in England and Wales. A study by Edinburgh university looked at all these figures. The study was published in the *British Medical Jounal* in 1986 and concluded:

> "in relation to health, the new Scottish licensing arrangements can be viewed neither as a source of harm nor as a source of benefit. They have in effect been neutral".

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): No improvement.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend is correct; there has been no improvement. I do not claim that the change in the licensing laws in Scotland secured an improvement. Equally, there is no evidence to show that they brought about a deterioration. Our conclusions from the Scottish evidence is that there is a demand for pubs to be able to open in the afternoon and there is no evidence to show that if they do so there will be a harmful effect on society or that it will, in itself, lead to further misuse of alcohol.

It seems that, although people may drink over a slightly longer period, they do so in a more leisurely manner without increasing their total consumption. I fully recognise, of course, that there are dangers in making too close a comparison of different parts of the kingdom. We are not saying that the changes in Scotland have led us to introduce changes in England and Wales, but rather that the evidence from Scotland has not produced findings that suggest we should not make the changes contemplated in this Bill.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I share the view of the Home Secretary that the Scottish evidence is wholly inconclusive. Why did the Home Office statement of 30 October assert that the Scottish experience demonstrates that there would be no change in drinking habits, just a more leisurely approach to drinking?

Mr. Hurd: I have been through the evidence. I am not claiming that and nor did the statement to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. There are no inconsistencies. I am not claiming, and nor does the statement, that the Scottish experience suggests that there has been an improvement. I am saying, as did the statement, that the effect is neutral. There is no evidence from Scotland which would lead anyone to argue against the change proposed in the Bill.

It was no doubt with these thoughts in mind that the British Medical Association wrote to us on 15 October, concluding:

> "While opposed to any action which might lead to a significant increase in alcohol consumption in this country, the Association accepts the modest changes proposed in the Home Office Consultation Document, including those designed to bring opening hours for on-licensed premises more into line with those of off-licensed outlets."

A little earlier, the Royal College of General Practitioners wrote to us with the following conclusion:

> "The College believes that a liberalisation in drinking hours should be supported with the aim of reducing the image of the bar as a place to drink, to get drunk and quickly. We believe that such liberalisation would encourage the image of alcohol being incidental for the consumption of snacks and meals and also as an incidental in places where coffee, tea and soft drinks are also sold."

Those are the reactions of two substantial medical groups to our proposals. There have been other reactions, but I am simply trying to nail any suggestion that medical opinion is united against the Bill. Two prestigious and substantial organisations have written to the Home Office, rather unusually, in substantial support of our proposals.

Dr. Moonie *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman and I do not intend to do so again. He has already shot his bolt. That is his concern.

Clause 2 is a safety net provision.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): My right hon. Friend has made an eloquent case for greater flexibility of opening hours on weekdays, but, before he finishes dealing with clause 1, will he explain why he has not made the same decision in regard to opening hours on Sundays?

Mr. Hurd: I know my hon. Friend's views on this matter. I shall give what I hope he will not regard as too crude an answer. I want to get this Bill through. I do not want to overload it with a new argument which I know, from scars that I carry, arouses serious and emotional division on both sides of the House. That is a frank answer.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend realise that being timid in this matter has not significantly lessened opposition to the principles of the Bill? This is an important point for many rural areas involved in the tourist trade. Does my right hon. Friend recognise the need for more flexible licensing, as in Scotland, to cater for the circumstances of particular areas?

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend and others support the Bill in sufficient numbers, no doubt this is a point which he will wish to raise in Committee, but I must quarrel—

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman when I have answered my hon. Friend's question. I do not agree with the analysis of my hon. Friend. The provisions in this Bill have been substantially welcomed. Since we published our proposals, the opposition to them has been considerably more muted than I had expected and I believe that that illustrates the basic good sense of what we propose.

Mr. Hattersley: Can we get this absolutely and categorically clear? Is the Home Secretary saying that if the Bill receives a Second Reading there will be an opportunity for it to be amended in Committee to allow Sunday opening? Is the answer to that question yes or no?

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman has made an entirely bogus point. If the Bill gets a Second Reading the right hon. Gentleman will, of course, be able to move such an amendment should he wish and so will any other member of the Committee. That is so.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that he would vote against an attempt to extend the Bill to Sundays?

Mr. Hurd: I am not. I am simply stating facts.

I made it clear in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) why I do not believe it would be sensible to overload the Bill. However, my hon. Friend is perfectly entitled to make his point in Committee, should he wish.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hurd: May I move on a little?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: If such a misguided amendment were brought forward to try to include Sundays in the Bill, may we have an assurance from my right hon. Friend that he would not back such a move?

Mr. Hurd: I have already stated why I believe that it would be a mistake to overload the Bill by including such a provision. I am glad that I gave way to my hon. Friend because I believe that she supplied the necessary counterbalance to the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). I have given three answers to this question and I wish to move on.

Clause 2 is a safety net, which we hope will be unnecessary. However, in case the relaxation of licensing hours in the afternoon gives rise to unforeseen problems of annoyance, disturbance or disorderly conduct, we have made provision for restriction orders whereby the licensing justice, or the magistrates' court in the case of registered clubs, can reimpose closure for all or part of the afternoon break.

I do not believe that the House would want me to describe at length the other, mainly streamlining, procedural provisions of the Bill. They are designed to ease unnecessary burdens on the courts and licensees and remove some of the anomalies that have come to light in the existing legislation.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): If the Home Secretary does not intend to deal in detail with the various points, will he say something about clause 10? It appears that those who traditionally have a right to object to a licence will now face the possibility of being saddled with court costs. Surely that greatly undermines a person's freedom to object — a freedom which exists in every other area including planning procedures. Would my right hon. Friend be willing to reconsider this matter in Committee, because it means that individuals are deprived or are put at risk if they put forward what they regard as a valid objection?

Mr. Hurd: I believe that it is a reasonable proposal, but I note what my hon. Friend has said. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary may wish to deal with that in greater detail when he replies, but if my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) is a member of the Committee he may wish to bring that matter forward.

I should like to return to the question of alcohol abuse because I believe that part of the early opposition to the Bill—as I have said, the opposition has been less fierce than I expected—came from a feeling that we were not sufficiently alert to this evil. I hope that we have shown otherwise. The House will have welcomed the decision of the Prime Minister to ask my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal to chair a new ministerial group on alcohol misuse. Perhaps I should make it clear to the House that it is a standing group and it is not its intention, as has been suggested, to work towards the production of a single report.

The group had its first meeting recently. Its aims are, as the published terms of reference made clear, to pull together the activities already undertaken by Government, by the drinks industry, by voluntary and other bodies as part of a general strategy for combating the misuse of alcohol. The group will look at priorities in the allocation of resources, it will be open to new ideas for remedying misuse and will seek to arrange for the better coordination of policy.

Young people have already been identified by the group as a priority. Indeed before the formation of the ministerial group, a working party was set up under the chairmanship of Baroness Masham to examine the part that alcohol plays in the commission of crime by young people and the problem of under-age drinking. The working party will present its report soon to the standing conference on crime prevention, which meets under the auspices of the Home Office. Obviously we in the Home Office will examine the report from the crime prevention angle and the Lord Privy Seal's group will, as part of its new remit, consider at its next meeting the working party's recommendations.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Does the Home Secretary accept that the evidence relating to crime and other aspects in the Bill is not inconclusive, but rather contradictory? Does he therefore agree that tonight would be an ideal opportunity to put his weight behind a move to suggest that the Bill be considered by a Special Standing Committee for a period of one or two months before going on to Committee?

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): A Select Committee?

Mr. Allen: No, a Special Standing Committee. That Committee would ensure that all the evidence could be considered before the Bill reached Committee.

Mr. Hurd: We have opened up this subject for wide consultation. I have already said that it was contained in the election manifesto. Indeed, I believe that, in August, we published an outline of our proposals. There has been a long time for discussion and examination of the proposals by interested groups. Indeed, those groups, as one would expect and hope, have come forward with their proposals. Although this is not a matter for me but for the House, I would not wish to press that such a procedure as a Special Standing Committee was necessary on this occasion.

A great deal of welcome activity on alcohol abuse is undertaken by probation services, the voluntary sector and other organisations. For example, I recently visited an interesting project in Coventry where, since February, a team led by the chamber of commerce and including representatives from the city council, the licensed trade and the police have been looking closely at the problems caused by irresponsible drinking in the city centre. The team has proposed a number of measures which it is hoped will go a good way to reducing those problems.

Misuse takes many damaging forms, but I suppose that drunk driving comes to public attention most often. As regards the Bill, the figures from Scotland for pedestrian casualties, child casualties, and pedal cyclist casualties during peak times all show that the proportion involved in drink-driving accidents decreased between 1975 and 1985, which covers the time when restrictions on the licensing hours in Scotland were relaxed. There is, thus, no evidence to link extended licensing hours with an increase in drunken driving or in road casualties. However, I accept that the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) went wider than that.

On the general problem of drink-driving, the Government and police forces are taking effective action. The police carried out 300,000 breath tests last year, and the Government's publicity campaign to persuade everybody that drinking and driving do not mix continues. Police powers are important as my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham has said and we have considered carefully the calls for random breath testing. In fact, existing police powers are more substantial than is usually recognised. It is not always known—indeed, I am not sure that the Opposition have hauled this on board—that the police may use their general power under section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 to stop any vehicle at random to decide whether there are grounds for requiring a breath test under section 7 of the Act.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): We are aware of that.

Mr. Hurd: Well, sometimes the Opposition carry on and make public statements as if they were not aware that the police already have substantial powers.

Section 7 requires reasonable grounds, before testing, to suspect that the motorist has alcohol in his body or has committed a moving traffic offence or has been involved in an accident. Thus, the law as it stands permits random stopping though not random testing. In practice the police are content with this and the Association of Chief Police Officers stated that it sees no need for wider powers. However, the door is not closed on our search for better ways of tackling this problem.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Home Secretary agree that the case in the House of Lords the other day—I forget the name—that has called into question the use of intoximeters may well cause some difficulties for the police force? Would he care to reconsider that matter and rectify the decision in that case?

Mr. Hurd: It is partly with a recollection of that decision — the hon. Gentleman is shrewd to draw attention to it—that I said that the search for effective ways of dealing with the problem must go on. The doors cannot be closed.

To conclude, I believe that this is a common sense Bill designed to remove an absurdity that has come into our law as a result of history rather than logic——

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I shall not give way, because I am coming to a conclusion and I have given way a great deal.

The British Tourist Authority has estimated that the relaxation of hours provided by the Bill will provide an additional 50,000 jobs, mainly part-time and in catering. I cannot vouch for that figure, but I do not doubt that there will be significant additional employment. This is not a Bill to please foreign tourists, although there is nothing wrong with doing that. Let us remember that most of the tourists in our country are British. Let us concentrate by all means on real ways of dealing with the dangers and miseries of alcohol abuse. Meanwhile, let us remove the irritation and absurdity of the forbidden afternoon from our statute book.

5.15 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The Labour party is to have a free vote on the Bill, so I can do no more and no better than to offer the House my own judgment rather than my party's opinions and policies. It is not an altogether unique experience for me and I know that advantages and penalties are involved in that course. The advantages allow me to say things about policy that I dare not and would not say were the imprimatur of Walworth road to be stamped upon them.

To begin with, the Home Secretary told us about the improved conditions in public houses in the United Kingdom. I do not now when he was last in an inner-city public house and what his experience of inner-city public houses is this year compared with 1975 or 1965, but were he ever to take a Sunday morning pint outside Oxfordshire his judgment about the conditions in British public houses might be significantly different.

Secondly, the right hon. Gentleman talked about history. I confess that my preparations for the debate were enormously interrupted by reading Morley's "The Life of Gladstone" and the Gladstone diaries for the period of the first licensing Bill. I shall give only two quotations from what I learnt. First, Mr. Gladstone did not regard the subject of licensing hours as appropriate for debate between gentlemen, which at least allows me, if not the Home Secretary, to continue. Secondly, after his defeat in the 1870s, he remarked that the Tory party was invariably washed to power on a sea of gin and beer.

Perhaps more important than that was what the Home Secretary said about Sunday. With the freedom of the free vote that is to follow, I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that I am a great deal more relaxed than some hon. Members about Sunday opening. I am also a great deal more relaxed about Sunday trading, which I may have the opportunity to debate as the year goes on.

There is no doubt from what the right hon. Gentleman has said — he should not deceive the House; not by intention, but by some other means — that if the Bill is given its Second Reading, it will pave the way for Sunday opening. Hon. Members will take their own view on whether that is desirable or undesirable, but, judging by what the Home Secretary said, there is no doubt that that is what is prepared for in the Bill.

Mr. Crowther: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a considerable distinction to be drawn between the matter covered by the Bill, which is essentially a leisure activity, and ordinary retail trading, which clearly is not? Is it not illogical to exclude from leisure activities the one afternoon on which most people have the most leisure?

Mr. Hattersley: I have considerable sympathy for what my hon. Friend says. I hedged it about in terms that I hoped would not be revealed until my hon. Friend asked that question, but I have that sympathy. Irrespective of my personal position, hon. Members should not vote for the Bill under any misapprehension. If the Bill is given a Second Reading, there will be pressure for Sunday opening and, sooner or later, that pressure will be irresistible. However, that is not the central issue of the debate, although it was inevitably raised by the Home Secretary. The central issues are whether we want more drinking, whether we want what I regard as the inevitability of extra drinking and whether there are penalties to be paid for that.

We should understand that the debate will be dominated by speakers who are, as the Under-Secretary of State described them on 30 October, "responsible drinkers". Most speakers will be in that category. In the context of the debate, I believe that "responsible drinker" is a most dangerous animal, for the responsible drinker — I flatter myself by saying that I am among that number — is far too often incapable of facing and understanding the real dangers of alcohol abuse and over-consumption. Were some of those who will speak in the debate offered cannabis, they would be frightened as well as offended, but, were they offered alcohol, they would take it as the normal round of social intercourse. There has never been a candidate for judicial office, either in the United States of America or in Great Britain, who has withdrawn his nomination because, as an undergraduate, he experimented with alcohol. In Great Britain, alcohol is the acceptable addiction of the middle classes and most of us in the House — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] —

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware, in the context of what he has just said, that there is an organisation in the House called the all-party clubs group, which represents working men's clubs, with some 6 million members, a large part of whose enjoyment derives from consuming alcohol in the privacy of their clubs?

Mr. Hattersley: Of course. Nothing that I have said in any way undervalues or contradicts that. I am saying that most hon. Members who speak for liberties and freedom will represent the acceptable addiction of the middle classes. If the hon. Gentleman wants to qualify that to refer instead to the acceptable addiction of the whole British population, I shall not argue with him. I say simply that we should debate licensing laws in the knowledge that most of us, by our upbringing and cultural background, are prejudiced in favour of alcohol in a way that makes us less than wholly unbiased on the subject.

Notwithstanding that, I make no apology for, or qualification about, my support for the general principle of more liberal licensing laws. I support that principle because I am opposed to the intrusion of the state into the private lives of its citizens, except when it is absolutely necessary in order to support and protect the welfare of society as a whole. However, we cannot support extensions of freedom for one group that imperil the interests — indeed the lives, in some particulars — of another group.

That is why the Home Secretary supports, in defiance and contradiction of the libertarian bodies, stop-and-search powers, tougher gun laws and the prohibition of knife sales. It is why the Prime Minister argues with the libertarian lobby which wants fewer police powers by saying that there is a freedom to be protected against burglary, mugging and assault.

The right to be defended against the penalties of extended freedoms offered to a single and specific group must be applied to the provisions of the Bill. The problem with the Bill is that it provides extra opportunities for drinking among a limited group of people. I support those opportunities, but the Bill provides none of the safeguards that should accompany those extra opportunities and protect the interests of society. The necessary safeguards concern far more fundamental matters than disorderly conduct in an individual public house, with the disadvantage and detriment to the neighbourhood, which are dealt with in clause 2.

We need safeguards that are intended to reduce the amount of alcohol-related crime. We need safeguards to reduce the amount of drunken driving. Above all, we need safeguards to ensure that afternoon drinking does not produce an even greater problem of alcohol addiction among teenagers and the very young.

The need for some safeguard is not in dispute. The facts of alcohol abuse demonstrate the need. For example, 45 per cent. of all violent crime in Great Britain is alcohol related — that is 50 per cent. of murders and 25 per cent. of child abuse cases. Each year there are between 1,400 and 1,500 road deaths caused by some form of alcohol abuse, and between 8 million and 14 million working days each year are lost through absenteeism caused by drunkenness.

The most important and terrifying figures are those revealed by the Health Education Authority survey which revealed a terrifying increase in drinking, not only among teenagers but among children. Thirty per cent. of the children aged between 11 and 12 who answered the questionnaire said that they had had some experience of alcohol during the previous seven days. That figure demonstrates the need for the most important safeguard if there is to be an extension of licensing hours. With juvenile drinking such a growing problem in society, it seems absurd that so much money and television time should be spent on advertising alcohol and promoting its sale. I can only support a relaxation of licensing hours

[Mr. Hattersley]

—although I support the general principle—if there are much more stringent controls over television advertising than the IBA is now able to manage and organise.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): My right hon. Friend is right to emphasise the increase in drinking among children and women, but there is evidence that this is not related to pubs and to pub opening hours and that we should be examining the huge number of supermarket and off-licence outlets.

Mr. Hattersley: I support my hon. Friend's view. If the Government brought in a Bill to relax the sale of alcohol in supermarkets and chain stores, I should have reservations about that, too, if it were not accompanied by a crackdown on television advertising which pretends that the nature of the good life—of social and economic success—depends on regular drinking. We have to debate what is before us and we are debating the relaxation of licensing hours without any of the safeguards which I consider would make such a relaxation possible.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree, however, that he is wrong to claim that there are no safeguards in the Bill? Clause 2(2) gives just the safeguard that he wishes to see. If, as a result of afternoon drinking through the extended hours to which he referred, there is a nuisance or disorder, redress is given to apply for a restriction order which would close that pub for all or part of that afternoon period for up to 12 months.

Mr. Hattersley: I have been a neighbour of the hon. Gentleman for nearly 10 years and I should have known better than to give way to him. I dealt specifically with that point 10 minutes ago. I shall now explain it slowly for the hon. Gentleman. If a pub opens and causes nuisance to its neighbours, the licensing justices can take action against it. That is an admirable safeguard for neighbours. If that pub is full of teenagers drinking silently but to excess every afternoon, the licensing justices can do nothing whatsoever. I am more concerned about teenagers drinking silently to excess, than about the annoyance to the families on either side of a public house.

I shall now pursue the real argument, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will do his best to follow. For drunken driving, juvenile drinking, and the cost to the Health Service and to the economy of alcohol abuse over the past five years, the Government have offered nothing but platitudes and promises.

That is why, before I examine the safeguards that should be put in place, I wish to ask the Home Secretary about his timing and tactics. I hope that the Under-Secretary will answer my simple questions when he replies. Why are the Government in such a hurry and why do they support their case with such dubious arguments? Two months ago, the Wakeham committee was set up with the widest possible terms of reference. Its duty was

> "to review and develop the Government's strategy for combating the misuse of alcohol."

I was told by the office of the Leader of the House that there is a chance that the first of the Wakeham committee's casual reports will be made some time in the new year. It is extraordinary—indeed, it is irresponsible—that we should have the Bill to extend licensing hours first and the report into alcohol abuse later. Will the Under-Secretary of State explain the timing to us?

Another question on timing relates to the activities of the Under-Secretary of State for Transport. No one can complain that he does not report frequently. He seems to report all the time—usually on television and radio—and his reports make the flesh creep in a variety of ways. Sometimes he draws attention to accident statistics. Sometimes he suggests bizarre penalties, such as making publicans responsible in law for damage caused by drivers whom they have served with alcohol. All that he does is tell us about the terrible road safety problems caused by alcohol, that something must be done about it and that he will do things of which he has not yet conceived. But all that the Government do is extend the licensing hours without implementing, or considering or recommending the implementation, of any of the things which the Under-Secretary of State for Transport constantly tells us must be done. Why do the Government wish to alter the licensing laws before they have received reports on the problem of alcohol abuse?

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): The right hon. Gentleman has accused the Government of acting in haste, but it is about 15 years since the Auld committee reported. That report has been gathering dust on the shelf ever since. It is 10 years since the Clayson reforms were implemented in Scotland. We must have had enough time to study the position.

Mr. Hattersley: During that period, alcohol abuse, alcohol-related crime and juvenile addiction have increased. All the problems have intensified. The Erroll committee offered a much more comprehensive answer to the problems than a simple manipulation of the licensing laws. Indeed, the Erroll committee convinced at least one right hon. Member that there should be a comprehensive examination of alcohol abuse and the licensing laws, which is the proposition that I make today. That right hon. Member was the former Secretary of State for Social Services, who is now Secretary of State for Employment. Had there been such a comprehensive examination, many Opposition Members would have been much more sympathetic to the Home Secretary's proposals.

Mr. Allen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this would be an ideal Bill to refer to a Special Standing Committee so that we could hear evidence from expert witnesses for a few weeks or months? Will he support me and my colleagues when we move that such a procedure be adopted?

Mr. Hattersley: It would be the ideal procedure, and I wish that I had thought of it. This is a proper Bill for a free vote of hon. Members. If it is a matter for individual judgment, it is ideal for the type of investigation which my hon. Friend described. There is general agreement that the Home Secretary's consultation period was woefully short. But the Government will vote against my hon. Friend's proposal because, as I understand from my conversation with the brewers a fortnight ago, they have been promised that the Bill will be law soon after Christmas. I doubt whether the Home Secretary would agree to such a procedure, but the Under-Secretary of State can tell me later whether I am wrong.

The Government have used strange arguments to justify the Bill. The main argument on which they rest their case is that the relaxation of licensing hours will not result in an increased consumption of alcohol. On 30 October, the Under-Secretary of State, in his exuberance, speaking for the entire British population and interpreting the national psychology in a single sentence, said:

> "People will exercise the freedom that this Bill will bring not by drinking more but by adopting a more leisurely approach to drinking."

Mr. Anderson: My right hon. Friend will recall that in their 1981 policy statement, entitled "Drinking Sensibly", the Government concluded:

> "Available evidence suggests that licensing restrictions may have a broad influence on both the level of average consumption per head of alcohol and the influence of alcohol-related harm."

Nothing that the Home Secretary said today suggests anything to the contrary. Would it not be appropriate for the Government to provide us with the evidence on which they changed their mind?

Mr. Hattersley: The main change is that the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) arrived at the Home Office and, with that natural exuberance, announced his judgment on the conduct and character of the entire British people. Today the Home Secretary was much more cautious; he said that there was no evidence either way. The Under-Secretary of State was given the onerous and unpleasant task of announcing the Government's certain view——

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I will not.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Is the right hon. Gentleman frightened to give way?

Mr. Hattersley: The Minister is right: I am terrified out of my wits by the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale).

If there will be no increase in the consumption of alcohol, why are the brewers so keen that the Bill should be passed? What is more, if there is no increase in the consumption of alcohol, how will the brewers finance the extra 25,000 jobs which they say will be the product of the Bill? The claim that there will be no extra drinking is wholly implausible. To their credit, the brewers make no such categorical suggestion. They say that there will be no additional alcohol abuse, which is open to some argument. The Government, in the form of the Under-Secretary of State, say that there will be no extra drinking. As I understand it, the Government base their claim on the Scottish experience following relaxation in 1976.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: Not for the moment. I have given way a great deal. Hon. Members will wish to make their own speeches, and I must bring mine to a speedy end.

The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys considered the Scottish experience, and its conclusions were quoted by the Home Secretary. He said:

> "There is no evidence that the 1976 Act has caused an increase in alcohol consumption." — [*Official Report*, 4 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. *102*.]

That must mean that the conclusions to be drawn from the operation of the 1976 Act are neutral. The Home Secretary has no reason to assume, demonstrate or argue that that Act proves that a change in licensing laws will not increase consumption. He can conclude only that no evidence in either direction is available from the operation of that Act.

Those who support the Bill with less discrimination than the Home Secretary showed today have chosen to take the evidence of what happened in Scotland to suggest that a relaxation of the law will certainly not increase drinking and might reduce its overall incidence.

Mr. Gale: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Favell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I will not give way.

Such a conclusion from the Scottish experience is justified only by a misuse of the available statistics. The available statistics from Scotland prove, first, that alcohol consumption among women has increased. I ask the Secretary of State—yes or no?

Mr. Hurd: Less than one fifth in pubs.

Mr. Hattersley: In other words, it has increased. Secondly, the statistics prove that alcohol consumption among men in general has not reduced but has remained steady, largely because the consumption among the unemployed has fallen as unemployment has increased and the purchasing power of the unemployed has fallen.

The statistics also prove a third point and, if the Home Secretary wants to contradict me, as he did a moment ago, I will gladly give way to him. Thirdly, convictions for drunkenness in Scotland have fallen largely because of changes in prosecution practice following the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 rather than changes in drinking habits. Whatever else one may say about the Scottish evidence, none of it is strong enough to justify any additional extension of the licensing laws in Scotland or anywhere else.

Mr. Gale: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No.

The reasonable conclusion of the experience from this country and others must be that extra drinking hours mean extra drinking, particularly among vulnerable groups. I make no apology for bringing to mind at once the unemployed teenagers in my constituency who have nowhere to go, nothing to do and little hope. If the Bill becomes law, we will find that the public houses of Sparkbrook, not at all the welcome hostelries that the Home Secretary tried to describe 40 minutes ago, will be open to them during their long and desperate afternoons.

We ought not to comfort ourselves, as I fear the Home Secretary tried to do, with the pretence that the longer hours allowed under clause 1 will not become universal. The brewers are changing the clause in their contracts with tenants that requires those tenants to be open at all permissible hours, but that clause is likely to remain in the contracts of licensed managers and, more important, the pressure on public houses from brewers, users and every sort of group able to exert pressure is likely to mean that every public house will open for the full 12 hours. It only needs a public house around the corner to open for managers, licensees or tenants to know that if they do not open, they will lose business that they cannot afford to lose.

I suppose the Home Secretary has read the explicit and precise evidence of Clayson that, whenever there is a

[Mr. Hattersley]

permissible increase in opening hours, that permission becomes the universally applied rule. I have no doubt that that will happen here.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I really must continue and I hope that my hon. Friend and hon. Gentlemen will forgive me.

The conclusion that it is a virtual certainty that there will be additional drinking leads some of those who are most concerned with alcohol abuse—for example, the campaign Alcohol Concern—to insist that restrictions on opening hours are necessary and should be a permanent safeguard. That is not my view. Safeguards other than restrictions in opening hours would be far more effective and far more acceptable in a free society.

I should like to see longer opening hours and more effective safeguards of a different sort. Were those more effective safeguards in place, I would vote for the relaxation in opening hours that the Home Secretary has proposed. For example, I think that we need a general and widespread use of the random breath test. We understand perfectly well section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. It is a question not of the stopping of drivers but of the certainty of the testing of drivers. The Home Secretary knows as well as I do that the most dangerous driver is the man who says, "I may be above the limit but because I can hold my liquor, I will not commit a traffic offence and therefore I will not be breathalysed." That driver has to be convinced that, even if he believes, rightly or wrongly, that he can hold his liquor, if he drives while over the alcohol limit he may be stopped at random and be breathalysed. That will be the greatest inhibition on over-limit drinking that it is possible to imagine. Were that provision general within the United Kingdom, that would substantially cut road deaths.

We need a more effective programme of education about the problems associated with alcohol and we need far fewer advertisements pretending that alcohol is inevitably and irrevocably associated with economic and social success. We need the brewers to commit themselves to a real campaign, not simply to keep under-age drinkers out of public houses, but to reduce the drinking of alcohol by teenagers in general. Perhaps we should make low-alcohol or alcohol-free drinks a compulsory feature of every public house so that it is possible for teenagers to go into public houses to socialise without being forced to booze.

Most important, we need a drive by the Government, that the Opposition would gladly support, to try to explain to the population that alcohol, whether used moderately or not, is not the pattern and model of the good life, that it carries with it severe penalties and that nobody should use it without being conscious of those penalties.

Were those safeguards on offer and were they firm, definite and certain, I should gladly vote for the Bill, for my instincts are against extended controls over licensing hours. As I half hinted earlier, I would vote for more extensive relaxations of opening hours, but, as the Government choose to relax licensing laws without providing any of the alternative and, in my view, necessary and much more effective safeguards, I shall vote against the Bill, and I urge other hon. Members to do the same.

5.48 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): This modest measure can be properly judged only against the changes, for good or for ill, that have taken place since the Licensing Act 1961.

My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is inclined to speak as if licensing restrictions have remained unaltered since the first world war. That is not so. The Bill is not the beginning of liberalisation of permitted hours, but a continuation of a process of weakening control. The 1961 Act was hailed as a measure that would set the people free. I know—I was here at the time. The Government spokesman who wound up the Third Reading debate became quite lyrical. He ended with a quotation:

> "Now is the time to drink. Now is the time to stamp the floor with the feet of freedom".

It seemed quite right at the time to take that view, because the Ministry of Health was claiming that alcohol abuse was not a problem. Indeed, at that time we had a national reputation for sobriety. The question is: what has happened since 1961? It can be answered quite simply. We have seen a doubling of alcohol consumption and with it more than a doubling of alcohol-related harm. The situation deteriorated so rapidly that in 1972 Sir Keith Joseph, who was then the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, invited me to become chairman of the National Council for Alcoholism, because in his view alcohol abuse had already become a major problem. He told me that if I agreed to do the job he would find the resources. I accepted the challenge, and successive Governments kept faith with me by finding increased resources, at least until the late 1970s. Those of us who have worked in this area know that in Britain, as elsewhere in the world, increased consumption means increased harm. The clarion call in 1961 may have been, "Now is the time to drink," but it has led to an appalling state of affairs.

Consider the facts. For the first time in this century, 16-year-old boys are more likely than middle-aged men to be convicted of offences of drunkenness. Under-age drunkenness has increased ninefold. In 1965, under-21s accounted for one in 12 of all drunkenness offences, and by 1985 they accounted for one in four. Goodness knows what the figure is now.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir Bernard Braine: No, I shall not give way to my hon. Friend. If he has the opportunity to speak in this debate, I hope that he will declare his interest in these matters.

The Blennerhassett committee, in reviewing the reasons for the declining effectiveness of drink-drive legislation, pointed to increasing alcohol consumption as a major factor. Alcohol is a contributory factor in one out of three domestic accidents, in four out of every 10 fires, in one in five deaths from drowning and in two thirds of all attempted suicides. Alcohol abuse by a parent is one of the major reasons for children being taken into care. One in three divorce petitions cite excessive drinking as a contributory factor.

The link between alcohol and crime, especially violent crime, as the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) made clear, is indisputable. One in five of our hospital beds is occupied by a patient with an alcohol-related disease. It is clear that that fact was in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services when, at the Conservative party conference at Blackpool, he referred to the enormous saving of Health Service resources that would be achieved if the problem of alcohol abuse were to be brought under control.

According to the royal medical colleges, alcohol is responsible for thousands of premature deaths each year and is the third largest killer after cancer and heart disease. We do not hear the Department of Health and Social Security saying now that there is less alcohol abuse in England and Wales than there was in the restrictive 1950s.

Contrary to the claim advanced constantly by the drink industry, alcohol problems are by no means restricted to a small minority of alcoholics. The levels of consumption that are known to cause medical and social damage are substantially lower than those required to produce alcoholism. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) was responsible for the nation's health — my right hon. Friend is now the Secretary of State for Employment—he said:

> "The problems of alcohol abuse are not those of a small minority. We are not concerned solely with those whose lives have been totally destroyed by drink . . . or with the problems of liver cirrhosis or alcohol psychosis . . . They are a tiny part of the total problem although they are also useful indications of trends in the overall size of alcohol misuse in our society."

Precisely. I hope that that statement will be accepted as a definitive rebuttal of the myth assiduously cultivated by those with a vested interest in the sale of alcohol that its victims are only a tiny minority.

How do the Government respond to this appalling state of affairs? Do they bring before us a Bill to end the scandal of under-age drinking or to reduce the carnage on the roads by introducing random breath tests? Do they introduce stringent controls on advertising? No, they do none of those things. Instead, they have introduced the modest measure that is now before us, the sole purpose of which is to increase the sale of alcohol.

Those who claim that licensing controls are irrelevant to alcohol abuse, or even counter-productive, should explain why all the indices of alcohol-related harm have increased steeply since the 1961 Act ushered in an era of increasing alcohol availability.

We have been told in the past, and no doubt we shall be told again—there have been some interventions on this issue already—that the Scottish experiment proves that licensing restrictions can be loosened without a harmful effect. In reality, the evidence from Scotland is ambiguous, inconclusive and quite insufficient to give the green light to further liberalisation in England and Wales. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has conceded as much. The idea that Scotland is now largely free of the sort of alcohol-related violence and disorder that previously disfigured it is another myth.

An article that appeared in *The Daily Telegraph* of 26 October stated:

> "Inside a young girl is pinned to the wall by a big angry drunk wielding a long knife. Another girl is grabbed by the throat while a clean-cut, sober-suited young man tries to wrestle her attacker to the ground . . . This is Edinburgh Royal Infirmary's accident and emergency unit—Britain's biggest and busiest and arguably fast becoming the most dangerous and violent.
>
> Said a young registrar, 'You'd be a fool not to expect violence any night of the week here . . . It is no longer a question of whether you will be assaulted on duty but when. A lot of medical students coming here are terrified. They are not taught to cope with the drunkenness and violence . . . Something like 80 per cent. of all the patients we see in here at night have alcohol on board. Fifty to 60 per cent. of those can best be described as legless.'"

That was said by a registrar of a fine hospital in the capital city of Scotland, where no one, we gather, is very sure of what happened as a result of the 1976 Act. The consultant in charge was reported as saying:

> "The genuinely ill are having their treatment compromised by rampaging drunks."

If that is Scotland after the supposed benefits of liberalisation, I shudder to think what it was like before.

England is not to be compared with Scotland. In considering the Bill, it is what we know has happened in England and Wales that matters. The 1961 liberalisation coincided with rising living standards. Both factors worked together to increase consumption, and with this to increase harm. The consequences of further liberalisation in England and Wales must be assessed also against the background painted by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, presenting us with the happy news of increasing real incomes. The drinks trade claims that the Bill will create 50,000 additional jobs—three cheers! — but that in itself must lead inevitably to increased consumption. It is inevitable, too, that that will lead to increased harm.

I must be fair to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and accept that he had to respond to the commitment that was set out in the manifesto to introduce a Bill to liberalise the licensing legislation. I accept also that there may be practical reasons for introducing this measure early in the new Session. I recognise, too, that my right hon. Friend has moved some way towards the amendments that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and I tabled to the Bill that was introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) in the last Parliament. For example, my right hon. Friend has accepted 11 pm as the closing hour, and that is excellent as far as it goes. That was also reflected in the Conservative party's manifesto, which promised that a Conservative Government would

> "keep a sensible limit on late-night opening".

I am pleased about that.

That is something that must not be forgotten by my right hon. Friend, nor by those who seek to become members of the Committee that will consider this measure. I trust that my right hon. Friend will vigorously resist any attempt to introduce a later closing hour. To do otherwise would be to renege on our electoral commitment and go against public opinion. A MORI poll conducted over the past few weeks has shown that 61 per cent. of the population oppose public houses remaining open until midnight, and there is similar opposition to extended hours on Sundays.

I welcome, too, the provision to allow licensing justices or magistrates courts to exercise discretion in granting special hours certificates and to attach limitations to them. This reform is long overdue. The proposals for the administration of licensing committees will, I know, be welcomed by the justices' clerks. However, the Government should reconsider the proposals to award costs. We should take account of the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on this issue. By giving powers to award costs against objectors the Bill does not reflect what the Justices' Clerks Society wanted, and it is likely to deter residents from objecting. That is not sensible, it is not just and the proposal should be changed.

[Sir Bernard Braine]

Nor do I approve of the dismantling of a 70-year-old safeguard, the afternoon break. Without doubt, this break has helped to make British pubs the orderly and pleasant places that many of them are. Many licensees I know want the afternoon break to be retained. They work damned hard, as do their wives, and they deserve this break. Whether they will be allowed to have it if the Bill is enacted, bearing in mind all the pressures that will exist, is another matter. It is ironic that, just when the Government are introducing a Bill to destroy the afternoon break, the New Zealand Ministry of Justice is recommending the introduction of an afternoon break for the first time in that country's history, precisely because it has concluded that the break here has helped to advance sobriety in this country.

Hon. Members will have received a personal communication from the Campaign against Drinking and Driving, a group which represents the innocent victims of alcohol-related road crashes. The campaign's anxieties regarding the Bill's likely effects on road safety — particularly the fear that it will increase the number of alcohol-related road casualties during the afternoon — must be taken seriously. This is, after all, a matter of life and death. Unfortunately, it does not seem to me that the Government are taking it at all seriously, although I look forward to hearing what they have to say.

The consultative document promised that one of the grounds for the imposition of a restriction order on afternoon opening would be public safety. The licensing justices could impose restriction orders if they were convinced that all-day drinking had contributed to increased deaths and injuries on the roads. However, the Bill contains no such provision. Public safety is excluded altogether as a ground for imposing a restriction order. That is wholly unacceptable, and I hope that the Government will look at the matter again in Committee.

Let me now deal with the Bill's gravest omission, the absence of measures to deal with under-age drinking. I cannot understand why a Government who are prepared to tackle the problems of drug abuse with stringent legal measures, and who responded so promptly to the tragedies of Zeebrugge and Hungerford, should appear so unconcerned and so reluctant to make decisions on the problem of under-age drinking. Only last Thursday *The London Evening Standard* carried the headline

"Half our children are regulars at the pub",

and reported the results of a survey by Exeter university based on a sample of 18,000 schoolchildren throughout the country, which revealed that almost half our 14 to 15-year-old boys — and almost as many girls — had visited a pub or bar in the two weeks before the survey was carried out.

Such findings are not new. They merely confirm what the Government already knew in October 1985 when the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys handed a report that it had commissioned to the Department of Health and Social Security. I have to speak as I feel and say what I know. The history of that document is a disgrace. The Government's behaviour remains a complete mystery to me. When I tabled questions about the report in February 1986, I was fobbed off with the reply that it would be published later in the year, and so it was. It was sneaked out a few days before the Christmas recess. The findings confirmed that, for adolescents, the major drug of abuse was not glue, or heroin, or cannabis, but alcohol, and that adolescents suffer many more problems from alcohol than from all the other drugs combined.

The Government have now sat on that report for over two years. It concluded that under-age drinking was rampant and, if not tackled seriously, would be completely out of control by the end of the decade. In spite of that, the Government now bring before the House a major piece of licensing legislation containing no measures to deal with the problem. Indeed, the very extension of hours that the Government seek in the Bill would worsen what has already become an epidemic — and I choose that word carefully.

The Government know that one in five 15-year-olds drinks more than 25 units of alcohol a week, which is well above the maximum regarded as safe for an adult. They know that the law on under-age drinking is not only flouted by young people, but, if their own surveys are correct, that it is ignored by the majority of publicans. More than 1,000 young people die every year as a consequence of alcohol misuse. In 1984, 2 per cent. of resident patients discharged from detoxification centres in the North East London regional health authority area were under 15 years of age, and in some district health authority areas the figure was 5 per cent. That number is increasing.

The Government are very well aware of the situation. Their consultative document, published on 4 August, recognised that action was needed. Indeed, the document clearly implied that the Bill would contain provisions to tackle the problem of under-age drinking. It was no doubt the promise of such action, coupled with the announcement of the inter departmental committee that persuaded the British Medical Association an the Institute of Alcohol Studies to be less hostile to the Bill than they had been to the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood. Last Christmas the Institute of Alcohol Studies called for rigorous enforcement of the law on under-age drinking and urged that the court should no longer need proof that a licensee knowingly sold alcohol to a minor in order to prosecute, a view widely expressed in editorials throughout the country, but the Home Office had already been alerted to the need in 1983 by no less a body than the Justices' Clerks Society. The justices' clerks administer the law and recognise the gravity of the problem. They are the people who know, and who hear the facts in court.

I find one matter extremely puzzling. According to the press, a working party of the standing conference on crime prevention set up by the Home Office to consider the problem of under-age drinking is due to issue its report later this month. I am led to believe that it will recommend tough action, including a ban on drinking in public places by persons under the age of 18, the removal of the word "knowingly" from those sections of the Licensing Act relating to the selling by licensees of alcohol to children and the raising of the age limit for persons to enter licensed premises.

It seems that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be present at a meeting on 24 November at which the report will be discussed. That means that the recommendations must be known to him already. Why, then, are they not reflected in the Bill? Are we to understand that the Government intend to deal with this aspect of the law in Committee, or will they at some time in the future introduce another Bill to deal specifically with under-age drinking? Or are we to assume that the Government intend to ignore the recommendations of their advisory committee? Whichever is the case, it is difficult to see what useful purpose can be served by debating the Bill, let alone passing it, when we are ignorant of the Government's intentions.

I might not have spoken so strongly had I not seen an article dated 22 October in a journal entitled *Publican*, which stated that the proposals of the standing conference on crime prevention would not be entertained by the Home Office. How does the author know? The article states that the Home Office is known to want a smooth passage for the Bill and will not entertain the addition of "anti-alcohol measures or fresh restrictions which might delay its progress."

Is that so? We need to know whether that article truly reflects the view of the Home Office. I read the consultative document and learned of the establishment of the interdepartmental committee, and I warmly wlcome the latter initiative because I know that my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal is a man of firm principle, sincerity and integrity; I expect action from him, and I know that we shall get it. But clearly in this the Government are putting the cart before the horse.

Originally, I took the view that I would not vote against the Bill on Second Reading but would abstain. That was when I had not seen the Bill. I have seen it now and I cannot acquiesce in a measure which is so untimely and which fails to tackle the problem of under-age drinkers. I trusted the Government and thought that they would at least be prepared to grasp the nettle and seek ways and means of reducing alcohol-related harm.

I am sure that my hon. Friends will forgive me if I begin to have a lurking fear that the Government intend to do nothing that might offend the drinks industry. I hope that I am wrong about that. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will assure me that the Government intend to act positively and that further legislation will follow. I hope that my hon. Friend's reply is helpful because, if it is not, the Government cannot count on my support.

I hope too that throughout the debate, both in the House and in Committee, we will all bear in mind the escalating drain on our Health Service, the increasing number of broken homes, the harrowing loss of a child, parent, husband or wife because of the criminal action of a drunken driver, and the blighting of the lives of more and more of our young people. That is what we should consider before we chance our arm with this further increase in drinking hours. I hope that we bear in mind that it is not the public who are clamouring for the Bill, but those who make money out of peddling our No. 1 drug of abuse.

This morning I had a telephone call from a licensee who wished me to make these comments to the House. I venture to suggest that a number of licensees—decent, responsible people—do not want further deterioration. We should bear in mind the fact that, with events already out of control, there is no case for risking further deterioration. We should also remember that the World Health Organisation has urged all member states, including Britain, to reduce their consumption of alcohol by 25 per cent. by 1995, for health reasons. Will this untimely and incomplete Bill really be our country's answer to that sensible and urgent plea?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Clearly, a large number of hon. Members are seeking to take part in the debate. Brief speeches will reduce the number of disappointments.

6.11 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Although the speech of the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) may not have been particularly brief, many hon. Members should pay attention to it. The right hon. Gentleman described the Bill as "modest", but the arguments that he advanced demanded a sense of responsibility which we have not yet seen from the Government. We certainly did not see it from the large number of Conservative candidates in the general election, who gave a remarkably high priority to the liberalisation of licensing laws but much less to issues such as unemployment, which may well have been worthy of a little more attention.

Two or three years ago I would probably have voted in favour of liberalisation, but the experience in my constituency since then and the growing concern about the matters raised by the right hon. Member for Castle Point have convinced me that this measure is not merely "modest", but is extremely harmful. It will give a great deal more power and opportunity to publicans, but even more to the breweries.

I have been concerned about the fact that the major brewery in my area—my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) pointed this out after he declined, not unreasonably, to allow me to intervene—requires its landlords to be open during every permitted hour. On Thursday I asked what steps the Home Secretary was taking to ensure that the flexibility to which the Government claim to be attached is achieved. The Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—replied in a written answer:

> "This is a matter for negotiation between the parties concerned."

Therefore, whether the breweries allowed their tenants or managers to provide the flexibility which the Conservative general election manifesto said would be sought was nothing to do with the Government. The Under-Secretary said:

> "I understand that negotiations are in progress and the parties are hopeful that a satisfactory solution will be found."

I suggest that the Bill should not have been brought before the House until proper arrangements had been made to give that flexibility.

My main reason for speaking is to express my deep concern because of the experience in my constituency over the past two or three years. Two licensed premises enjoyed late night hours until 2 am. When one stopped being open for those hours, the local crime rate fell by nearly 50 per cent. It might be worth the Home Office asking the South Yorkshire police to comment on the effect of extended hours on society in the Rotherham area.

The second of those licensed premises, which is now closed—the name is about to be changed—was called "The Kiss of Life". I reckon that I received up to 30 complaints a week about that public house, to which people repaired after they had done a great deal of drinking at other hostelries. I was pleased—as, I believe, were many hundreds of my constituents—when "The Kiss of Life" ceased to operate. It is about to re-open as a more respectable establishment.

Mr. Favell: I refer the hon. Gentleman to clause 4 which, I hope, will resolve the very problem of public houses that obtain special hours certificates, especially in residential areas. We have all suffered from such problems. The powers given to the licensing justices to deal with these problems have now been greatly enlarged.

Mr. Hardy: There are all sorts of protective arrangements in other clauses. The licensing benches had a certain amount of power before, and I have been disappointed that they have not exercised that power. I do not enthuse when it seems likely that those who appeal to the licensing benches may suffer financial forfeit.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I have a similar problem in my constituency. A number of people, having drunk all day in Scotland over the border, cause a great deal of public disorder while availing themselves of the opportunity to go to a late licensed premises in my constituency.

Mr. Hardy: The problem of the mobility of the inebriated is serious, and the Government will make it worse.

The real reason for my involvement in the debate is the experience of two landlords in Wath upon Dearne, which is where I live and is within my constituency. I know "The Oak Tree Inn" and its landlord. I spent most of my childhood within about 100 yards of that establishment, which is 250 yards from my home. The landlord is on four weeks' notice to vacate his premises because he has not reached the brewery's barrellage target. I wrote to the brewery, John Smiths, which took over the local brewery, Whitworth, Son and Nephew, which I think is now the preserve of an Australian commercial enterprise. John Smiths has given that landlord and the landlord of another public house in Wath upon Dearne four weeks' notice because they have not reached the beer sales target set by the brewery.

I pointed out to the brewery that the population is stable, that disposable household income has fallen and that there are three or four new public houses within the former urban district. I asked the brewery how on earth they expected the landlord to maintain or increase his sales when there was the same population, less money and more public houses. The brewery has not answered that point. It has said that its managers should be able to exercise ingenuity and industriousness. The right hon. Member for Castle Point will recognise the sort of ingenuity and industriousness which landlords could demonstrate.

The brewery thinks of its obligation to its shareholders. It is not concerned about under-age drinking or about encouraging its landlords to refuse to serve a person who has had enough. The brewery is not concerned about the noise and other problems that can arise. It is all very well hon. Members wanting to be flexible, but if they live on or close to a route from public houses where ingenuity and industriousness have caused a social nuisance to develop, they may feel, as many of my constituents feel, that flexibility and freedom must be considered at the same time as responsibility.

Only a few months ago I saw a girl in the middle of Wath upon Dearne completely inebriated at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Only three of four months ago my wife and I went to the police station to bring the police to four teenagers—I doubt whether any was anywhere near the age of 18—who were completely drunk at 3.30 on a Saturday afternoon. One was so drunk that he could not get up and was lying in the middle of the road. That type of scene in my home town would not have existed 20 years ago.

Mr. Couchman *rose*——

Mr. Hardy: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. I have given way twice and I want to finish soon.

We did not see such scenes until relatively recently. As a former schoolmaster and one who is concerned with the health of my constituents, I believe that drunkenness among young people and alcohol abuse among the community generally have reached serious proportions.

It is time that the Government recognised the severity of the situation rather than appearing merely to be the pawns of those who manufacture drink. Decent landlords should be able to remain within the community, but the breweries want landlords who will maximise profit. The Government have an obligation to ensure that breweries' profits take second place to the interests of the community. The present proposals and current practices in the industry certainly do not put the interests of the community uppermost. I am deeply concerned at what is happening in my constituency and I fear that things will become a great deal worse if the Government have their way.

6.20 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I shall return to some of the points made by the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), as eloquent and well informed as ever on these matters, reminded the House that I had the honour to introduce a private Member's Bill last Session. That Bill involved more flexibility in licensing hours than the present Bill. Nevertheless, it had all-party support. It was supported by a number of Labour Members and especially by Sir Clement Freud from the Liberal Bench. It had a Second Reading without a Division and went through its Committee stage. That experience established that there was widespread, if not universal, support in the House for a modest reform of licensing hours in England and Wales.

The House must recognise the absurdity of the present law. A person visiting this part of London in the afternoon and wanting a drink can acquire alcohol without difficulty by going to a restaurant and consuming alcohol with a meal, by buying alcohol in a supermarket or off-licence and consuming it in St. James's park, by taking a train to Brighton and back and consuming alcohol throughout both journeys, or even, perhaps, by persuading his or her Member of Parliament to buy drinks in one of the bars here. The one place where such a person could not consume alcohol would be in the controlled social environment of a public house. To me, that is absurd. Surely the essence of reform is that it is better to allow the consumption of alcohol in a socially and legally controlled environment than to encourage people to buy alcohol from supermarkets and to consume it wherever they like, which is the effect of the present law.

The hon. Member for Wentworth spoke eloquently of the problems of late-night opening. Clause 4 provides new discretionary powers for licensing justices and courts in relation to late-night nuisance. That is an important additional safeguard. The fact that there are serious alcohol-related problems in our society is not in dispute.

The question before the House is whether a measure of this kind would improve the situation, have a deleterious effect or have broadly no effect, given the natural arguments in favour of choice and of measures likely to increase choice.

As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has said, one must be cautious about drawing too dramatic conclusions from the evidence of Scotland. Nevertheless, I congratulate the Labour Government — I hope that some Opposition Members will do so, including the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) whose expertise in these matters is well known—on introducing the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976. I think that it is universally agreed, first, that no one wishes to return to the status quo before that legislation; and, secondly, that it has led to more civilised drinking. Thirdly, it is an unquestioned fact that the police now support the reforms that were implemented.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point referred to the present situation in Scotland. It is no part of my case or of anyone else's to be complacent about the situation in Scotland. Nevertheless, before the 1976 Act, Dr. Clayson himself stated that on every index for studying the misuse of alcohol, the Scots were worse than the English. One may interpret the statistics optimistically, pointing out that between 1981 and 1986, when one would have expected the effect of the 1976 Act to become apparent, figures for cirrhosis fell by 16 per cent. in Scotland but increased by 14 per cent. in England and Wales. The decline in cases of drunkenness was also sharper in Scotland than in England and Wales. The number of drink-driving convictions in England and Wales rose by 64 per cent. between 1975 and 1985 but increased only slightly in Scotland. The overwhelming weight of evidence gives no comfort to the opponents of a modest reform of this kind.

It has been suggested that the figures for alcohol consumption were affected by the recession, but the figures do not bear out the contention that Scotland was worse hit than England and Wales. Between 1974 and 1984, unemployment rose by 126 per cent. in Scotland compared with 139 per cent. for Great Britain as a whole, and personal incomes rose more in Scotland than in the United Kingdom as a whole.

I should be interested to hear any further comments from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State with regard to Sundays. I have some sympathy with the case so honestly stated by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, that doing nothing about Sundays would make it less difficult to get the Bill through. That is why my Bill did not touch Sundays. But there is a difference between a private Member coming eighth in the ballot and a Government, with all their advantages, implementing a manifesto commitment.

I would not go so far as the Erroll committee recommendation. Of course there are arguments for keeping Sunday special, but that is not an argument for the status quo. In my view, the argument for liberalisation in principle applies strongly to the very limited period of two hours available at lunch-time on Sundays, which in my view is likely to lead to "beat the clock" drinking and to discourage leisurely drinking at a time of major importance for the leisure and tourism industries. I have no doubt that these aspects will be considered in Committee. The Erroll committee recommendation may be too radical, but that should not lead us to regard the status quo as the best of all possible worlds.

The House is rightly concerned about the problems of under-age drinking. The Scottish Council on Alcoholism has pointed to the problems in Scotland and, in particular, identified consumption from supermarkets as being a major cause. The law in England and Wales varies unsatisfactorily and is in need of amendment. The Bill will bring undoubted benefits in choice, employment and tourism. I am not one of those who take an extreme stand on the Scottish figures. They must be interpreted with caution. However, I believe that the arguments from Scotland point in the direction of a sensible and modest reform, and I wish the Bill well.

6.30 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Although I shall speak in favour of the Bill and vote accordingly, there is to be a free vote from the alliance Benches. We accept that the issues that we are called upon to determine today require the exercise of individual judgment. As has been eloquently demonstrated in some of the speeches, there is genuine concern about the effects of relaxation. I do not share that concern, but I accept that it is not to be discounted or lightly disregarded.

I find myself substantially in accord with the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). However, before I expand upon that, it would be proper to declare an interest in two respects. First, as a practising advocate in Scotland, I have appeared on a number of occasions on behalf of companies that might be expected to profit from the provisions of the Bill. Secondly, I had the good fortune to be a member of the Clayson committee that sat contemporaneously with the Erroll committee. Indeed, the Clayson committee's proposals were surprisingly rapidly enacted in the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976. It is to the particular provisions of that Act that I wish to direct the attention of the House, especially in relation to clause 1 of this Bill, which has justifiably been described as a modest proposal.

The provisions of section 64 of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 allow for the regular extension of permitted hours. Extensions have been sought for the period between 2.30 pm and 5 pm to such an extent that they have been granted virtually as a matter of course. That can only be because the licensing boards charged with the responsibilities of administering the Act have decided that such extensions can be granted without causing undue public nuisance or a threat to public order or safety — the statutory grounds for refusing an extension. Indeed, the fact that the period between 2.30 pm and 5 pm has been treated in that way by licensing boards was reflected in the consultative document produced by the Scottish Home and Health Department this year, which suggested that, in parallel with clause 1 of this Bill, 11 am to 11 pm could become the basic terms of a licence in Scotland.

The experience in Scotland does not suggest that the extension of hours in the afternoon has had anything approaching the adverse consequences that have been predicted for the provisions of clause 1. In a country that is endeavouring to expand the tourist trade, it has become clear that the facilities now available in Scotland in the afternoon have frequently proved beneficial. That is in line with the consequences of relaxation generally in Scotland, which has improved the standards of comfort and hygiene and been a civilising influence, even in licensed premises in urban areas.

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

A rather curious consequence of that relaxation is that the range of non-alcoholic drinks available in public houses has been extended and expanded. Whereas, prior to 1976, the atmosphere in a public house would have dissuaded someone from entering if he was not intending to drink alcohol, now he may more freely enter and have a non-alcoholic drink. The success of reform in Scotland has to some extent arisen because the powers of the licensing authorities were properly defined in the 1976 Act and because there was a proper recognition of the public interest and the right of the public to object either to applications for licences or to an extension of the hours otherwise permitted by the Act.

The extended power of licensing authorities in Scotland to intervene when standards have not been met has been effective, especially in the regulation of licensed premises after 11 pm and into the early hours of the morning. Certain enterprises, such as discotheques, are, by their very nature, operating at an hour when many people have already retired to bed. Clauses 2 and 4 of the Bill similarly reflect the principle of giving licensing authorities an effective policing power for premises under their jurisdiction.

The Clayson committee was concerned to ensure proper monitoring of the effects of changes in Scottish legislation, but that has not happened. I hope that, recognising some of the apprehensions voiced today, the Government will feel that that should now be done in the whole of the United Kingdom. Indeed, it may be a topic for consideration by the interdepartmental committee.

Having regard to the strictures about short speeches, I wish to conclude with a specific reference to clause 10. As I understand it, it gives power to licensing authorities to grant expenses against those who oppose applications if that is thought to be just and reasonable. That might impose a rather severe test on members of the public who wish to object to applications. I draw to the Minister's attention section 16(6) of the 1976 Act in Scotland which provides a similar power, but which requires the licensing authorities to be satisfied that the objection is frivolous or vexatious. If those principles are applicable north of the border they could, with considerable common sense, be incorporated into similar provisions south of the border. My experience of Scotland, however, is that the power to award expenses has rarely, if ever, been exercised.

The proposals in the Bill have been described as modest by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I think the description appropriate. They represent a modest liberalising of the law, and should commend themselves to the whole House.

6.38 pm

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am grateful for this opportunity to intervene in the debate. I especially want to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary on securing this piece of legislation in our programme for this Session. The Bill responds to what the public at large feels has been a successful change in Scotland. If it goes through Parliament, it will bring us more into line with practices in Europe. Many people from all parts of the world who visit this country are confused by our licensing laws.

I am pleased to say that the legislation is based on conclusive evidence. In that respect, I am pleased to follow the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) who, with his experience on the Clayson committee, has brought an important contribution to the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) knows more than anyone else about the effects of changes in the licensing laws in Scotland. Through the introduction of his Bill on licensing reform, he too brings to the debate the sort of evidence that we are looking for as justifying such changes. It is important that the changes that we make do not exacerbate the problems of alcoholism and misuse of alcohol. It is to ensure that we are in a better position to deal with such problems, but, at the same time, allow people to enjoy themselves and go about their lives in a civilised pattern.

Much is said about the Scottish evidence. Some studies have found no significant increase in the consumption of alcohol among men as a whole between 1976 and 1984. In 1976, an average of 14·3 units a week were consumed, as opposed to 1984 when 14·5 units per week were consumed. The difference is so minute as to be almost insignificant. The increase was due to an increase in the number of men's visits to public houses. Among women, there has been an increase. In 1976, 2·8 units of alcohol a week were consumed, and in 1984 the figure had risen to 3·8 units a week. That is a modest increase. In the main, it is due to the fact that more women are going to pubs in Scotland with their husbands and men friends, whereas hitherto they were put off by the general state and order of pubs. Since 1976, there has been an upgrading of public houses —the provision of more food and a much more civilised atmosphere — and that has been more acceptable to women who wish to go in and enjoy themselves.

Mr. Favell: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are no similar figures for England and Wales? It is impossible to say whether alcohol consumption has gone up by that modest amount in England and Wales. It could reflect a general trend throughout the United Kingdom towards greater equality for women who, at one time, were treated as second-class citizens in pubs and clubs, including Conservative clubs.

Mr. Banks: I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will understand that point. I certainly agree with what was said by my hon. Friend.

The final drink-up time that occurs just before closing is important. To my mind, the restrictions placed on the closing of pubs at 10 o'clock in Scotland before 1976 and at 11 o'clock now in England and Wales tend to accelerate drinking just before the pubs are about to close. That is the crucial time when people will drink just too much, putting them over the limit before they go and drive away in their cars, or they drink that much more, which leads them to commit some stupid crime or to do something silly. I prefer my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to accept that it is better to have greater flexibility so that, through the Bill, we may suggest that pubs can open at, say, 11.30 in the morning and close at 11·30 at night, with all the restrictions that would be imposed by licensing magistrates as a result of local opposition and objections if they were proved to be unacceptable.

If hours are staggered to take account of local conditions — prticularly in areas in which there are a great number of tourist attractions, such as cinemas and theatres, and people want to go to a pub and enjoy a drink and perhaps have some food before they go home — extra time would allow that to take place in a civilised and reasonable way. It would also have the effect of reducing the snap drink-up time, which happens at the moment when people go to a pub a little later in the evening. It would also be of general benefit to the police. They will find that it is easier to police pubs that close at different times rather than try to police all the pubs that close at the same time every night.

The survey of licensed premises that the Government commissioned showed that a significant reduction in the pattern of acceleration of drinking towards the end of the evening had not disappeared in Scotland but had diminished. Senior police officers much prefer the situation, but the decline in the proportion of drinkers on licensed premises at closing time who had either bought a drink for themselves or were bought one in the last 10 minutes has gone down from 51 per cent. in Scotland in 1976 to 42 per cent. in 1984. We need to take that argument on board.

One point that has emerged in this debate and that will emerge in all other debates on licensing reform relates to the drunken driver and drunkenness. I shall continue to advocate that we should have personal breathalysers. They should be freely available on the market at reasonable prices, so that, if somebody feels that he may be over the limit, he can at least test himself. If he is over the limit, he can wait until he is under the limit or he does not drive. It is extraordinary that we do not take action to try to propel the matter forward and give drivers an opportunity to test themselves in their cars, or before they get into their cars, to see whether they are over the limit. Certainly, insurance companies have a role to play in abdicating insurance if a drunken driver is found guilty of an offence. Nobody should be able to drive a car if he is in a condition which could cause grave harm to someone else.

Mr. Colvin: I go further and ask my hon. Friend to reconsider what he said. There is a good case for a driver who goes to a pub not to have any alcohol at all. The licensing trade may welcome, not resist, that suggestion.

Mr. Banks: I do not entirely agree with my hon. Friend's point. We can debate it on other occasions. It is reasonable to have one or two dinks. As Members of Parliament we may often go to functions. It is normal to take a glass of wine and then go to another function. We can drive quite safely on that basis.

Experience in Scotland has shown that the number of drivers who have been convicted of offences arising out of being drunk in control of a vehicle has declined in relation to the number in England and Wales, which has increased.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) referred to problems associated with under-age drinkers. His speeches on such matters are always listened to with great interest. Under-age drinkers are undoubtedly a major problem for the publican who cannot determine the age of some of the people whom he serves. It is a major problem when young people, who should not drink, do so wildly and to excess. It is up to the publican to say to somebody about whom he has any slight hesitation in serving because he believes that they may be under 18 years of age, "I shall serve you with a drink if you can prove to me that you are over 18." That is another way of saying that we should have identity cards. It would make it simple and easy for anybody to make a straightforward challenge of that sort.

I welcome the work that brewers and the Brewers Society have done in bringing forward alcohol-free beers. I have sampled some of them, and they are good. People can enjoy the conviviality of drinking in a pub with friends without the risk of going over the limit. An enormous amount of work must be done to deal with the problem of alcohol misuse. I warmly welcome the appointment of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to co-ordinate the activities of the various Departments. That is a major step forward. In time, I am sure, we shall see the action that many of us believe is necessary to educate young people about drinking sensibly and the problems that emanate from too much alcohol consumption.

At the end of the day, the Bill will be of benefit. It will not exacerbate the problem of alcohol abuse, but it will make us a much more civilised nation. I support the Bill.

6.49 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I want to make it clear that I am putting forward the views of the National Association of Licensed House Managers. Whatever is said by Front Bench spokesmen and whatever is decided upon, the licensed house managers will have to deal with the problems created by the Bill.

Of course, those managers are prepared to go part of the way to assist the implementation of the Bill. They would not, for example, oppose the extension of licensing hours from 11 am to 11 pm; they are quite agreeable to that, although it goes further than they would have wanted. However, they would oppose any interference with or extension of Sunday or bank holiday opening hours, such as those for Good Friday or at Christmas.

Licensed house managers want to retain some control over the operation of licensed premises. They would especially like to retain the law that provides specifically that licensees are not obliged to open for all the permitted hours. They feel that if all the other pubs in a town or village opened, the pressure on them to do likewise would become intolerable unless some provision enabling them to avoid having to do so were written into the Bill.

I know that I shall elicit a response from the Minister by saying that licensed house managers would like removed from their contracts the clause that obliges a licensee to open his licensed premises during the whole of the available permitted hours. It is no good saying one thing if licensed house managers are obliged to do the opposite because the brewers insist on keeping the premises open. That is a most important point.

Another important argument relates to flexibility. The licensed house managers understand local conditions. I do not think that there will be any extension of licensing hours in many areas. In many residential and industrial areas the local need can be met under existing licensing arrangements. Indeed, I do not think there will be the demand that the brewers think. However, in many other areas the position many be different. One example is the City, where people appear to have nothing better to do than to drink in the afternoon — indeed it might be better for them to drink in the afternoon than to make the mess that they have made recently of stock market prices.

Another such instance of need would be in seaside resorts. In the holiday trade there is need to maximise the hours available. Similarly, holiday resorts need to be flexible in winter. Surely it is best to leave it to the manager or to the licensee to know his own area and, in knowing his locality, to reach the decision, rather than having

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

pressure placed on him by the brewer who might say, "This is now the law and we expect you all to be open." We know that that pressure could arise if the Bill is left as it is. We should take account of local conditions and meet the need rather than create one. I am sure that that is the way in which licensed house managers would look at the matter.

Hon. Members of all parties have said that the Bill aims to enable people to use licensed premises rather than to encourage them to drink more. We should examine that matter in relation to the problems that face us. Licensed house managers are especially concerned that the extended hours provision must not provide a basis for a later terminal hour on a regular basis, as occurs now, for example, in some pubs on Friday and Saturday evenings.

Hon. Members have also touched on the fact that alcohol is available from sources other than public houses and restaurants. Much of the increase in drinking habits has occurred because of off-licences and supermarkets. Many statistics have been given on under-age and children's drinking and on the fact that more women are drinking. It is far easier for an under-age person to go into a supermarket to obtain drinks than it is for him to do so on licensed premises. It is also far easier for women or other members of the family, when shopping, to put drinks in the supermarket trolley. I am sure that that is why an increase in drinking has occurred and we should pay more attention to it.

At football matches, the closing of pubs around football grounds has not stopped people who are drunk entering the ground. Indeed, some people try to take drink into the ground. That happens because they have been able to obtain the alcohol from surrounding supermarkets. I should like to see, as would many licensed house managers, supermarkets having their licences revoked when such things happen. They should be responsible for the disorderly conduct that can occur.

The hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) referred to the non-alcoholic beverages that taste like beer. They are not perfect, but they are still being worked on and I welcome them. However, one of the difficulties at the moment is that they cost more than ordinary beers. If we want to promote them, surely the price should be less than that of beer. Perhaps the Government could do something about that: possibly the Chancellor could seek to extend their sales and divert people from alcohol.

There is nothing wrong with going into a pub. Indeed, pubs are the central feature of many villages, because they are the places where people gather. That is not a bad thing, and I should like to see all the family going in. It does not necessarily follow that that would lead to more drinking. If a pub is well run—many licensees are responsible people—that need not happen and licensees often kick out people who are nuisances.

I do not want extended licensing hours to be imposed on areas where it need not happen. I do not want to see the pressure to be open being put on licensed house managers by brewers. Where there is a need for an extension of the licensing hours or at bank holidays such as Christmas, it should be the individual licensee who makes an application rather than the area manager or the brewery.

I shall probably support the Bill. However, I give fair warning that I shall watch what happens. I should like to see some of the conditions and ideas that I have put forward incorporated in the Bill. I shall certainly consider the Bill most carefully on Third Reading to decide whether I shall continue to support it. However, for the moment I wish it not a fair wind, but a little wind. I shall probably continue to support it, but only on the understanding that flexibility must remain with the licensee and especially with the house manager. We must protect them against the undue pressure that could come from breweries.

6.59 pm

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Mr. Deputy Speaker made a plea for brief speeches and I shall attempt to follow that advice.

We live in an enlightened age — the age of the microchip, of man in space and of nuclear power—yet in England and Wales it is still not possible to get a drink in a public house during the afternoon or after 11pm. The truth is that our licensing laws are not relevant to today. They are restrictive and inconvenient to everybody. I applaud the Government for seeking to bring about a modest change through this Bill.

The arguments put forward by critics of the measure are that the Government should leave the law as it is because of the problem that, regrettably, a minority of people have with alcohol. I have never understood why the majority should face the inconvenience of severe restrictions on pub licensing hours because of the unfortunate minority. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) made several good points, but he omitted to mention that public houses are controlled drinking environments. The licensee is in charge of what happens on his premises and has a duty to keep an orderly house. There are certain ways in which one cannot conduct oneself in a public house; for example, one cannot behave in a threatening or abusive way to other customers and one cannot be served if one is intoxicated or if one is under age.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) gave a graphic description of several drunken youths collapsing and milling about outside his house. I, like the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) must ask him where those youths bought that drink. The chances are that they bought it, not in a public house, but in a nearby supermarket. If there is a case for the Government strengthening the law, it is in relation not to public houses but to supermarkets.

Often, the licensee in a supermarket is not in charge of alcohol sales. He may visit the licensing area of his store only once a day, and invariably it is under the control of a fairly junior shop assistant. Many hon. Members will have seen a shop assistant serving a customer with drink who is obviously under age, and on two recent occasions I saw an assistant selling alcohol to a customer who was clearly intoxicated.

Mr. Hoyle: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a supermarket licensee does not see the consequences of the drink bought from his store?

Mr. Knight: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The consequences are often scenes of drunken behaviour on the streets, such as the hon. Member for Wentworth described.

Other critics outside the House say that the measure does not go far enough, and I have some sympathy with them. Obviously clauses 2 and 4 are right, but the licensee of a public house is adjudged by a magistrates court to be a fit and proper person. He must provide references; he knows that his behaviour is under continual police scrutiny and that he must run an orderly house. I wonder why in 1987 we cannot therefore allow a publican to open at his discretion within a maximum number of hours each day. That is the nettle that we should grasp tonight.

Even the Erroll report of 1972 recommended that pubs should be able to open between 10 am and midnight, yet 15 years on we are being asked to consider only a minor relaxation. Even if the Bill is passed, most of Europe and the United States will still have more liberal licensing laws.

Some opponents of the Bill have provided statistics. I will do the same. United States law varies from state to state. In Alabama, the closing hour for bars is 2 am, in Arizona 1 am, in California 2 am, in Florida midnight, in Indiana 3 am and in Nevada the bars are open 24 hours a day. It is disappointing that the Government have not seen fit to include measures to postpone the terminal hour here.

As the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) said, it is disappointing that the Bill does not include measures to allow greater flexibility on Sundays. As he pointed out, it is ironic that the day of the week when most members of the public have most leisure is the one day when we shall not allow them to choose how they use that time.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be pleased to know that Derby and District Licensed Victuallers Association is wholeheartedly behind the measure. However, it has expressed some anxiety about the operation of the drinking-up rule and I hope that my hon. Friend will consider this in Committee. The association feels that the allocation of 10 minutes which is given to licensees to collect alcohol from tables and to persuade customers to leave is a narrow period in which to operate. It would welcome the Government reconsidering this point and, hopefully, relaxing it somewhat.

The Bill is not a drunks' charter; it is a modest measure. In my view, it is rather too modest, but in politics one soon learns to grasp what one can while one can. On that basis, I shall support the measure tonight.

7.5 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): At least the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) had the honesty to say that he was grabbing what he could and wanted the measure to go even further. Both he and my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) were throwing dust in our eyes in trying to turn our attention to the off-licenses and supermarkets. Naturally, one must consider all the outlets available to the public. Both tried to exonerate public houses by describing them as "controlled environments", but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said—in this matter he is my right hon. Friend—the recent Health Education Authority survey stated that 49 per cent. of 14 to 15-year-olds visited a pub or bar in the two weeks before the survey was carried out. That hardly supports the argument of a closely controlled environment, nor the argument that one need simply look into supermarkets and off-licences.

This is pre-eminently a matter on which we should all declare our interests, so in all honesty I shall declare mine. Together with my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, I am a patron of the Alcohol Safeguards Campaign and Familybase, and I am president of the West Glamorgan council group on alcohol and drug abuse. I hope that all Conservative Members will declare their personal interests in that same spirit and that the Government will lay on the table their close personal and financial links with the drinks trade, which have existed ever since William Ewart Gladstone lost the 1874 election, having been drowned by torrents of gin and beer following the Licensing Act 1872. It was introduced by Henry Bruce, who, like me, was not only a member of the Bar, but the only other Member who attended Swansea grammar school. Clearly, there have since been substantial links between the drinks industry and the Conservative party.

The Minister will not be surprised that the bodies with which I am closely linked are opposed to the Bill. We have several questions. Who wants the change? Where is the pressure for this change coming from? Certainly pressure has come partly from the tourist industry. Since the Scottish precedent is quoted with such relish by Conservative Members, I note that in Scotland tourism increased by only 8 per cent. between 1979 and 1985, compared with 24 per cent. in England and Wales. That hardly argues eloquently for a direct correlation between the accessibility to drink following the 1976 change in Scotland and benefits to the tourist industry and brewers.

Following the excursion through history of my right hon. Friend, we recall that Bishop Magee of Peterborough said during the debate on the 1972 Act that he would like to see

> "England free better than England sober."

I recall that Peterborough is not too far from Grantham or rural Oxfordshire, and I wonder whether there is an echo today of "rather England free than England sober" in speeches from the Government Front Bench.

Who is concerned about the Bill? Medical experts on the subject and the general public certainly are. There is no evidence of any support for the Bill from the general public—on the contrary. Why the hurry? What is it that impels the Government to press forward with this so-called modest change, when we hear that the Government's legislative programme is overloaded and their business managers are seeking opportunities of jettisoning parts of it? I commend this Bill for that purpose straight away. It is a poor measure and the Wakeham committee gives the Government an opportunity to examine the whole issue of alcoholism in the round, rather than going ahead wilfully with only part of this area.

How far do the Government really want to go? Some Conservative Members have let the cat out of the bag; they have an incremental view of the Bill As the Home Secretary was honest enough to admit, it is as far as he can go now. He knows that if he put forward the package that he and his hon. Friends wanted, it would include Sunday, too. Having sustained a bloody nose over the Shops Bill in the last Session, he is not prepared to go ahead with that aspect now.

The Government like to portray the Bill as a modest, tidying-up measure, to get rid of what the Home Secretary called the dead afternoon. If so, are they prepared to give an undertaking to the House that in no circumstances will they support any further liberalisation for, say, the next five years? Or do the Government see the Bill purely on an incremental basis—something that they can get away with now in the hope that they can build on it by salami tactics, bit by bit, supporting their friends in the brewing

[Mr. Donald Anderson]

industry? Of course the brewers will come back asking for more, and the Government, on present form, will give it to them.

The key question surely is whether consumption will increase as a result of the measure. We know that the Scottish evidence is contradictory and inconclusive. Why do the Government not promote research that can give us a clearer idea of what has happend in Scotland? For example, the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys survey, prepared for the Scottish Home and Health Department, has produced figures that must be viewed with considerable caution. They are based on people's opinions of what happened rather than on what actually happened.

It is clear that increased road traffic offences due to drunken driving have continued to be higher in Scotland than in England. There has certainly been an increase in consumption among those in work, particularly among women. The only group among which there has been a reduction in consumption has been the unemployed—for obvious reasons. If the brewers are really saying that they do not expect an increase in consumption—we hear that the Government have promised them the Bill by February—why are they investing more——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have promised nobody the Bill by any time.

Mr. Anderson: That is some small mercy.

Why do the brewers intend to invest more if they do not expect higher profits? The Home Secretary contradicted himself by quoting with approval suggestions by the tourist industry that 50,000 jobs—albeit part-time jobs—would be created. If those 50,000 jobs were created within the public house system as a result of the Bill—the Home Secretary seemed to adopt that figure—who will pay their wages? Surely they can only come from increased consumption — from projected increased consumption—by the public. Who else would pay? The money will not come out of the brewers' pockets.

I made the concession that the Scottish evidence is inconclusive, but the reaction of the brewers and the evidence from other countries suggest that there is a direct correlation between availability and consumption, and between consumption and the range of social problems that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point described. I do not propose to go over all the social consequences for the family, industry and personal relationships, but hon. Members who are concerned about the effects of alcohol know about them.

I want to inject one other matter that has not yet been discussed in the debate — the Welsh dimension. The Home Secretary talked about "England and Wales" as against Scotland. I submit that there is a special Welsh dimension to the debate. The Home Secretary is well aware of that because of a letter, dated 25 September, that was sent to him by the Welsh Health Promotion Authority. It charted a growing problem of alcoholism in Wales. It described it as being of epidemic proportions, with enormous costs to industry and the family. For example, alcohol consumption in Wales is 25 per cent. higher than in England. Average expenditure on alcohol, in spite of our lower per capita income, is 15 per cent. greater. Alcohol is much cheaper in Wales — 20 per cent. less expensive than in London. There are 25 per cent. more licensees per hundred thousand of the population in Wales.

So we are bound to reflect on whether this modest change is likely to exacerbate or help the problem. We are going ahead with this corner of the matter without looking at the whole range of problems that my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mentioned: the effects of advertising and the commercialism that encourage people to drink; taxation policy and its effect on consumption; and other areas that we know can affect the total picture of alcoholism in this country.

The Government press ahead as a result of pressure from known quarters in this one area, yet public opinion polls among the Welsh people have decisively rejected this liberalisation measure. Heartbeat Wales carried out a special survey in September. It showed that 54 per cent. of people in Wales were opposed to change or wanted even tighter controls on opening hours. So there is clearly no mandate for the change in Wales. The Home Secretary may insist on a merrier England, but it is clear that the people of Wales do not want a merrier Wales, with all its social consequences. If the Government were at all sensitive to Welsh public opinion — they have and had no mandate from Welsh opinion from the last election —they would allow us to opt out.

Bills normally have a clause with estimates of Civil Services manpower and Exchequer costs that are likely to result from their implementation. With a Bill of this sort, we need a rather broader social audit. For example, if, as some suggest, there is likely to be a 15 per cent. increase in consumption, and as the brewers prepare to invest more money and produce those extra part-time jobs, it is estimated that such an increase would result in 9,000 more violent crimes, 1·2 million more working days lost, 350 more deaths a year from cirrhosis of the liver, and 50 to 100 extra deaths and up to 2,000 injuries on our roads — all as a result of the increase in alcoholism and alcohol-related effects.

The Bill is not part of a comprehensive strategy to combat alcoholism, but a shameless concession to an interest group and a reckless gamble that ignores the social costs to the country.

7.19 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I shall start by affirming that alcohol misuse is undoubtedly one of the greatest causes of human misery today, not only among those that it affects directly but also among their relatives and those who are close to them. If a continuation of the existing licensing controls could help in some way to reduce the scale of the problem or to prevent it increasing, then I would be among the first to argue against the change that is proposed in the Bill. However, the existing laws are illogical and arbitrary. Whether they ever did any good must be in some doubt. It is certainly difficult to argue that they do any good today.

At the beginning of this century total abstinence was very much the message that was preached by those who saw the effects of alcoholism in the home, in the street and in the workplace. The message was preached effectively because Lloyd George is quoted as saying in 1915:

> "We are fighting Germany, Austria and the drink. And, as far as I can see, the greatest of these deadly foes is drink."

King George V was responding to that mood when he pledged that drink would not be served in the royal household until the war was over. A law that restricted the times during which drink could be obtained over the bar thus appeared early in the century to be a step in the right direction.

There are still many things that we do not know and do not understand about why some people become victims of alcohol whereas the majority appear able to enjoy alcohol in moderation. However, there is one thing about which we can be absolutely sure: that simplistic solutions like those adopted in 1915 are not helpful. We require more subtle and more complex measures as part of a total strategy that recognises the realities of the situation that we face.

There is evidence that the present restrictions on afternoon opening hours only cause irritation to the tourist and to the moderate drinker. Anyone who is determined to drink—as is the problem drinker—will have no difficulty whatever in obtaining alcohol from one of very many retail outlets.

Let no one imagine that because we want the Bill to bring about a relaxation in these archaic restrictions that is in some way an indication that we believe there is not a problem. Clearly and sadly the problems are all too apparent. The costs of alcohol abuse in the workplace have been estimated to range up to £1·5 billion in terms of absenteeism, lost production and accidents. Heavy alcohol consumption accounts for, perhaps, 15,000 premature deaths every year. As many as one third of all patients in general medical wards appear to have an underlying problem that is in some way related to alcohol. It is a problem that may immediately affect 1 million people in the United Kingdom. Few people do not know of somebody who is affected in some way by the problem of alcoholism or of alcohol abuse.

The social ills associated with alcohol are greater than the ones relating to alcoholism alone. While 14 per cent. of men and 3 per cent. of women are thought regularly to drink more than the amounts which require that they be described as problem drinkers, according to recent assumed criteria, many tragedies are caused by people who may drink to excess only occasionally. The drunk driver who kills may never before have driven when over the limit, but his action on just one occasion may have disastrous consequences, as many of us know from the sad constituency cases with which we have to deal. One in three drivers killed on our roads had excess alcohol in the blood.

It is easy to understand why many well-meaning people come to the conclusion that restriction is the only means of averting such tragedies. However, history surely shows us that restriction may sometimes make the situation worse rather than better. In the United States, prohibition, which was introduced in 1919, glamorised law-breaking and ushered in a period when violent crime escalated alarmingly and underground drinking prospered until, eventually, those who made the laws in the United States saw the error of their ways.

Those who argue against the Bill do so because alcohol misuse can be and often is a serious threat to the individual and to society. There can be no doubt whatever about that. The only question to ask is what we can do about it. The Government can play an important part in answering the challenge. Only the Government can initiate the better designed and better targeted campaigns that are needed to influence the young. We hear much about drugs, but alcohol kills 10 times as many teenagers as heroin and two thirds of drug-related deaths also involve alcohol.

For many young people alcohol is the cheapest and most fashionable drug available, and the research into drinking shows that the young are the most frequent drinkers. More money should be provided to the Health Education Authority specifically to fight alcohol misuse among the young. It cannot be right that, when £17 million has been spent fighting heroin and cocaine abuse, less than £1 million has been spent on the campaigns against alcohol.

The education message for young people is a difficult one to put across, because the message cannot just be, "Don't drink" in the same way as we would say, "Don't take drugs". Not only is it clear that drinking moderately will do no harm, but many cardiac specialists believe that moderate drinking may have some modest medical benefits. No doubt the argument about that will continue. The Bill has encouraged its proponents and, indeed, its opponents to produce figures that only go to show that one can prove anything with statistics. This applies not only to the situation in Scotland, which many hon. Members have said is inconclusive, but to opinion surveys, the responses to which vary as much as the questions that are asked in the surveys.

I hope that the interdepartmental committee that has been set up under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal will not hesitate to press forward with initiatives designed to improve the situation, even if they are costly or difficult. It may be asked, for instance, whether we should not give legislative teeth to codes against advertisements that portray alcohol as attractive to under-18-year-olds if the existing voluntary code is not seen to be working effectively.

Most of the changes that one could envisage do not fall within the ambit of the licensing law. Issues that do, and which might be considered in Standing Committee, relate to the fact that publicans are hardly ever charged with the offence of selling alcohol to a person who is clearly already intoxicated, even though there must often be justification for such a charge. The majority of publicans do their best to control their saloon bars and to prevent people from drinking too much. However, of the many tens of thousands of people found drunk in the streets, surely some could have been seen by more than three licensees —which I think was the figure for a recent year—to be already far too intoxicated to be served with more alcohol. We could also consider whether there are adequate deterrents against selling alcohol to those who are under age. As I have said, the difficulties that licensees face should not be underestimated. Equally, they have a vital role to play in the front line against irresponsible and anti-social behaviour.

It is a frightening fact that 29 per cent. of 13-year-old boys and 11 per cent. of 13-year-old girls said in a recent survey carried out by, I think, the Department of Health and Social Security that they drank at least once a week. I would think that relatively few of them obtain their drink in public houses. This shows only that our major thrust must point in other directions.

There is plenty to be done in areas where legislation is only one of several options open to us. There has been plenty of debate over many years, if not decades, about these modest changes. We should not allow the broad

[Mr. Gary Waller]

nature of the problems to which I have referred to stop us making progress in this field. That is why I welcome the Bill.

7.30 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), I shall support the Bill. Traditionally, the licensing laws have been concerned with the social consequences of the use and abuse of alcohol, but change must come. We must acknowledge that we live in an alcohol-using society.

As we all know, the present pattern of licensing hours stems from the first world war. Strict controls were introduced to curb drunkenness among munition workers. Surely today one cannot sensibly argue a case for controlling the sale and consumption of alcohol on licensed premises on the basis of what happened 70 years ago. It is generally agreed that there is a need for some control over licensing hours, but the reasons are very varied. Relying on the control of licensing hours as the principal means of preventing alcohol misuse seems to be inappropriate and ineffective. It prevents a person from enjoying a social drink in the afternoon, after, say, 3 pm. On the other hand, it simply makes it awkward for the determined drinker who can always purchase a drink at the local supermarket.

The present licensing hours do not prevent the hardened drinker from obtaining a drink. One need only look around my constituency to see young people, well below the legal age for consuming alcohol, drinking cider and cans of beer purchased from supermarkets and off-licences. I do not suppose that my constituency is out of the ordinary. No doubt a similar state of affairs exists throughout the country. Only last Saturday morning, constituents came to see me at my surgery complaining that the off-licence near their home was selling cans of beer to under-age youths who were then causing a disturbance.

We should address the real problem, which is not so much a fear of increased alcoholism and alcohol-related diseases—which some people see as an obvious spin-off from extending licensing hours—as the danger of the increased availability of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licences. Both young people and hardened drinkers may purchase alcohol virtually from Monday to Saturday, from about 9 am to 10 pm. They are not dependent on the opening of licensed premises. That is the real cause for concern.

Our present licensing hours prevent shift workers, at the end of their working day, be it early afternoon or late evening, from having a social drink. It prevents the frustrated tourist and the moderate drinker from obtaining and enjoying a drink after 3 pm. It makes little sense to allow a customer to buy a drink at 2 pm but not at 4 pm. It restricts freedom of choice. Is there any reasonable explanation for distinguishing between one part of the afternoon and another? The main argument for retaining the present licensing laws is that their removal will encourage increased alcohol consumption and widespread misuse, but that is not so.

The main conclusion to be drawn is that the liberal reforms in the Scottish licensing laws have not had a dramatic effect, so it would be unwise to base the possible results of licensing changes in England and Wales on the Scottish experience. The evidence suggests that neither benefit nor harm would result from licensing changes. Indeed, they would create more jobs. It is estimated that more than 20,000 jobs would be created in public houses alone; indeed, I have heard mentioned the figures of 30,000 and 50,000. However, I must stress the need for safeguards for staff if that happens. Most of those jobs would stem from the supply of food rather than the sale of alcohol.

Since the introduction of more liberal licensing laws in Scotland, about one third of public houses have taken on more staff, mostly on the catering side. Pubs will be able to expand to provide more services and meals, snacks and refreshments will be available all day long. Such expansion would appear reasonable and is supported by the family expenditure survey which states that going out for a drink accounts for the largest single item of leisure expenditure for the average family and is greater than the amount spent on holidays. It seems logical that people should be able to enjoy a drink where they want and when they want.

It is regrettable that a small minority of people unable to cope with alcohol have been used as the reason for restricting the choice for the vast majority of moderate, sensible and sociable drinkers. There is insufficient evidence to establish a causal link between alcohol availability on licensed premises and drink-related problems. Scotland has proved the case—less control has led to less trouble.

The problem to which we must address ourselves is the increased availability of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licences. Over the past few years the number of off-licences has grown considerably faster than the number of public houses. However, relaxing the restrictions on licensing hours does not carry any obligation for premises to open. Licensees will not be obliged to open for the available permitted hours. The Bill includes a clause that gives the licensee the choice of opening for any hours within the 12 hours permitted. Effectively, that choice establishes flexibility in opening hours to meet customer demand, which is good. Often premises have been forced to open when there is no custom, which is silly. Licensees know their areas and they know the needs of their customers.

The existing law on the 10-minute drinking-up time is ludicrous and should be abolished, as it causes nothing but trouble and problems. Customers rush to get the last drink and that causes conflict and confrontation between the licensee and the customer. At the moment, there is great difficulty in keeping within the law on drinking-up time and in some cases it is an almost impossible task.

The whole objective must be a society in which the majority who wish to drink peaceably and sociably can do so at a time when they wish. The minority who abuse alcohol must not be allowed to influence the licensing hours for the majority. Although I do not believe that stringent licensing laws have a significant part to play in preventing alcohol abuse, I should like to see safeguards in the new law to enable licensing justices to ensure that the public are protected from any nuisance that may arise as a result of extended licensing hours. However, the liberal reform of the Scottish licensing laws has proved that there is no cause for concern in Scotland.

The present licensing laws are complex and varied. They date back to the Licensing Act 1921, which provided a similar timetable to that in operation today. That Act followed the stricter regulations that were introduced as a result of the first world war. Those regulations originate from a different era and, although they were effective at the time, there is little reasonable justification for retaining them. Although the dangers of alcohol abuse have become apparent over the years, I do not believe that restricted licensing hours are appropriate or effective in controlling alcohol misuse. The Bill will give the customer freedom to enjoy a drink in the afternoon. I do not believe that the legislation will have any significant effect on the overall consumption of alcohol. However, I believe that the Government must urgently address themselves to the availability of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licences, which are particularly attractive to under-age people.

Restricted licensing hours do little to prevent the problem drinker from getting a drink but they restrict the freedom of choice for the moderate drinker who may wish to purchase a drink after 3 o'clock. If heed is taken of the issues that I have raised and, in particular, if safeguards for staff are included, I shall welcome the Bill. Quite honestly, I am dying for a drink now.

7.39 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): First, may I say how delighted I am to have caught your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, this evening.

May I congratulate the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg)—a great deal of good sense came from the Opposition side of the Chamber, for a change.

To prevent any misunderstanding, may I once again declare my financial and vested interest in the licensed trade and hence the reform of the licensing laws. I am a managing director of a small family company, of which I own 75 per cent. of the shares, which operates, under tenancy from three different breweries, five public houses in the London area. Together with my managers, I am licensee of those five pubs and I am registered as a multiple licence holder with the Metropolitan police.

For the past 17 years, my wife and I have earned a substantial proportion of our income from the licensed trade. For four years we ran an extremely busy south London pub with a ballroom. I followed my father and grandfather into the trade, and I believe that I am the hon. Member most closely involved with the operation of public houses. I am not a brewer, nor a freeholder—I am a tenant licensee. Although the brewers and myself have much in common concerning the Bill, there are certain areas on which we will probably find ourselves in dispute.

I believe that this is the seventh occasion on which I have addressed the House on the subject of licensing reform. I should like to think that the Consolidated Fund debate that I initiated in 1983, soon after I was elected to the House, played some small part in spurring the Government to undertake, at last, this long overdue reform. It is unnecessary for me to rehearse the history of restrictions and regulations on the sale of alcoholic drinks. It is sufficient to say that, during most of our 80 years as publicans in Pimlico, my forebears and myself have enjoyed a somewhat uneasy love-hate relationship with that old harridan the Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act 1916. We shall shed no tears if DORA finally succumbs this year. The 1916 Act may have had some relevance during the first world war, but it has none today.

I shall illustrate just a few of the ways in which the present laws relating to licensing have become anachronistic. In 1916 Britain was at war and it was essential that the war effort should be maximised. However, even if we had not been fighting a desperate war, the lifestyle of our people was very different. Far more people worked at hard manual jobs for long hours each day on low wages. Many homes were less than comfortable and the installation of electricity was far from common. Television was a dream, or perhaps a nightmare, of the future. I guess that people went to bed early to save on the gas lamps and because it was cold indoors. Amusement was man-made. Few people had paid holidays, and, even if there had been no war, only the wealthy travelled abroad.

Let us contrast that with our lives today. The inward and outward tourist industry ensures that many foreign visitors are able to witness, at first hand, our antiquated drinking laws, while many of our people are able to experience the more relaxed hours on the Continent. It is an eye-opener to all.

The greatest difference is the greater flexibility in our working hours. The hon. Member for City of Durham talked of shift work. Many people start work early in the morning and finish early in the afternoon, for example, milkmen, postmen, policemen, delivery men and nurses. Indeed, even people working in the much abused City tailor their hours to the 24-hour markets throughout the world. Those people's working day ends as the pubs close for the mandatory afternoon break. There is no after-work pint for them.

It would be very ungracious of me not to welcome the Government's willingness to introduce the Bill. It is 15 years since the Erroll committee reported, and 10 years since the Clayson reforms were implemented in Scotland. Previous Governments have been unwilling to confront the issue, preferring to sit on the fence while allowing hon. Members successful in the Private Members' Bills' ballot to fall victim to the anti-alcohol tendency. I have criticisms of the Bill as presented today, and I hope that the reports that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will listen with an open mind to arguments deployed to amend the Bill are true.

The two major criticisms that I have concern the terminal hour, particularly on Friday and Saturday evenings, and the hours permitted for opening on Sundays. With regard to the terminal hour on Friday and Saturday, many houses with a supper hour certificate, or an extended hours certificate—often granted to disco houses, which are more rather than less likely to cause annoyance to neighbours than ordinary pubs — already offer an opportunity for legal late drinking. The option of staying open to midnight on Friday and Saturday evenings would allow licensees to offer an opportunity to customers, which undoubtedly they would welcome. If disco houses and restaurants are deemed responsible enough to open until midnight, why not the best-controlled outlet of all, the traditional British pub?

My second point of difference with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State concerns opening hours on Sundays. Let me say straight away that I do not want to see all-day opening on Sundays. My staff value their long Sunday afternoon break. However, the two-hour Sunday lunchtime session is popular with staff and customers alike. From my experience as a resident manager, I can vouch for the fact that it is the most pleasant session of the week to work behind the bar. There is no difficulty in getting staff to work on a Sunday. So popular is that short session that, increasingly, licensees are applying a Nelson eye to the clock, either before midday or after 2 pm. That is now happening in many parts of London. If customers

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know of one pub where the doors open a few minutes early, they go there. In defence, other publicans tend to follow suit to defend their trade.

That brings the law into disrepute. On previous occasions I have spoken of the law being brought into disrepute, and I do not propose to repeat myself. Suffice it to say that I recognise that a law in disrepute is not a reason to change the law. However, perhaps it is a reason to look at it.

Sunday is a day when many people, whether relaxing locally or out for the day with their families, would welcome the opportunity of a more leisurely drink than the short midday to 2 pm session allows. The Licensing (Restaurant Meals) Act 1987 allows restaurants and pubs with separate rooms used as restaurants the opportunity to serve their customers with drink accompanying a meal for much longer hours on a Sunday, but that is an inequitable situation for pubs serving bar meals or just serving a cool pint of beer to their customers on a hot afternoon. There is a strong case for extending the Sunday lunchtime session to a maximum of four hours between 11 am and 3 pm. That would bring more benefit to customers and licensees alike than opening the mandatory break on, say, a Monday or Tuesday afternoon.

Much has been written of the clause in tenancy agreements, which brewers impose on their tenants, insisting that the latter must open for all the hours permitted by the law and licensing justices. This very day I signed such a tenancy agreement with that clause in it. I did so on trust that the brewers will take a sensible and responsible attitude if the Bill becomes an act.

The Brewers Society issued a statement in September this year to the National Licensed Victuallers Association, of which I am a member, stating that such clauses would be deleted from tenancy agreements and that a new clause would be inserted, the effect of which would require the hours during which the premises would open to be such as would be mutually agreed by the landlord and tenant, having regard to the needs of their customers. In the event of a dispute, there would be an arbitral procedure.

There is still suspicion among tenants fearful that the extended hours allowed under the Bill might be used as a stick by the brewers intent on dispossessing the tenant of his house by making it unviable for him. Clearly the owners of a commercial property are entitled to an input in to its use. I should prefer licensees and licensing justices to have a predominant position in deciding the appropriate hours for any house, but at the least I am convinced that it behoves each and every brewery to send out to each and every one of its tenants a letter implementing the terms of the Brewers Society's commitment for his or her house in respect of his or her current agreement. That should be done before any changes under the Bill are implemented. I recognise the position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that that must be a point of negotiation between the parties.

I should like to refer to the abuse of alcohol and the possibility that the Bill will exacerbate the state of affairs in the United Kingdom. The National Licensed Victuallers Association, the Brewers Society and the Wine and Spirit Association are as aware as are individual licensees of the perils of drink. Indeed, trade interests give large sums each year in grants and donations for work associated with alcohol misuse to organisations concerned with alcohol and research bodies. Britain has a low percentage of people who seriously abuse alcohol and low levels of liver cirrhosis due to alcohol. As has been said, the people who abuse it seriously almost certainly obtain the bulk of their supply from the off-licence trade because of price advantage. In any case, no publican wants a drunk on his premises, for such people disrupt other customers and put the licence at risk. The same applies to the young, for we, as licensees, are very concerned to ensure that the young do not come into licensed premises—public houses—and drink. It is disruptive and they are a nuisance.

It is generally held that moderate drinking can be beneficial to health. It would be iniquitous if the 98 per cent. of people who drink sensibly were to be penalised to try to influence the 2 per cent. who regularly abuse and who do not, in all probability, frequent that most controlled of retail outlets, the pub.

In recognising the problem of alcohol abuse, one must also recognise that anti-alcohol organisations have been guilty of peddling some misleading and, in some cases, downright untrue figures and statistics, particularly the 1986 Action on Alcohol Abuse figures, which multiplied by 200 a small sample in Malmö in Sweden, to obtain the number of deaths through drink in the United Kingdom. Even the authors of the Malmö research cautioned against such extrapolation. The circulation of misleading scare figures is profoundly unhelpful to the cause of sensible drinking. Having said that, I, too, welcome the setting up of the committee under my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal to examine the many and complex factors involved in alcohol abuse.

I operate five London pubs under tenancy. Their locations differ markedly. Some do the bulk of their trade at weekday lunchtimes, and others are busy in the evenings and at weekends. The flexibility of permitted hours offered by the Bill, particularly if amended in the two respects that I have suggested, and if applied sensibly after discussion between brewer landlord, the licensing justices and tenant licensee, will represent a major step forward to a more sensible and relaxed way of drinking in our traditional British pubs.

I for one do not believe that all pubs will use the 12 hours that will become available to them. I know for certain that mine will not, and I believe that the bulk of pubs throughout the country will not open 12 hours a day. They may tailor their present hours to more sensible and viable hours than those which, at present, they are forced to operate, as laid down by the justices and the present law.

I congratulate the Government on introducing the Bill. I, for one, support it with no equivocation and with considerable enthusiasm.

7.52 pm

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I support the principle of the Bill, but not without important reservations. I firmly believe that the impact of off-sales outlets and supermarkets has changed our drinking habits dramatically, especially in two sorts of community. The first is where there is high unemployment and people find it cheaper to buy alcohol in supermarkets and off-sales outlets. The second is where there is probably much less unemployment and more wealth. There is much evidence that the yuppie drinkers who consume more wine tend to purchase it in supermarkets and off-sales outlets.

If I could be shown conclusively that extending our licensing hours leads to an increase in alcohol consumption and alcohol abuse, and if I could also be shown conclusively that that increase in abuse leads to an increase in the damage to the health of a considerable number of people, that would heavily influence my assessment of the case for extending the licensing laws. However, having heard the evidence so far in the debate —I know that there are a number of important speeches to come—I am not convinced that the link is proven. Recent Scottish experience shows that economic and social factors have far more influence on alcohol consumption than do opening hours.

In the area of Newcastle that I represent, public opinion supports the extension of licensing hours for reasons of leisure and recreation. If a publican wishes to open in the afternoon or later at night, and if the public wish to give him that trade, the licensing laws should allow that to take place. Indeed, the reforms will be widely welcomed in the social clubs which are major social centres in my constituency. They provide an invaluable community service and always ensure strict rules of conduct. Reference has been made to Conservative clubs. If anyone is in doubt whether the same strict rules apply in working men's clubs in the north of England, they should ask anyone who has fallen foul of the club secretary or steward, or perhaps more intimidatingly, the doorman. They will find that good order is kept in our clubs throughout the country.

I do not know whether there is such a thing as civilised drinking. My mother would certainly say that there is not. But I am not sure that her view is wholly representative of the public. I have always felt, from my experience north of the border, that long hours slow the pace of drinking. If I can describe its effect in the parlance of a Scottish public bar where I confess to have spent part of my youth —and I have to say that not all of my youth was misspent—longer hours "slows the swallae and reduces the par". The slowing of pace is something of a civilising influence.

My major reservation is that the Government make no provision for the protection of workers in the industry. That reservation is a sticking point. The brewers undoubtedly think that they will make bigger profits from extended hours or they would not have made such a massive investment in lobbying and advertising in recent weeks, but I want to know what the workpeople will get. If there is no protection, they will get more low pay, longer hours, more split shifts, more part-time working and fewer breaks. The pay is low enough now, as I shall show the House.

The average earnings for a barmaid, according to the 1987 new earnings survey, is £93·80 for an average 40-hour week, which is £54·30 below the average earnings for a woman. Average earnings for a barman are £133·70 for an average 46-hour week. That is £90·30 per week below the average earnings for men. Before 1986, people who worked in the industry had some protection under the rules of then governing wages councils, but, as the House knows, the wages Act 1986 stripped the councils of many of their powers. In the case of the licensed non-residential establishment Wages council, rest day protection, public holiday payment guarantees, and annual holiday entitlement were ended.

As for the licensed residential establishment wages council, spread-over payments were ended — that is particularly important in regard to this legislation — statutory protection for intervals for rest, again a crucial issue, was stopped and holiday provisions were withdrawn. Crucially, all the wages councils — several cover this industry—lost their power to protect workers under the age of 21.

Many hon. Members regularly visit public houses and clubs, although, in case the public get the wrong idea, I should say that we do not always go there to consume alcohol. In the north of England, we often visit our constituents in such places. An hon. Member who visited a public house would notice that many of the staff are aged between 18 and 21. If the Bill is not amended, they will have little protection at their workplace. He would also notice that many of the staff were women. Two thirds of the 1 million people who work in the industry are women, and three quarters of them work part time. If the Bill is not amended, it will become a brewers' charter for bashing our barmaids.

Defending the need for strong wages councils, Winston Churchill identified the fact that they prevent the good employer from being

"undercut by the bad, and the bad employer . . . undercut by the worst."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1909; Vol. 4, c. 388.]

I agree with that. The proper way to protect employees would be to strengthen our wages councils, which were undermined in 1986, but I am not so gullible as to believe that the Government will introduce accompanying legislation to achieve that.

Therefore, I propose that protection should be written into the Bill. The Shops Act 1950 had built-in statutory protection for employees, and is a clear precedent for dealing with young people, shift arrangements and meal breaks. I challenge the Government to include similar protection in this Bill for shifts which last longer than eight hours, shifts which finish late at night, split-shift working, rest-day working, the minimum rights of young people aged between 18 and 21, the taking of meal breaks and holiday entitlement and payment. The hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman), who is an employer in the industry, mentioned the importance of shift working. I hope that he will urge on the Government the need to include protection for his staff.

If the Chancellor of the Exchequer can write in protection for the BP underwriters, the Home Secretary must be able to write in protection for workers in hotels, bars and clubs. The Government cannot resist that proposal on the ideological grounds of non-intervention, because the idea of licensing laws is itself interventionist.

Despite my reservations, I shall support the Second Reading, but if the Government do not accept amendments to include protection for staff, I will no longer support it.

8.3 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): It is with some regret that, in only my second speech in the House, I must express grave reservations about the Bill. I welcomed many of the remarks of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), not least his Pauline conversion to the rights of the individual over the incursion of the state. I look forward to Labour Front-Bench spokesmen having an illustrious champion of the individual's rights to private education and private medicine and of denationalisation.

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

I speak, not from the point of view of the temperance lobby, but as what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook called a dangerous animal—a sensible drinker. However, perspectives on that may differ, and I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) does not believe that someone who likes one, or preferably two, drinks is a sensible drinker. The fact that one enjoys a drink, or even two, is not to say that one would welcome a society in which the sun was perpetually over the yardarm — in which there were only a few hours of daylight and a great deal of twilight.

The objective of the Bill is to introduce afternoon drinking. I ask myself — it is one way of getting a sensible answer—who is likely to benefit from afternoon drinking? My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) made a persuasive and eloquent speech, saying that the Bill would benefit shift workers. The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) made a similar careful argument. But one immediately asks where it will stop. Some people come off shift at 7 am. Should pubs be open for them? Hon. Members sometimes serve a 24-hour shift and then stagger out, if only through fatigue. Should the pubs be open for us? Why select shift workers and say that those who leave their place of work at 3 pm must be allowed the right to an after-work drink?

Those who will take advantage of afternoon drinking fall largely into two categories: first, tourists and those on holiday. Were they the only people who would avail themselves of afternoon drinking, no one would have much objection to it. Those who will not be drinking in the afternoon are those who are gainfully employed and at their places of work and those who, over a lifetime, have gained the habit of drinking only at certain hours. That leaves the young and the unemployed. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was right to draw special attention to those two groups, especially to where they merge. A combination of youth, unemployment, inner-city conditions and the pubs being open all day could be extremely dangerous and will need careful thought before we allow the Bill to go through.

I do not wish to exaggerate the position, but many studies have shown a large increase in under-age drinking. I do not wish to paint a picture of schoolboys dropping in at the pub on the way home from a rugger match before they do their homework, but there is increased drinking among the young, especially the young who, by chance or by choice, are idle and have time on their hands.

I appreciate the argument that abuse does not abrogate the lawful use of alcohol, but there were advantages in the old system. It forced a break at 3 pm, so that someone who was considering drinking unwisely for the rest of the afternoon had to be determined to wait for the pub to reopen, or visit the supermarket. If he made a casual decision, the break helped him to make the right decision.

The break also creates social acceptance of certain hours of drinking. Essentially, the old law said that when someone was not supposed to be working — at lunch time and in the evenings after work—it was all right to drink. I do not know why it is that I regard with pleasure a gin and tonic at 7 o'clock in the evening but regard with revulsion a gin and tonic at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I suspect that it lies in the habits of a lifetime and the social rule that drinking at certain hours is taboo. Unless I see evidence that alcohol consumption will not go up as a result of the Bill, it is essential that we have those sort of taboos to encourage people voluntarily to control their drinking.

In the eloquent speeches of hon. Members we have heard that supermarkets are somehow at the root of the excesses of alcoholics. If supermarkets bear the sole blame for the alcohol problem, why is it that in a Bill that controls licensing laws we do not seize the opportunity to control the sale of alcohol in supermarkets? If the Government had done that I could look more sympathetically at the argument that the Bill will not increase alcohol consumption.

The only thing that makes me hesitate before absolutely opposing the Bill, or abstaining from voting on it, is the possibility that something will come out of the ministerial group that has been set up to achieve interdepartmental co-operation on the problems of alcoholism. However, I believe that we are putting the cart before the horse. We should have had that group, had some recommendations and had some action before we had the Bill. At least the group is there. However, my principal concern is about what we can expect to come out of a combination of departmental examinations of the problems of crime, health and social services and their relationship to alcohol.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House and from both sides of the argument have quoted many statistics, which I do not intend to repeat. However, there is one chilling statistic that has not been mentioned, although I was temporarily out of the House and it may have been quoted then. Published figures reveal that in one third of cases of child abuse there is an alcohol-related factor. At a time when child abuse is a major concern, we need to think carefully before promoting the consumption of a substance that causes or contributes to such crimes.

In the discussion of the Scottish statistics we did not hear that, in the period following liberalisation of licensing laws, cirrhosis of the liver went up by 45 per cent. in Scotland, while it went up by only 17 per cent. in England and Wales. It is an uncomfortable statistic, but it still needs to be considered.

Mr. Colvin: Will my hon. Friend give way? She is wrong.

Miss Widdecombe: I am sorry, no. My hon. Friend suggests that I am wrong. If I am wrong, the Government's published statistics are wrong. My hon. Friend should write to the Minister and ask for a correction. Statistics are cold figures. Behind every statistic on alcohol lie devastated families, ruined health and wasted lives. Above all, alcohol abuse affects the innocent, the victims of drink-driving accidents, the victims of assault and the families who have to suffer the effects of its abuse on a loved one.

The ministerial group that has been set up has in its terms of reference the phrase "It will make such recommendations as from time to time it may seem fit." That is wonderful. Anybody with elementary logic could work out that that could also read, "If from time to time no recommendations seem fit, they need not be made." I want some reassurance that there is a timetable, some definite aim, or something concrete expected from that ministerial group that will so far combat the effects of alcoholism that it will overshadow any effects of rising alcoholism that might result from the Bill. If I can have that assurance from the Dispatch Box, I shall be delighted to vote at least in favour of referring the Bill to Committee. I hope that in Committee some of those aspects will be addressed rather more assiduously than they have been tonight.

I am not opposed in principle to making life easier for publicans or for those who want a drink during the afternoon, but the adverse social effects need to be more carefully looked at. They need more than the cursory acknowledgements that hon. Members on both sides of the House have given them. They need to be addressed in detail. I should like that assurance before I can support the Bill.

8.16 pm

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I feel a certain sense of déjà vu, as most arguments have already been gone over at some length. I am also reminded of the old saying that there are none so deaf as those who will not hear, because when hon. Members hear statistics they automatically say that they are not true. The statistics are true.

The Bill purports to make relatively minor changes in the hours within which licensed premises in England and Wales are permitted to sell alcohol. The changes are being enthusiastically supported by the major drinks manufacturers and distributors and, sad to say, are being rushed through in indecent haste so that they may be implemented early in 1988, at, we are led to believe, the behest of the brewers. Why are the Government in such a hurry? Are Ministers blissfully unaware of the potential consequences of their actions, or are they, because of outside pressure, reprehensibly pushing through as fast as possible a measure which will damage people's health? I should like to know. Moreover, the Bill is not supported by the majority of people in England and Wales, according to recent surveys, so it makes no sense to me to proceed with such haste.

Alcohol consumption in England and Wales, as in Scotland, has risen over the decades as the price of alcohol has fallen in real terms. The damage that has risen in parallel with that increase is well documented and has been gone over today in some depth. To summarise, drinking and driving, accidents, assaults, ill treatment and deprivation of families, ill health and death have risen year after year. However, the Government propose to increase the availability of the most socially damaging substance, without any effective action to attempt to tackle the problems associated with its consumption and abuse.

I shall vote against the Bill. I am not opposed to the consumption of alcohol. I consume it myself, occasionally in some quantity, but within the security of my own home. I enjoy it in moderation. I recognise that there is a happy medium to be struck and that, given that other circumstances were tackled, there might be a case for revising the licensing laws, but surely not in the absence of action on the other problems that have been mentioned.

I do not believe that extending by one third the hours which public houses may open is a minor cosmetic change. Like other hon. Members, I do not believe that there will be no change in the level of alcohol consumed. It defies belief that the brewers and licensees, out of the goodness of their hearts, will open public houses for one third longer merely to gratify the interests of a few tourists. That is not the object. The object is to increase the sale and consumption of alcohol. There can be no other reason for the drinks industry to be pushing for the Bill to go through.

There is evidence that the relaxing of licensing laws increases consumption and, conversely, that tightening those laws reduces it. That has been the position whenever licensing laws have been changed. For example, when the licensing laws were relaxed in Finland, consumption increased dramatically. When the Finns became alarmed about the rise and licensing laws were made more restrictive 10 years later, consumption fell. In the three years following the implementation of the Clayson proposals in Scotland, the consumption of alcohol rose. The fact that it fell between 1980-82 cannot be attributed, in the opinion of the experts, to the Clayson report. The fall in consumption is thought to be due to the recession and the massive increase in taxation that took place in 1981.

There has been a fall in the number of convictions for drunkenness because the police no longer charge people with being drunk and disorderly. That offence used to be common, but I cannot remember the last occasion when I became aware of it being dealt with by the magistrates. It seems that the police no longer deal in that way with those who are drunk and disorderly. The evidence on which the Clayson committee based its claim and on which the Government now base their case — that the implementation of the Clayson proposals in Scotland has been successful—is spurious.

I believe that the relaxation of licensing laws in Scotland over the past 10 years has produced no beneficial effect on Scottish society. In the Clayson report we read about the family pubs that would serve soft drinks and tea and coffee. We were told that these would be cosy, social places in which the public would congregate. There have not been many pubs of that sort appearing in my neck of the woods over the past 10 years, and I do not think that many have appeared in other parts of Scotland.

The result of the Bill will be more physical and mental damage. We shall see more under-age drinking, more problems for women and more drunken driving, leading to more road accidents and more deaths. There is a clear difference between England and Scotland in the incidence of accidents involving drunken driving. When I intervened in the speech of the Home Secretary on this issue, the right hon. Gentleman refused to answer me. In Scotland, the peak time for such accidents begins at 4 pm, whereas it begins at 10 pm in England. At 4 pm, my children and the children of others are returning home from school, and it is they who will be so much at risk from afternoon drinkers.

We know that some applications for licences for premises on which alcohol may be served and consumed are refused. One such application was recently refused in my home town. Why was that? The application was rejected because there would be inadequate parking facilities. What sort of reason is that for a magistrates court to reject the application of a licensee? The provision of "adequate" parking facilities increases the likelihood of people drinking and driving. That is symptomatic of our attitude to alcohol. There is the casual attitude that we can introduce a small measure such as the Bill without doing harm to anyone, and in doing so we ignore all the problems that alcohol produces for the people.

We must not ignore the problems that are caused by the consumption of alcohol. Indeed, the Government are establishing a committee to investigate the issue, which will be the first of its sort to be formed. I understand that all Departments that have any link with the provision and

[Dr. Lewis Moonie]

sale of alcohol will be involved. Against that background we are galloping to enact the Bill before the committee has a chance to report its findings and perhaps to produce some inconvenient conclusions for Ministers to digest.

I worked for many years in psychiatry and preventive medicine and I, like many others, have seen the damage and suffering that have arisen from the increased consumption of alcohol. Psychiatrists, general practitioners and those in the medical profession working in general wards with beds taken up by those suffering from the late effects of liver failure—cirrhosis—along with social workers, policemen and the representatives of many volunteer agencies, have provided us with a great deal of information over the past week or so. They all point to a massive amount of evidence that an increase in the availability of alcohol increases the consumption of it. The workers in the field, as it were, are opposed to the change because they know what the result will be.

The problem of alcohol in our society must be faced honestly and constructively. It must be addressed in the House by co-ordinated action that crosses departmental boundaries. Every Minister is involved in some way. When a strategy has been developed, and not before, let the Government bring forward a reform of the licensing laws, if that is seen as a reasonable and constructive part of the plan. Let us have no truck with this shabby attempt to pre-empt effective action and let us not pretend that licensing has nothing to do with the real problems of alcohol abuse. I urge hon. Members on both side of the House to join me in opposing this ill-considered piece of proposed legislation. Let use send the Minister away to think seriously about the problems that it will cause.

8.26 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am glad to have the opportunity to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). I have a properly declared interest — it appears in the Members' Register — in Scottish and Newcastle Breweries. I spent some time with the company and had the opportunity to study the position north of the border. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) have graphically described the situation as they see it, and I would not presume to improve upon their special and local knowledge. However, I shall offer the House some comparisons and personal observations.

First, I challenge the assertion that there has been an increase in consumption north of the border related to the change in the law. I endeavoured to intervene in the speech of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) on this issue, but the right hon. Gentleman declined to give way to allow me to do so. I suspect that he did so because he knows that there is no fact or statistic to substantiate the claim that there has been an increase in the consumption of alcohol in Scotland in the 10 years since the law was changed and that that is related to the change in the law. It is correct that there has been a small increase in overall consumption, and it is correct also that that is attributable to an increase in the number of female drinkers. That is the direct result of a social change and has nothing to do with the change in the law. It stems from the fact that the premises provided for the consumption of alcohol have improved.

I spent some time on Tyneside 25 years ago, and at that time it was a symbol of a boy's virility that on his 18th birthday he was given membership of the local social club by his father, uncle or the family generally. He then became a man and went to drink beer with men. Twenty-five years have passed and the days of the big swill on Tyneside are over. Social clubs of the sort to which I have referred are in decline. That is due partly to the decline of the smoke-stack industries and the rise of employment in high-tech industries. The after-work thirst is no longer as great. It is due also to a desire, especially on the part of the young, for improved surroundings and circumstances in which young men and their girl friends can drink and eat.

The company to which I was attached and its major competitor north of the border have made a major investment in modern premises of good design and with good decor. In some instances family rooms were provided. The company has ensured that it provides excellent facilities for its customers. It seeks to provide a relaxed atmosphere and what my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary referred to as "a more cheerful and welcoming pub." There was no comparison between what I found last year north of the border — I spent a considerable amount of time there — and what I experienced over 20 years ago in Sauchiehall street on a Saturday night. It was not possible to make a relevant comparison. In hard, statistical terms there has probably been little change in alcohol consumption, but I believe from what I have seen that socially there has been an immeasurable improvement.

This must be contrasted with what has been found by myself and my colleagues who represent seaside constituencies in the north-east, the north-west and the south coast of England. On many Saturdays in the summer we experience what is known as the beano party. A coachload of day trippers empties a crate of brown ale kept in the back of the coach before arriving. They tip out of the coach and into the pub and are hell-bent on getting drunk. At 2.30 on a Saturday afternoon the day visitors, undeniably having had far too much to drink, empty themselves en masse—or are emptied by the police—on to the sea front. The reason why they drink so fast is that they say, "We've got 10 or 15 minutes, lads, to get another five pints in before we're chucked out." Not surprisingly, that creates problems of crowd control.

The same people who are thrown out of the public houses go on to supermarkets or off-licences in my constituency and others and clear the shelves. They take canned beer to the sea front and drink it there, with no control whatever. It is nonsense that a landlord is required to empty his pub at 2.30 on a hot summer's afternoon so that his customers can go across the road to the off-licence and take iced cans of lager or beer from the fridge only to go back to the pub where they will sit and drink on the doorstep, leaving the cans for the landlord to clear up. It is nonsense, too, that one can buy alcohol in an off-licence from 8.30 am until 10.30 pm without a break, while one is not allowed sensibly and responsibly to consume alcohol in a pub, where one is under supervision.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to those "dangerous animals", the "responsible drinkers". I should like to think that I could class myself as one of them. The right hon. Gentleman said that we did not understand the problems. However, I spent some time training in the counselling of those with alcohol-related problems. I have worked with problem teenagers and made television programmes for them, and I think that I am aware of the problems. I have also been involved personally in the treatment of alcoholics. I know that there is a dark side. Anyone who has had to search a home to find half a bottle of whisky hidden in the stuffing of an armchair or the cistern of a lavatory knows that. Anyone who has seen the dog being taken for a walk too frequently and who knows that somewhere out there in the hedgerows is hidden a half bottle of spirits knows that. Anybody who has had to strip someone off and remove urine-soaked underwear and vomit knows that. Anyone who has experienced the knock at midnight and the request, "Please come and identify the bodies; there's been a crash," knows that there is a problem.

However, that problem would not be exacerbated by reforms such as that before the House. The problem is caused by the solitary abuse of alcohol bought cheaply from off-licences and supermarkets. The problem of under-age drinking will be solved, I believe, by education — by the teaching of what are known as "sensible drinking skills". The brewers and the drink trade probably contribute more than any other sector to education programmes for young people. I have a daughter of 15. She is bright, responsible and attractive, and I hope that I am justifiably proud of her. She has attractive male and female friends, many of whom look older than 18, and it would be naive of me to think that some of them do not sometimes go into public houses. I would not wish to encourage young people to break the law. However, I would sooner the young drank in the controlled atmosphere of a public house, under the watchful eye of a good landlord, than that they cleared the supermarket shelves, then had a wild party and got drunk at home.

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) cast a slur on the brewers—I think inadvertently—because I do not believe that the Bill is driven by the profit motive or that it would cause a massive increase in the consumption of alcohol. I believe that the Bill paves the way for the better use, and probably the better management, of public houses. Many brewers, landlords and tenants are seeking to diversify into soft drinks, tea, coffee and food. The Bill will result in an increase in employment. I hope that there will be an increase in profits, too. But I do not believe that that profit or the increase in jobs will be related solely to an increase in the consumption of alcohol.

The Bill has been described as a measure introduced with indecent haste. The Erroll committee reported 15 years ago and the Clayson reforms were introduced 10 years ago. If 10 to 15 years of consideration represents indecent haste, I shudder to think what real speed might look like. The effects of such a measure have been tried and proven in Scotland over a period of 10 years. Those effects are socially acceptable and they will be good for the tourist industry. Safeguards are built into the Bill to prevent nuisance and abuse. The Bill is a modest measure on which my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary should be congratulated, and I hope that it receives wide support throughout the House.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I draw your attention to the fact that the Register of Members' Interests is not yet available? According to a resolution passed by the House on 12 June 1975

> "any interest disclosed in a copy of the Register of Members' Interests shall be regarded as sufficient disclosure for the purpose of taking part in any Division in the House or in any of its Committees."

The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) properly disclosed an interest. However, I am concerned that many hon. Members who have not taken part in the debate have not been able to disclose their interest. When similar circumstances arose in 1981 in connection with the Lloyds Bank Bill, Mr. Speaker felt it necessary to issue guidance on the matter. He said that it would help if hon. Members with financial interests did not vote. I wonder whether you, Sir, could consider the matter before the vote so that hon. Members representing the brewers' interests who have not been able to declare a financial interest may receive guidance that they should not take part in the vote. I understand that the brewers are fairly well represented on the Tory Benches.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that every right hon. and hon. Member will vote in accordance with the Standing Orders of the House.

8.39 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): I have two difficulties. First, as a new Member I am faced with my first free vote. I therefore have the serious problem of having to analyse the debate and listen to the contributions rather than simply turning up and voting on request. I am trying very hard to overcome that handicap and I have been in the Chamber as much as possible.

Secondly, this is a difficult debate because it involves complex issues. I have listened to the arguments in all conscience and tried to reach a decision. I have found that some facts support one side of the arguments while other statistics support the other side of the argument. All hon. Members have called in aid medical authority and some hon. Members have called in aid the great and eminent authorities of other professions.

We should also consider the civil liberties not just of those who wish to drink at the time and place they feel are appropriate but of those who suffer—the people injured in car accidents, the children injured on the way home by an afternoon drinker and the children abused by parents who come home drunk during the day or night.

I was disturbed by the Home Secretary's remarks about the possibility of amending the Bill in Committee. His almost throwaway line about also extending drinking hours on Sunday frightened many of those who entered the debate with an open mind. Many people, including me, will wonder what other secrets may emerge in Committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Plainly, hon. Members can table any amendments they choose in Committee, but the Government will oppose any relaxation of Sunday licensing hours. We will try to persuade our friends to support us.

Mr. Allen: I am grateful for that reassurance. But the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber when the Home Secretary gave his reasoning. The right hon. Gentleman felt that he could not get away with it this time and that such a proposal would compromise the rest of the Bill. If Conservative Members have a different interpretation of his comments, I shall gladly give way to allow them to make their view plain.

I regret the fact that Conservative Members have not been given the same liberty as Labour Members and been

[Mr. Allen]

given a free vote. Because we have a free vote, democratic decision-making processes can be brought to bear, which perhaps does not happen in other circumstances, and the facts can be considered. I suggest that we take that process a stage further, so that the Bill's broader effects—not just its effects on hours and licences—such as health, social and economic implications, are reviewed and better understood than they would be under normal procedures in the House. I suggest that we create either a Select Committee or a Special Standing Committee to examine in detail for a few weeks or perhaps a month or two—I am not familiar with these operations—the various facets of the legislation and their possible effects.

A Special Standing Committee could call as witnesses representatives of landlords and their various associations, brewers' representatives, representatives of the trade unions of the full-time and part-time workers in the industry and the medical and professional experts to whom reference has been made. That Committee would take evidence, including that being considered by the Wakeham review. Its members would have the benefit, when they become members of the Standing Committee, of having heard for six, eight or even 10 weeks solid evidence from all parts of the political spectrum and all the interested groups which wish to contribute.

With that in mind, after the Second Reading vote, a motion will be moved calling for the question of a Special Standing Committee to examine the Bill.

Dr. Moonie: Only if the Government win the Second Reading Division.

Mr. Allen: As my hon. Friend reminds me, that will happen only if the Government win. My mathematics may be a little awry, but I would not put a drink on the vote going the other way. I commend the proposal that a Special Standing Committee be constituted so that we can carry out our functions relating to the Bill.

8.45 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I have never failed to declare an interest in the House, no matter what it is. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has never failed to remind me to declare an interest in any debate that may relate to the licensed trade. Therefore, I happily declare an interest on two counts. The first is as a parliamentary adviser to the National Licensed Victuallers Association. I say "adviser", and not "spokesman," because there are many occasions on which I do not agree with the association's view. An adviser would be useless if he did not occasionally disagree with those who appointed him to tender advice. Secondly, I declare an interest as a tenant licensee. I do not call myself a publican because the manager of my pub has a fit if I ever go behind the bar to pull a pint. He knows that on those occasions people usually get over the measure and are charged under the price. Nevertheless, I have some knowledge of the trade, and it is with that knowledge to assist me that I take part in the debate.

I pay tribute to the establishment during the last Parliament of the all-party group for the licensed trade under the joint chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). That group assisted my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) in promoting his private Member's Bill which, alas, was killed off—if that is not too strong a description—by my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point and others who shared his view. I do not think it will be quite as easy to kill off this Bill, because it has Government backing. The Bill also enjoys a great measure of all-party support, which we all welcome. It has the benefit of a so-called "mandate", because the Conservative party was the only party to include in its general election manifesto a commitment to reform our outdated licensing laws.

I accept, to some extent, the suggestion of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) that this is the sort of measure that should be considered by a Special Standing Committee, but the hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that this issue has been debated ad nauseam for 15 years. I think that all the views that have to be expressed have already been expressed, to such an extent that many of us are sick and tired of hearing them and are profoundly relieved that the Government have decided at last to bring forward what many have described as a "modest" measure.

The Bill has been described by some hon. Members who seemed to be talking against it as a "step-by-step" measure. I welcome that. The Government would be wise not to proceed too far too quickly. We should get the Bill on the statute book and then consider in the light of experience where we should go next. That is what happened with Scotland, and it is on the grounds of the Scottish experience that the Bill will find its passage easier.

As so many people have said, the Bill is a long overdue reform. A. J. P. Taylor described our licensing laws as

> "a lasting memento of the Great War".

I believe that he was referring to the Defence of the Realm (Amendment) (No. 3) Act 1915, which related to the danger of munitions workers drinking in the afternoon. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood referred to the many places where tourists can obtain drinks in the middle of the afternoon, although he omitted to mention riverboats from Westminster pier. He was right to point out that there are many places where people can obtain a drink when it is not possible to do so in a traditional pub. That is the nub of the case for reform. The law is daft and needs reform.

The threat to the traditional British pub is another reason for reform. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point has often waxed eloquent in the House on the merits of the traditional English pub. I would argue that my right hon. Friend is himself a traditionalist. Yet when it comes to a measure of this kind he goes off at a tangent—some might say over the top—in arguing against a measure that would enhance the British pub and enable it to survive in the face of mounting and at times unfair competition. I shall give some figures to show the amount of competition that has arisen in recent years. In 1904 there were 6,600 clubs in the United Kingdom. There are more than 30,000 today. In 1904 there were 90,000 pubs. Today the total has declined to around 70,000. The trend for clubs is up, and the trend for pubs is down.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): The hon. Gentleman talks of an unfair trading relationship between pubs and clubs, but clubs, whether political or otherwise, provide an outlet for the brewers where the on-costs are met by members of the club, so they are very profitable for the brewers. Moreover, landlords and brewers do not provide the social aspects and the services that are found in clubs in communities. The Bill will not redress the balance. It will have the opposite effect and distort the trading relationship. As a supporter of clubs, I should be most disappointed if the measure was used to distort trading patterns to the disadvantage of clubs.

Mr. Colvin: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says. At present, clubs have a somewhat unfair advantage over pubs. They benefit from measures such as those related to gambling and amusement machines with prizes. I take no brief from the brewers, but I imagine that they would be keen to see an increase in the number of clubs as well as in the number of pubs.

Another aspect of competition for the traditional English pub is the proliferation of outlets, a subject touched on by several of my hon. Friends. The way in which people can walk into off-licences, grocers' shops, supermarkets, wine shops and so on, and buy drink, often without any supervision from behind the counter, is most alarming. Indeed, I believe that it is perfectly legal for people under age to walk into a cash-and-carry warehouse and walk out with a case of wine, provided that they have the money to pay for it. If the Government wish to deal with under-age drinking and alcohol abuse, they should consider the proliferation of off-licences and the like. That was a point made by many hon. Members who referred to the dangers of under-age drinking.

Mr. Allen: Rather than simply suggesting that someone somewhere should look at that, does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is exactly the kind of point that could be examined in detail by a Special Standing Committee? Will he therefore consider supporting that suggestion?

Mr. Colvin: I do not support such a procedure in this case, as I believe that the issue has been debated quite enough, both in public and in private.

With regard to alcohol abuse and the dangers of under-age drinking, some hon. Members suggested that the publican was at fault in permitting it. In fact, a publican who permits it puts his livelihood on the line. For that reason, the public house is probably the most controlled and socially acceptable place for drinking to take place. The hon. Member for Kirkaldy (Dr. Moonie), who is a doctor, referred to the dangers of drinking in isolation. That cannot happen in a pub, but it can happen at home if people stock up with alcohol from supermarkets.

On the question of under-age drinking, the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) that identity cards should be carried seemed a good idea and one that could perhaps be debated on another occasion.

I think it is generally accepted that there is public support for the measure. The hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) claimed that that was not so, but a survey published this month showed that there was substantial support in England and Wales, and that the measure was backed by a majority of pubgoers. The survey is entitled

"Attitudes to Longer Pub Hours"

and was carried out by Public Attitude Surveys Research Limited on its own initiative, without any pressure group sponsorship. The survey found that just over half—51 per cent.—of all adults in England and Wales thought that pubs should be allowed to open for longer in the afternoons for at least some days of the week, whilst only 35 per cent. were against any afternoon opening. The survey also looked at the attitudes of regular pubgoers, whose support for the Bill was also clear. Among those who visit a pub or club for a drink at least once a week, 64 per cent. support afternoon opening on one or more days, and 55 per cent. specifically want Sunday afternoon opening. That is pretty strong support.

A number of hon. Members have referred to what they describe as the "drinking-up rule." Rather more crudely, I would call it the "10-minute swill." It is acknowledged by the trade and by customers that more flexible opening hours and longer opening at night would reduce that danger. As we see far too often, the so-called "one for the road" often becomes one for the morgue.

Several hon. Members have mentioned the possibility of additional jobs being created, and estimates have varied between 25,000 and 50,000. Christie's, the estate agents who specialise in the licensed trade, suggested that almost 100,000 jobs might be generated. I endorse what was said by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson), that there should be proper negotiations between employers and employees about the rates of pay for an extremely arduous job. Perhaps that is why employees' organisations were not exactly quick to voice their support for the campaign for flexible hours. However, generally speaking, they now support the proposals.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) questioned increased consumption resulting from the proposed reforms. Everyone acknowledges that consumption might increase. However, although the evidence in Scotland shows increased consumption, it is not directly attributable to flexible hours. That could be the case in England and Wales as well. The important aspect of flexible hours is the increase in other forms of business in public houses —meals, snacks and coffee—and is one reason why additional employees will be required. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not believe that additional jobs would be created without a massive increase in alcohol consumption. However, people use pubs to eat and to drink beverages, and are not necessarily going to consume alcohol.

Many hon. Members have referred to the Scottish experience. When my right hon. Friend reviewed the liberalisation of licensing laws in Scotland, with the benefit of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, he concluded that the majority thought that extending licensing hours had resulted in a more sensible pattern of drinking. Certainly there has not been the explosion of lawlessness predicted by the doom merchants. The number of drink-related offences is down, and although the revised licensing laws cannot be the sole factor for that, there can be no doubt that reform has played its part.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy referred to the impact of drink on health. I rudely interrupted my hon. Friend and said that her facts were wrong. She suggested that there had been an increase in deaths from cirrhosis of the liver because of the more flexible drinking hours in Scotland. That is manifestly wrong. A detailed survey by the specialist alcohol unit at Edinburgh university, conducted by Dr. Martin Plant and Mr. John Duffy, show that health harm indicators were neutral — that licensing hour changes had neither improved nor worsened them. They also noted that public

[Mr. Colvin]

order offences had shown a marked improvement. The figures are interesting. Cirrhosis takes several years to reach a terminal condition, so 1976 should not be taken as the base. Indeed, 1981 would be a fairer base, and between that year and 1986, deaths in Scotland from cirrhosis of the liver were down 16 per cent., while in England and Wales they had risen by 14 per cent. Those are the real facts.

I wish to refer to some of the shortcomings of the Bill. The right to open from 11 am to 11 pm is welcome, but surely it would be better if there was a right to open for any 12 hours between 10 am and midnight, with the licensee deciding what hours were best. For the majority of licensees, afternoon opening may not be worth while. The licensee understands the local trading conditions and, after all, if freedom of choice is an important principle, he should be allowed to choose.

Secondly, the right of the licensee to determine the hours that he will trade is important. Should the brewer insist on imposing the so-called permitted hours clause in licensees' agreements, it should be resisted. I doubt whether the Bill is the right vehicle for changing the law. Perhaps we can get support from the Opposition when it comes to re-examining the landlord and tenant legislation, which needs to be reformed to give licensees protection against brewers who, in some cases, can use the permitted hours clause to get rid of tenants.

There has been much debate about pubs opening on Sundays. Today the House has had a great deal to say about events at Enniskillen and has expressed outrage, anger, concern and sympathy for those in Northern Ireland. It is ironic that the last time the House debated licensing laws was to permit pubs to open on Sundays. I hope that the House will think again about the facility for England and Wales. If an amendment is brought forward in Committee, I ask my right hon. Friend to think carefully about it before being firmly against it.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the measure. Britain is still one of the most sober nations. The Bill will enable it stay sober.

9.5 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): The debate has shown hon. Members' strong concern about problems related to the misuse of alcohol. That anxiety has led hon. Members on both sides of the House to declare their opposition to the Bill, and for many it overrides the acknowledgement that our existing licensing laws may not be perfect.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) pointed out that Opposition Members will have a free vote. In view of the speeches made by many Conservative Members, I wonder what the outlook would be if the Government had a free vote. I shall vote against the Bill, and I urge anyone who shares my concern about alcohol abuse to do the same.

Some hon. Members are opposed to alcohol as a matter of principle or on grounds of religion. I respect such views, although I do not share them. My opposition to the Bill is not based on any killjoy motive. I enjoy a social drink and, like many hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I regard myself as a responsible drinker, but I am not convinced that we need to extend pub opening hours to meet a need or demand for extra time for social drinking. The arguments against extra opening far outweigh any advantages to the social drinker.

Earlier today, the Home Secretary acknowledged that alcohol abuse is a significant problem in our society. The Government should tackle that problem before encouraging greater consumption of alcohol.

I remind the House of the size of the problem that we face. In the United Kingdom, we spend over £16,000 million a year on alcohol. The consumption of alcohol has more than doubled over the past 30 years—a staggering increase, which has largely been related to the cost of drink. The Home Secretary said that he did not know whether the Bill would lead to an increase in the consumption of alcohol. He acknowledged that it might do so, but he said also that, even if consumption increases, abuses may not increase. I ask the Under-Secretary of State to tell the House of the evidence for that suggestion. Every increase in alcohol consumption has led to increased problems of alcohol abuse. Why should it be different now? At present, alcohol abuse costs the country £2 billion each year. There is a vast cost to our Health Service and to industry. Even Government research shows that, through alcohol abuse, industry loses between 8 million and 14 million working days a year—far more than are lost through strikes.

Alcohol abuse costs the country over £5 million per day. That does not include the individual and family misery of those directly affected or the impact on those who are victims of the many who turn to crime. Alcohol is often a factor in criminal activity, including, most significantly, drinking and driving. One in five of all deaths on the road is the result of drinking and driving. Each year between 1,400 and 1,500 people die as a result of drinking and driving and 8,000 people are found guilty each month of driving when over the limit. Half of them have driven with twice the legal limit of alcohol in their blood. Since the introduction of the breathalyser, more than 1 million people have been found guilty of driving when over the limit. There is a dreadful picture of avoidable deaths.

The misuse of alcohol also does much damage in other ways. About 45 per cent. of violent crimes are committed by people who have been drinking—60,000 crimes per year. Alcohol misuse is involved in half of all crimes, in two thirds of suicides, in one third of all cases of child abuse, in many cases of domestic violence and in one third of all divorces.

Alcohol abuse leads to premature death and to avoidable health problems for many people. As the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said, deaths from cirrhosis have increased during the past 15 years from 1,600 a year to more than 3,000, hospital admissions of people with alcohol-related mental disorders have increased in the same period from 8,000 to 15,000 and one in four hospital admissions are alcohol-related. About 36 per cent. of accidents involving pedestrians are alcohol-related, as are 33 per cent. of all domestic accidents. Many fires and many deaths in fires are also related to alcohol. Action on Alcohol Abuse put the figure at 52 per cent. The brewers say that we do not need to worry because the figure is only 36 per cent. About 45 per cent. of all fatal accidents involving young people are alcohol-related. Figures from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents show that 20 per cent. of drownings occur after alcohol has been consumed.

While we must all be horrified that the misuse of drugs kills many young people in this country, 10 times as many youngsters are killed or seriously injured by the misuse of alcohol. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Royal College of General Practitioners has estimated that there are 40,000 preventable deaths each year in the United Kingdom. It is now generally accepted that alcohol is the third largest killer in this country after heart disease and cancer.

Mr. Hurd: That body supports the Bill.

Mrs. Taylor: The Home Secretary says that the royal college supports the Bill. I shall come to that in a moment.

It is not surprising that representatives of all the medical royal colleges are against the Bill. At their meeting on Friday, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Surgeons of England—I believe that the Royal College of General Practitioners was represented — the Royal College of Occupational Medicine, the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and the Royal College of Physicians of Glasgow announced their opposition to the Bill because they said that it would make alcohol more available, that there would be more drink-related problems and that it would cause more harm to our society. They accept, as do many Ministers, that the cost of alcohol misuse is £2 billion per year.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Is the hon. Lady therefore suggesting a reduction in the current licensing hours?

Mrs. Taylor: I am willing to discuss any details and perhaps we could discuss that in Committee. If the hon. Gentleman wants to put forward some positive suggestions for reducing alcohol abuse, some of us will be open-minded in Committee about any means of doing so.

The medical profession realises that alcohol is putting an extra strain on our doctors at the very time when the Health Service is crying out for resources. Yet against that background the Minister has chosen to introduce legislation to relax the licensing laws. Why? The cynics may say that it is because of pressure from the brewers —a simple reward for all the poster sites made available during the general election. I believe that the Home Office is far less willing to move against alcohol and more inclined to be swayed by the brewers than other Departments, although perhaps I am exaggerating the influence of those concerned about alcohol.

Earlier this year the Secretary of State for Social Services said:

> "We have to go further in persuading people who are not anywhere near becoming dependent on alcohol that their consumption at the wrong time during the working day can be damaging."

He also stated:

> "Because it is so widely and pleasurably used, the general public is largely ignorant of the cost of alcoholic misuse to our society."

The recognition of that problem is perhaps the reason why the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler) was moved from the DHSS, just as previous Ministers who have been convinced about the dangers of alcohol or smoking have been moved.

The Opposition want to be positive and to help the Minister by suggesting some of the steps that he should take to deal with alcohol abuse before we legislate. The Minister should at least delay the Bill until he has received the views of his interdepartmental committee which, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) suggested, could monitor the evidence in Scotland. Alternatively, the Home Secretary and the Minister could support the proposition of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) to send the Bill to a Special Standing Committee.

There are other steps which the Minister should take. Whether or not he proceeds with the legislation, he should tighten the law on drink-driving. As I have said, 1,400 to 1,500 lives are lost unnecessarily each year. More lives will be lost if the Bill is passed, especially if there is more late afternoon drinking which will endanger youngsters who come home from school and play outside. My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) pointed out that the peak accident hour for drinking and driving has shifted to the late afternoon in Scotland. If the Scottish pattern is repeated, we shall, as Dr. James Dunbar, the Tayside police surgeon pointed out, have 50 to 100 more deaths a year at this critical playing time for children in England and Wales. Even supporters of the Bill can see a need for action on drink-driving.

We should have random breath tests and reduce the limit of alcohol allowed in the blood of a driver. The hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) said that a little alcohol — a glass of wine or two — did not matter. Indeed, he implied that Members of Parliament are obliged to drink that much at receptions; only a man could have made that remark. Obviously, it matters how much people drink. It is a fact that at 60 mg per 100 ml a driver is twice as likely to have an accident as a non-drinker. At 80 mg, which is the present limit, a driver is four times more likely to have an accident. The limit should be reduced and we should consider a still lower rate for new drivers who are usually young. That could be helpful.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does the hon. Lady agree that it is reasonable to drink a glass of wine or two and to drive a car afterwards?

Mrs. Taylor: The Minister's advice is that if one is driving it is better to abstain completely. We should all do well to heed that advice.

The third thing that the Government should do—it might help the hon. Member for Harrogate in his predicament about what to do at receptions — is to encourage the drinking of non-alcoholic or low-alcohol drinks. A whole range of those drinks is now available, and the Government could do simple things to help that part of the drinks industry. Although I am generally in favour of raising the tax on alcohol at least in line with inflation, I believe that there is one area on which the Government could act directly. It is wrong that lower-strength alcoholic beers and wines should be taxed at the same rate as their higher-strength counterparts. Simple measures such as correcting that defect would help to deter alcohol abuse.

The fourth thing that the Government should do before relaxing licensing laws is to deal with the advertising of alcohol. Several countries that treat that problem seriously have already banned advertising on television. I am not sure whether that is the answer, but it is in the Government's power to alter the balance of spending on the advertising of alcohol. Last year, £200 million was spent on advertising by the drinks industry. That is £60 a second. The Government's proportionate response to that £60, in terms of spending on alcohol education, is 10p.

[Mrs. Taylor]

In the single month of December, the drinks industry will spend more than £20 million encouraging us to drink more over Christmas. The total budget of the Department of Transport's campaign on safer driving for a full year is £2·5 million, and it is planning to reduce that next year. That is completely petty by comparison with what is spent on encouraging people to drink more.

I want to say a word about young people; hon. Members on both sides of the House have recognised this subject as a major problem. The Health Education Authority's survey, which showed that 65 per cent. of all 14 to 15-year-olds and 30 per cent. of all 11 to 12-year-olds have had a drink in the past seven days, is worrying for everyone. A person arrested for being drunk is more likely to be a 16-year-old boy than a middle-aged man. On Friday, we had a debate on crime prevention, during which the Minister of State, Home Office emphasised that the peak age group for crime is that of teenage youths, many of whom offend while under the influence of drink.

It is not easy to determine what could be done to stop that. Spending money on education about alcohol is obviously a factor; but much more important is the whole atmosphere and image of drinking. That atmosphere encourages young people to think that success, both economic and social, is linked with the advertisers' image of drinking. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) emphasised that fact. He explained that alcohol is a much more serious problem than glue, drugs and all the other things, yet it does not have the priority that it should from the Government.

There is much that could and should be done before we legislate to change licensing laws. The Government may soon be advised by its own advisory body, which was set up, only recently, to take a different course from that which the Minister is proposing. The Home Secretary never answered the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook about why he has set up the interdepartmental committee under the Lord Privy Seal while pressing ahead with the Bill. Why legislate first and examine the evidence and obtain the advice second? Why is the Secretary of State doing things with this haste and in this order? Perhaps the explanation can be found in something that the Minister of State said on Friday; perhaps he was referring to the committee chaired by the Lord Privy Seal when he said:

> "It is sometimes said in Whitehall that setting up interministerial groups is a mark of complete despair and that they are unlikely to be effective." — [*Official Report*, 6 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 1177.]

I do not believe that the Government want positive measures from that interdepartmental committee, because they have already prejudged the issue and that is why they are rushing the Bill through.

The Home Secretary said nothing that takes us any further in dealing with the problems of alcohol abuse. He did not announce one initiative and did not even try to reassure the House by telling it that new measures are on the way. His speech was a one-sided case for liberalising the licensing laws and he said little about action on the dangers and the damage caused by alcohol. He was asked by the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) why he had not gone further and included Sunday opening hours in the Bill. With complete honesty, the Home Secretary admitted that that was for tactical reasons. He said that he did not want to overload the Bill and endanger its success. When pressed, the Home Secretary refused to be drawn on whether he would support a Back-Bench amendment. That was later clarified in an intervention by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, and that happened after obvious and hasty consultation outside the Chamber. I hope that the Home Secretary will stick to the assurances given by his junior Minister, because several of his hon. Friends have indicated their intention to press firmly for extending the Bill to Sunday opening.

I hope that the Under-Secretary will tell us that not only will the Government vote against all attempts to extend the Bill to Sunday, but they will also vote against any attempt automatically to extend opening hours to midnight. If he will not give that assurance, it will be clear that the Bill is the thin end of the wedge and is not concerned with the problems caused by extra drinking. The Home Secretary implied that he would like further to extend opening hours and would like to extend the changes to Sundays, and that only tactics had stopped him.

Mr. Hurd: I think that in my speech I met that point three times, and explained why I did not think it sensible to overload the Bill by including Sundays.

Mrs. Taylor: That is another admission by the right hon. Gentleman that he would like to do that, but does not feel that he could get away with it at this time. If the Bill is accepted, there will be extra drinking. About 90 to 95 per cent. of adults in Britain already drink alcohol. Therefore, the emphasis of the Bill and the reason behind it cannot be to attract new drinkers. The emphasis will be to increase the consumption of those who already drink, but nothing will be done about drinking and driving, crime and alcohol, the problems of under-age drinking, the weight of advertising or the lack of education about alcohol.

The Bill will make changes, but will do nothing to improve the safeguards and reduce alcohol abuse. It cannot be supported. Every increase in alcohol consumption in Britain has led to an increase in alcohol-related problems. Simply to encourage more drinking, as this Bill does, without providing safeguards is irresponsible. I urge hon. Members to oppose the Bill.

9.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hogg): The Bill is founded on a proposition with which I hope all hon. Members will agree, that restrictions that cannot be justified in terms of principle or of practical application should not remain part either of our law or of our national life. It is because there are elements in our licensing laws that are unduly restrictive and that cannot be justified that we are asking the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

That approach has been supported in express terms by the British Medical Association and the Royal College of General Practitioners. Both bodies wrote to us formally, and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has read to the House what they said. They gave our measure express and clear support.

Before I respond to the arguments, it is right that I should remind the House of the main features of the Bill, the changes that it makes and those that it does not make. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir

B. Braine) said, it is a modest Bill, the main object of which is to do away with the compulsory afternoon closing period of two and a half hours on every day save Sunday. It is a reforming Bill, in that it improves procedures and removes unjustified features within existing practice. I was very glad that my right hon. Friend was able to support some of the measures in that regard.

It is a balanced Bill because it gives local residents, the police and justices a greater power to revoke licences than they previously enjoyed. Of course, it is a Bill that is associated with a reinforced commitment on the part of the Government to bring together, co-ordinate and give fresh impetus to those departmental policies that are designed to tackle the problems of alcohol abuse. That is the purpose, the justification and the long-term strategy of the ministerial group chaired by my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal. I very much hope that this ministerial group will not disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe).

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I wish to ask the Minister a simple question. If this interdepartmental committee is so important, why is the Minister pushing forward this legislation before that committee reports?

Mr. Hogg: That is precisely the point to which I shall come very shortly, if the hon. Lady will be patient.

I wish to deal with several issues raised in the debate, including that mentioned by the hon. Lady. The first and principal question is whether the Bill, if passed, will lead to a significant increase in the consumption or misuse of alcohol. I want to make it plain that I do not accept that the Bill, if passed, will lead to a significant increase in the consumption or misuse of alcohol. [HON. MEMBERS: "How do you know?"] I am trying to explain in some detail to Opposition Members the evidence that supports that conclusion.

There are a number of points on which we need to focus. First, the relaxation contemplated in the Bill is extremely modest. It does away with the compulsory closing time of two and a half hours and, in some places, extends evening opening hours by 30 minutes. This is far less than the 1977 extension in Scotland, which allowed pubs to be open on a Sunday when previously they were not, extended evening opening hours by one hour and permitted afternoon opening hours. It was significant that the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who has personal experience of the working of the law in Scotland, supported the Government's proposals in this regard and said that the reform in Scotland was both desirable and long overdue.

The evidence from Scotland is plain. It shows that, among men, the relaxation in the licensing hours did not lead to a statistically significant increase in the consumption of alcohol. That evidence is spelt out in detail in this report, which I commend to Opposition Members for detailed study.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Minister accept that there is a major difference in the statistics for employed men and those for unemployed men, and that the rate of consumption among employed men increased substantially, whereas that among unemployed men, for obvious reasons decreased?

Mr. Hogg: I do not accept that point in the way that it has been put by the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson). It is true that consumption by unemployed men fell. However, I do not accept the second part of the hon. Gentleman's proposition.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No, not at the moment. I propose to proceed, if only to inform the Opposition Front Bench who are clearly ignorant of the evidence.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. We will begin——

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hogg: It is remarkable how unwilling the Opposition Front Bench are to listen to a little fact, but unfortunately they must listen.

We will begin at page 43 of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys report, which states:

> "Alcohol consumption among men as a whole was virtually the same in 1984 as it had been in 1976".

The report goes on to detail that proposition. For example, page 7 of the report says that table 3.1, the relevant one,

> "shows that for men as a whole consumption rose very slightly from 14·3 units a week in 1976 to 14·5 units in 1984. Neither this increase nor any change in a particular age group is statistically significant."

The report also contains an examination of the detailed figures. For example, on page 12 we learn about the average consumption among drinkers in 1976 and the average consumption in 1984. In 1976 average consumption was 18·7 units; in 1984 it was 19·3 units. The point that hon. Members must grasp—a point that I have already made—is that the relaxation in Scotland was much more dramatic than the relaxation that we are contemplating in the Bill. There is no evidence whatever——

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way in a moment. There is no evidence to show——

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One at a time, please.

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way to the hon. Lady when I have finished this point.

There is no evidence whatever that there has been a significant increase in consumption due to a change in licensing laws, but there is evidence that there has been a fall in the rate of consumption.

Mrs. Taylor: I should like to ask the Minister a simple question regarding the Scottish evidence that I believe will clarify the position. Is it not a fact that, for every single group, except unemployed males, consumption in Scotland has increased?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Lady is wrong. There was a substantial increase in the case of women. That consumption has already been dealt with in previous speeches. The major and fundamental conclusion is that to which I have already referred the House at some length. It is a conclusion that is supported by consideration of the effects of the licensing law change on health and public order offences.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I am going to continue for the moment.

[Mr. Hogg]

We have had the advantage of reading an article written by Messrs Duffy and Plant in the *British Medical Journal*, published on 4 January 1986. That article contained a comprehensive review on the effect of alcohol on medical conditions. They examined, for example, mortality from liver cirrhosis, mortality due to alcohol dependency, total alcohol-related mortality and hospital admissions through alcohol dependence. They examined all those issues in considerable detail, and the conclusion to which they came was:

> "In relation to health, the new Scottish licensing arrangements may be viewed neither as a cause of harm nor as a source of benefit. They have, in effect, been neutral."

That conclusion is justified under each heading to which I have referred.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way when I have made my next point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No. I shall give way when I have made my next point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister has said that he will give way in due course.

Mr. Hogg: I come now to the next point. I am not surprised that the Opposition do not like it, because I am giving the facts. They are never keen to listen to the facts. We are now coming to some more.

The point that I have been making is that the changes in Scotland have had no deleterious effect. We can establish that by looking at convictions for drunken driving, which is a persuasive guide. For the decade 1975-1985, in England and Wales convictions for drunken driving rose by 64·1 per cent. In Scotland over the same period, convictions rose by 4·99 per cent. Because in all three countries 1977 was a low year for convictions, I thought it proper to do another calculation—contrasting 1977, when the measures were introduced, and 1985. Between 1977 and 1985, in England and Wales drunken driving offences went up by 102 per cent. In Scotland, over the same period, they increased by 41 per cent.

There are several other relevant indicators, most notably the casualty rate in drunken driving road accidents among the most vulnerable groups — pedestrians, children and cyclists. This answers the point made by the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie). Contrasting 1977 with 1985, between 3 pm and 6 pm and 10 pm and 3 am, there was a fall in the number of pedestrians involved in drink-driving accidents. A similar fall can be seen in child casualties in the period from 3 pm to 7 pm. In 1985, fewer child casualties were involved in drink-driving accidents than in 1977. If one applies the same test, the same conclusion is true of pedal cyclists involved in drink-driving accidents. The only conclusion to which one can properly come is that relaxation in the licensing laws has not had an adverse effect on road safety.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister consider the point that I made earlier: that the evidence is not incontrovertible? There are different interpretations. Therefore, on that matter, along with drunken driving and abuse of children due to alchohol, is it not the ideal opportunity to refer the Bill to a Special Standing Committee for eight or 10 weeks' consideration so that evidence can be drawn from all facets of the community and proper consideration given to the Bill?

Mr. Hogg: That is the sort of loose thinking which, over the years, I have come to associate with the Labour party. In the first place, there is nothing equivocal about the evidence. It is wholly plain. It may not be easy for Opposition Members to understand, but that it is plain is beyond dispute. Secondly, we published our proposals in full in August 1987. If hon. Members have not had time to study or consider them or to come to a sensible view, that is hardly our fault. It is the fault of the Opposition Members. The Bill is inappropriate for a Special Standing Committee.

I should now like to make a little progress——

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: I shall give way to my hon. Friend later.

Several of my hon. Friends, notably my hon. Friends the Members for Devizes (Mr. Morrison) and for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) asked us to make a substantial change in the licensing laws operating on a Sunday. My hon. Friends the Members for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) and for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) put it more modestly and suggested that we should make a small change. The Government's position is plain. It was explained candidly by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I shall be equally candid—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear."] It is nice to make such a well-received remark. I have no objection in principle to the proposals of my hon. Friends, but we want to get this Bill through —*[Laughter.]* We are pragmatists. Opposition Members may have a death wish—many of their policies display a death wish—but we do not. We do not wish to disturb the existing law on Sunday licensing because we wish to ensure the maximum possible support for the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mentioned amendments.

Sir Bernard Braine *rose*—

Mr. Colvin *rose*—

Mr. Hogg: Hon. Members can table amendments in Committee. It would be wrong for us to try to stop that, but I can tell the House that we shall oppose amendments in Committee, and, what is more, we shall try to persuade all our hon. Friends to do likewise.

Sir Bernard Braine: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for kindly giving way. Since he intends to get the Bill through, since the Bill is about England and Wales and not about Scotland, since he is concerned about the evidence and the facts and since the Government have for two years sat on a report about under-age drinking in England and Wales, can he explain the Government's intentions in Committee, or later, to end the scandal of under-age drinking?

Mr. Hogg: My right hon. Friend has raised one of the most serious issues of this debate, both in his intervention and during his extremely passionate speech. He raised with my right hon. Friend the report of the working party and the committee dealing with young people and alcohol, which, as my right hon. Friend knows, will be published on 24 November, or thereabouts. On its publication, we propose to give those considerations extremely careful thought, as will the ministerial group, and we have to decide how to meet any recommendations in that report. If we decide that the recommendations merit a substantial change to statute law, clearly this Bill is the proper and convenient vehicle.

Mrs. Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: Not at the moment. I have given way to the hon. Lady often enough, and I propose to continue.

Mr. Colvin *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: We have to consider the extent to which we need new laws and the extent to which existing laws need to be properly enforced. I have been reminded by my hon. Friends the Members for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) and for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin)—to whom I will give way—that in essence it is for licensees properly to enforce their responsibility and trust, and we intend to raise that matter with the police.

Mr. Colvin: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend on the extent to which we need new laws. It was set out in the Conservative party manifesto for the general election. I am pleased that the Government are honouring the commitment to reform the licensing laws. Why is there not the same determination to reform the law applying to Sunday trading, which was also a manifesto commitment?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We have listened to the points that he has made.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) called for random breath tests. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said that if we introduced random breath tests, he might support the Bill. I hope that on further reflection he will support the Bill. He should study in some detail the provisions of section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. Under that section, the police have a right to stop vehicles at random with intent to determine whether a breath test should be administered. That is the law. Chief constables believe it to be sufficient, and the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook would have done better to have explained that to the House than to call for something which, in substance, already exists.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No, I must press on.

Mr. Bermingham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hogg: No. I have already told the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) that I will not give way.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North has been in the Chamber for only the past 10 minutes and has not attempted to intervene.

Mr. Hogg: I meant the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham). I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

Several of my hon. Friends suggested that we should extend drinking-up time on Friday and Saturday. There is a variety of opinion on this. My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham said in terms that we should extend closing time on Friday and Saturday. In a well-argued speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) said that we should extend drinking-up time. A similar view was expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Derby, North and for Romsey and Waterside. There are arguments in favour of that, but we regard the measures as a package, and we have decided that, if we agreed to such a change, the package would become unbalanced. The present drinking-up time of 10 minutes is frequently extended. If we allowed a further extension, it would become extremely late for local residents. I do not commend that suggestion to the House.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: No; I intend to proceed.

Mrs. Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: No; I intend to proceed. I cannot be criticised for not giving way frequently. I now wish to get on. Several hon. Members have made good points which merit a considered reply.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, who gave the Bill considerable support in the light of his experience in Scotland—for which the Government are extremely grateful—suggested that we should mount a survey to monitor the effect of the change in England and Wales. I wholly agree with him. The Home Office has commissioned the social services division of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to undertake an up-to-date survey of drinking habits in England and Wales so that we have data against which changes can be measured. Field work on the survey was completed in the last couple of weeks. In due course we will commission a further survey so that we can try to determine the extent of the change. I rather fancy that that will be welcomed by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East and by many other hon. Members.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: I will not give way at the moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham and the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) referred to the position of tenants and managers. The statutory position is quite plain. The law does not oblige a licensee to remain open during all licensed hours, but it is undoubtedly true that the terms of a tenancy or management agreement can require a tenant or manager to keep open for the permitted hours. I am glad to say that there have been negotiations between the brewing industry and those who represent tenants and managers.

In the case of brewery-owned tenancy houses, the brewery companies have agreed to withdraw the clause in many tenancy agreements that requires pubs to open all the permitted hours and to replace it with an arrangement whereby the brewers and the tenants will discusss the hours requirements for public houses. There will be arbitration proceedings if there are disputes. Brewery companies will also discuss with their managers the hours arrangements for brewery-owned managed pubs, although the owning brewer will have ultimate responsibility for determining opening hours. That is the proper way to go forward. The House should be extremely slow to try to alter by statutory intervention the freely negotiated terms of a freely entered into contract. If it can be achieved by negotiation, that is the proper way forward.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked the Home Secretary whether we could reconsider costs. I put forward this consideration: the Bill provides for justices to award costs if they think it just and

[Mr. Hogg]

reasonable. The Bill also provides a greatly extended ability to local residents and the police to apply to revoke a licence or to impose a restriction order. The ability to apply for a revocation order is far in excess of anything previously granted and can be made at any licensing session, other than the one at which the application is made. There is always a risk, however small, that the right to make such an application will be abused. Therefore, I suggest that it is right to give the justices a residual power to impose costs where the facts justify it.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Dewsbury raised the status of the ministerial group and asked why the Government have decided to proceed with the Bill without awaiting a full report from that group. We did not introduce the Bill lightly. We considered the facts carefully, and we are confident that the Bill will not lead to an increase in alcohol misuse. The clear evidence of that is justification for the orderly introduction of the Bill. The ministerial group will try to identify those areas where we can best deal with the misuse of alcohol by the vulnerable and risk groups. That is clearly proper. Mr. Speaker, I fancy that shortly you will put the question.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I certainly hope so.

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Member said he hopes so.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall) *rose*——

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is now presuming. I must conclude. To those hon. Members to whom I have not responded in detail, I apologise. No discourtesy was intended.

I commend the Bill. I reject the argument that it will aggravate the problems associated with the misuse of alcohol. It is a balanced package, and I commend it to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 293, Noes, 87.

Division No. 41] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Flannery, Martin
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Douglas
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ron
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCartney, Ian
McCrindle, Robert
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick

Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robertson, George
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheerman, Barry
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steinberg, Gerald
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wall, Pat
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Whitney, Ray
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dobson, Frank
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Hood, James
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lamond, James
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Macdonald, Calum
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Paisley, Rev Ian
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooker, Jeff
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Lewis Moonie and
Mr. Graham Allen.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill Read a Second time.

Motion made—[Mr. Allen]—and Question put, That the Bill be committed to a Special Standing Committee:—

The House divided: Ayes 74, Noes 247.

Division No. 42] [10.45 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foster, Derek
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, James
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meacher, Michael
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerald
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dr. Lewis Moonie, and
Mr. Graham Allen.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*

Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clelland, David
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Food Aid

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

10.25 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is a Standing Order of the House that the Scrutiny Committee—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leave the Chamber quietly if they are not taking part in the debate?

Mr. Spearing: It is a Standing Order of the House that the Scrutiny Committee, of which I have the honour to be Chairman, reports to the House on matters relating to EEC legislation and makes recommendations for debate. On this topic we have made a report, which will be printed. It is the fourth report, HC 43 IV. The memorandum states:

> "The Committee looks to the Government for additional information on these two issues in due course and any other clarification which seems necessary, and may then wish to report further."

Last Wednesday, after the Committee had met, a further regulation was received from Brussels. It is the numbered regulation in the motion, No. 9138/87, on which, unfortunately, the Committee did not have an opportunity to report. Article 1 of that document refers to designated organisations. The Minister tabled a supplementary memorandum, which was requested by the Committee. It stated that he wished to point out to the House how the proposal differed from that on which earlier explanatory memoranda were based. He then listed the main points. However, I understand that the Commission has deposited yet another document, namely, No. 9227/87, which was a report on the previous working of the scheme, not a regulation for its adoption, which relates to part of the debate tonight. A paragraph on page 10 states:

> "Organisations recognised by the Member State concerned or (if no recognition had been granted in that Member State to such organisations) the Commission would implement the programme in the relevant country. These organisations need not necessarily be charities."

I raise this point of order because, unless the information is available to the House in the form of a report—which through an oversight is not in the second supplementary memorandum — the House will not be aware that it is possible, under the regulation, for a wider set of bodies, possibly statutory bodies, to be involved as designated organisations. That may have a bearing on the debate. Is it possible for the Minister to confirm that point? Unfortunately, his second explanatory memorandum is dated 11 November. He was a little ahead of time.

10.28 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to agree with what the hon. Gentleman said. It will be understood by the House that I do not have control over the timing of documents as they emerge from Brussels. The hon. Gentleman rightly suggested that we should discuss the matter and that it is important that such discussions should take place before decisions are made by the Community. Therefore, I considered it right to put the documents before the House as soon as we received them. When we finally received the report in an acceptable form —in other words, in English—I put it before the House as soon as I could. In fact, I agreed it while out of London so that it should be before the House as quickly as it could be presented. The difficulty is that we have only what is before us. I have yet to receive confirmation from the Commission that it will lay regulations that will apply to any organisation, or whether there will be restrictions on those organisations. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman is perfectly right to draw attention to this and I would have hoped to do so in my own speech. It is better to have the debate before the decisions are made than to wait until one has all the answers, by which time the decisions will have been made.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the debate should proceed.

Mr. Gummer: I beg to move,

> That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9138/87 on general rules for the supply of food from intervention stocks for distribution to the most deprived persons in the Community.

We are debating both the past of this scheme and the proposals for the future in so far as we can decipher them from the various documents. I should like to confine myself to a few short comments to start with and, if the House will allow me, to give myself a little time at the end to answer the points that will have been raised. I am sure that that would be more helpful to hon. Members.

The House will remember that the United Kingdom Government were not enthusiastic about the terms of the original proposals. We said that it would be extremely difficult to prove additionality in the decisions that were made and wondered how much effect that would have on the surpluses of food in store. We were concerned about the fact that we were to ask charities to carry out that work without any warning and in conditions for which they were totally unable to prepare.

We were especially concerned that the decisions were made irrespective of the individual and different needs of each country. It was in no grouching or miserable manner that we put forward those points, but we were unsuccessful in getting our colleagues in the European Community to accept them. On the other hand, having lost the day on the terms in which the proposals were put forward, we set out to try to make the exercise as successful as it could be within the terms under which we were able to operate. In other words, we returned immediately, called together the charities that seemed to be the most obviously affected, and discussed the matter with them on the day after the decisions had been made. I returned from Brussels immediately.

As a result, the Commission's report shows that the United Kingdom spent about 45 per cent. of the amount of money that was spent in the Community as a whole. Indeed, we spent more of the available money than France, Germany and Spain put together. After us, those countries were the three largest spenders. We did extremely well in trying to use the available resources, given the problems about which we had already warned the Community.

I wish to make three comments, although I shall say more in answer to any questions. First, I am second to none in my considerable admiration for the charities' work in circumstances that were intolerable for them. They had

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to operate under wholly unsuitable conditions and immediately, without any advance warning, and they did so remarkably. It would be invidious to refer to any particular charity, although the Salvation Army especially was a tower of strength in areas that would not otherwise have been covered. It also helped other charities. Several other charities had a national distribution, such as the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and the Red Cross, and were extremely helpful and I should like to thank them.

Secondly, I am extremely doubtful whether the scheme had any real effect on the surpluses. I do not regard this as an effective system for reducing surpluses. To do that effectively one must prove at least some additionality and that the food that was given out from surplus stores did not replace food that would otherwise have been bought. There is considerable doubt about that. Certainly some food was not simply replacement food, but I do not think that it was of sufficient quantity to make this a sensible scheme for removing the surpluses.

Thirdly, we are a country that has every right to criticise and propose any future scheme, because we did everything in our power to make the last scheme work, although we did not like it, objected to its terms and tried to have them changed. We cannot be faulted on our efforts to make this work. Therefore, it is reasonable for us to say that we have considerable doubts about the scheme, as we understand it, proposed by the Commission. We remind the House that the scheme will run permanently. It is not merely for an emergency. It does not appear to have benefited from the many lessons that we could have taught the Commission. It does not appear to meet either the budgetary worries or the additionality concerns about which most people would be anxious. It is difficult to see any sign that the scheme overcomes the difficulties that our charities found and—I do not wish to put words into their mouths—they are hesitant about joining in any future scheme. The scheme does not seem to meet their major problem, which is that they do not see, as the Government do not see, that proper account has been taken of changes that would enable the scheme to make a proper contribution towards helping the most needy.

Obviously, there would be some help. It is difficult to envisage a scheme that would not do something, but it is difficult to see, even in the suggested changes, that any future scheme would make a contribution commensurate with its cost and the diversion of effort of anybody who carried it out. The scheme would have to be carried out by somebody—whoever we are allowed to suggest—who is likely already to be doing something useful. Therefore, if that somebody carries it out, he may well find himself having to carry out the scheme instead of what he might otherwise be doing.

For that reason, we are at present criticising the Commission for seeming not to have learnt the lessons that we could have presented to it. We are worried that the scheme does not solve the problems that have been shown, not only to the Government, but to the charities. Therefore, we enter these discussions with considerable doubts that the Commission can produce a scheme that will meet our needs. That seems to be a not unreasonable position to uphold, although, naturally, if something happened to make the scheme more effective we would consider it carefully, as we did the original scheme. Our bona fides are clear from our previous efforts.

If the House gives me permission, I shall be happy to answer any questions that are raised, but I think it would be best for the House first to discuss the proposals.

10.37 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move, at the end of the Question to add

> "and noting that the earlier free food scheme of 1987 led to considerable difficulties for charities responsible for food distribution and caused inconvenience and hardship to many of the intended beneficiaries, calls upon Her Majesty's Government to ensure that the new scheme takes note of this earlier experience and to devise means of guaranteeing that the distributive process does not lead to a financial loss to the charities involved and that the recipients are treated equitably.".

The official Opposition welcome the opportunity to debate the distribution of so-called free food from EEC intervention stores and we trust that the Minister will reflect our views when the matter is discussed at the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 16 and 17 November.

Perhaps we should first dispel once and for all the myth of free food. That term is a misnomer because the food has already been paid for four times over by its recipients. We should do well to remind ourselves that, first, the recipients have paid a high price in the shops because of the artificially high EC support systems; secondly, they pay as taxpayers for the cost of the food going into intervention; thirdly, they pay for the storage of the food in intervention; and, fourthly, they contribute towards the cost of the £70 million for the operation of the concessionary food schemes. Therefore, I hope that the House will accept that the term free food is merely shorthand for the scheme and that the food is far from free.

As the House knows, the Labour party views the common agricultural policy of the European Community with great dismay. It seems to set prices so high that food cannot be sold in the open market, which is crazy. It results in the scenarios that we face today, and regularly. It strikes us as ludicrous that in order to reduce food surpluses we have to feed them to animals, contemplate destroying them, or sell them to the Russians at knockdown prices. I am sure that the whole House agrees that that is not a sensible policy.

The Minister rightly pointed out that the item that the Government and this country gave most effectively in the last concessionary scheme was butter, but we still have 200,000 tonnes of butter in intervention stores in this country and more than 1·25 million tonnes in the Community at large, so the fact that some of that surplus food might find its way into the mouths of 5 million of our more deprived fellow citizens is laudable and sensible.

It is worth reflecting on what a condemnation of the Government it is that we have 5 million deprived people. The Government have a deplorable record of assisting the less well-off. I recall the miserly 40p pension rise last year for single pensioners and the fact that 700,000 of our poorest people will be still worse off under the new social security system that the Government are introducing next April.

The free food scheme is a palliative measure in the fight against poverty, and, in the short term, we support it. In the long term, surely the objective must be for all the people of the Community to have incomes that are sufficient for their food requirements.

As the Minister said, we are discussing what is essentially a mark II version of the concessionary scheme.

We must learn the lessons of the previous one. I hope that the Minister will bear in mind the positive suggestions that I am sure will come from both sides of the House. Perhaps we should remind ourselves that the new scheme is crucially different in several respects from the previous one. The Minister was right to draw our attention to one of the main differences—that of duration. The previous scheme existed for a mere 10 weeks; This one is envisaged as being permanent, so the responsibility to get it right is paramount, and we should not duck it.

Secondly, this is a narrower scheme, restricted entirely to stocks from the intervention fund, which was not the case last time. What lessons can be gleaned from the previous experience? The efforts of the various charities that were involved last time were commendable. As the Minister said, they did everything asked of them in intolerable circumstances, and the successes of the scheme were entirely to their credit. I regret that many of the dedicated workers of the various charities ran into problems which were the Government's fault and not their own. They were at the sharp end—angry pensioners had queued in the cold for hours, only to be told sometimes that supplies had run out.

Why did the Government work solely through the charities? My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has already pointed out that the EEC directive does not, and did not, require them to do so. "Designated organisations" were the relevant term.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to mislead the House. As we understand it, the future scheme does not use only charities, but the previous scheme required us to work through them. There was no way that the Government could have avoided doing so.

Dr. Clark: I thank the Minister for his remarks. It now appears that although the Government's explanatory memorandum on the new scheme speaks only of charities, the definition is not to be so narrow. EC document 9277 talks about recognised organisations and mentions, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South said, that those organisations need not necessarily be charities. We could discuss with the local authorities whether they could help. Local authorities have much of the expertise to identify the recipients, which was one of the points of consternation last time, and they have the means to assist in the distribution. The House will recollect that one of the main criticisms of the previous scheme was that in some parts of the country distribution worked very effectively, while in other parts it hardly worked at all.

If the Minister asks the local authorities to assist and to expend money on the scheme, will he give the House an assurance that such expenditure will be free from rate-capping calculations? If we follow the route that I have suggested, anything other than exemption would be crazy.

Do the Government intend to explore the possibility of using the expertise and facilities of the food retailers? They have an efficient system of distribution for all types of food to all corners of the kingdom. That is one thing that Britain does in an exemplary fashion. That might save many of the unnecessary and fruitless journeys made by pensioners on the previous occasion. It would also ensure a uniform distribution system, which I am sure that the Minister and the House want to see in the new scheme.

In our positive amendment we emphasise that the Government should not expect the various charities to bear the cost of administering the scheme, as they were forced to do previously. Age Concern incurred costs of almost £200,000 for the distribution of food in the previous system. Will the Minister ensure in any new scheme that such expenditure will be reimbursed? It is permissible for such payments to be made from national sources if the EC will not foot the bill.

Will the Secretary of State have discussions with the Secretary of State for Social Services? The negative attitude—I can use no other words—of the DHSS last year caused annoyance to many people. The House will recall that on 27 January the DHSS sent an insensitive circular to all its offices. In essence, it urged non-co-operation and reminded DHSS staff that responsibility for distribution and publicity and for identifying recipients rested with the charities alone. I hope that in future there will be a more positive attitude.

Perhaps the Minister could tell us what discussions he has had with the charities that will be or could be involved, and whether any charities that co-operated last time will not co-operate in future. Perhaps he will also tell us whether any new charities that did not co-operate last time will consider co-operating this time. Will the Minister ensure that the necessary distribution network is set in place before there is any publicity? Last time there was so much publicity prior to the establishment of the network that many people were disappointed. I hope that we can get the distribution network right before the Ministry pushes ahead with its publicity.

The Labour party welcomes the concept of redistributing surplus food to the needier members of the community. That is much more sensible than selling it to the Russians. We hope that the Government will work positively to devise such a system. I thought that the Minister's speech was a little negative, but I hope that in the debate he will reflect on some of the points made to him by hon. Members.

The earlier scheme had considerable success due to the initiative of the charities involved and the dedication of their workers. The charities did the hard work and footed much of the bill, while the Government took the credit. The Minister looks a little surprised, but we got rather tired of seeing the Minister and his colleagues in funny hats doling out butter and sides of beef.

I do not want to dwell on the past. What Britain needs is a sensible agriculture and food policy, but until we have such a policy we call on the Government to introduce a system of concessionary food for our neediest citizens and to ensure a fair and equitable distribution. The Government must also guarantee that no charity loses financially in assisting them in providing that concessionary food.

10.50 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I welcomed the tone of the Minister's speech because it has become obvious to most Conservative Members, but apparently not to Labour Members, that the original scheme was not only ill-conceived, but ill-devised and it operated in a most ineffective manner.

Such failure was inevitable because the scheme, by its very conception, undermined the whole essence of the common agricultural policy. I may agree with many Opposition Members that the very nature of the common agricultural policy is due for fundamental reappraisal—I put it no more strongly than that. However, as long as we

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have such a policy, based as it is on the principle of minimum intervention prices, any system that sets out to offer something at a different price or seeks to give something away, will start to undermine that policy.

Some people may want the common agricultural policy undermined, but the Minister, our Government and the Commission of the EC would be well advised to think carefully before setting out to undermine the principles of a policy to which they still claim to be committed. That is the first problem.

The next problem is the equally obvious one of the black market possibilities of such a scheme. I believe that it is obvious that when one gives away a desired product that is already on the market and has an established price, that practice is open to the possibility of black market operations. In other words the recipients of the product can decide whether to use it themselves or to offer it in some subsidiary or illegal manner on the market. Again, that further undermines the original market that we are trying to operate.

That problem leads to the next difficulty—sheer and rather unpleasant greed. I do not know about the experience of other hon. Members, but in my constituency the scheme attracted an unpleasant reaction when people got wind of something that could be got for nothing. There was a rather undignified response and in some cases people scrambled to get their hands on what was thought to be desirable. Unpleasant accusations were made by one set of people against another: "Why did they get some and I did not? Why is that charity not giving me something? Why is the person up the road getting it? What is the queue all about?" Any scheme that brings the greedy aspects of human nature to the surface is unfortunate to say the least. There must be much better ways of alleviating human need rather than a selective and ill-organised system that brings out the worst in people instead of the best.

Faced with such problems I was heartened to hear the Minister say, with honesty, that not only did the Government have reservations about the original scheme, but the experience of the previous scheme has left the Government suspicious about what is now to be attempted. Although the charities tried the first time round, they may not be the vehicles with which to attempt a second effort.

In my constituency I have been contacted by at least one charity previously involved that has made it clear that it has no desire to be involved in any subsequent exercise whether it is given money, subsidies, subventions or anything else such as the Opposition have suggested. I do not think that the charities want to touch this new scheme with a barge pole. They were disillusioned by their experience the first time round. They disliked the reaction that they received from the public. They disliked the ill-organised imposition of the scheme on them. I am sure that they would not be happy, and most of them would not be prepared, to contemplate taking part ~~in a subsequent~~ scheme.

Therefore, my right hon. Friend the Minister has my complete support in his scepticism and his grave doubts about whether we should undertake such a scheme again. He will continue to have that support. I hope that the Government will resist the attempts by the Commission to bring forward that ill-founded scheme, certainly on a permanent basis, which undermines our agricultural policy and brings out the worst in people throughout the Community.

10.56 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I differ in my approach from that of other hon. Members who have spoken. Many people in my constituency and in Wales generally were proud when they were given extra food at the beginning of the new year. That was welcomed by many of the needy and the elderly. However, I should like to express a cautious welcome to the European Community document that we are considering. It is an excellent idea in theory to distribute surplus stocks from intervention stores to those in need in our society. To some extent it eases the embarrassment over the wastage of keeping produce in intervention in the first place.

I have always been against hoarding meat and other surpluses. Will the Minister say which commodities are in surplus? I have been told that there is little best beef in surplus in the Community. There is plenty of cow beef, but I do not believe that many of the elderly will be interested in that. Will any beef be given away this Christmas or at the beginning of the new year? The other commodity in surplus is butter. Will the Minister list the commodities and tell us what percentage of those in surplus will be given to the people?

My reservations about the scheme are based on our experiences during the earlier part of this year when there appeared to be a great deal of public and official confusion about the working of the scheme—dare I agree with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth)? It came about because the distribution was in the hands of charities that had neither adequate resources to cope with the demand nor sufficient warning beforehand to organise the operation properly. I understand that there was a great deal of resentment at the lack of consultation. Whether it was between the charitable organisations and the Department I am not sure, but I have been told that there was a great deal of unease.

The other main problem has been identified as the imprecise definition of those eligible to receive the food and exactly how much food each person was to receive. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that issue, too.

We must welcome the initiative and its development into a permanent system, not linked to a cold weather factor as it was earlier this year. But from now on it is important to ensure that the rules are made crystal clear and that the organisations in charge of distribution are well prepared for the work involved, so that the food reaches the maximum number of those who deserve it.

There must also be adequate funding. Does the Minister consider that £70 million per annum is enough, bearing in mind that expenditure on distribution last time was £110 million for three months? There is a great discrepancy in that. Are the charities involved likely to be given sufficient support this time round, to avoid the tremendous financial and organisational strains that they suffered last time? Age Concern incurred costs of £195,000 for its part in the operation, and it has asked for consultation well before the public announcement of any future scheme.

Is there a case for involving local authorities, which probably have better local knowledge and comprehensive lists of those in need? They may also have more resources for distribution. Could there be co-operation between authorities and the charities? In Wales, the distribution could be carried out by county and district councils. Community councils are extremely strong in the Principality, and their members could do excellent work in helping to distribute food to the needy, the young and the elderly. When he announced the scheme, the EC Agriculture Commissioner hinted that the Government had asked him not to involve the local authorities. What was the reason for that? However, I understand that Mr. Andriessen said that local authorities might play a role in the future. I would welcome the Minister's comments on whether there is any truth in what the Commissioner said.

Another essential ingredient of a successful scheme must be the detailed description of the categories of those in need and eligible for free food. Last time varying interpretations in different areas led to confusion and resentment among the elderly and the poor.

We must accept this document with enthusiasm, but from now on the British end of the scheme must be organised as efficiently as seemed to be the case in other countries. The British public cannot put up with the confusion and disappointments that were such a feature of the original scheme.

11.1 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I need not detain the House for long at this late hour. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Minister's healthy dose of scepticism in these matters. As we are about to enter international negotiations on a concept and on a set of documents that are most kindly described as opaque, it might be helpful if I offered some general considerations to the House.

Such a scheme could not make more than the tiniest dent in the huge mountains of surplus food that have accumulated under the common agricultural policy. My right hon. Friend the Minister has said many times that we need radical changes in the policy, but the scheme would make little difference to it. It must not be prayed in aid as an excuse for not taking action to tackle the surpluses at source. If one wishes to empty the bath, it is a good idea to turn off the tap before taking out the plug, however slightly, as this scheme would do. In conformity with that thought, the scheme should be limited to a modest sum —in Community terms—of 100 million ecu. As it is likely to make only a small impact when one allows for substitution and the rest, the scheme must be confined in cost.

As the documents suggest in outline, it is essential that the member states retain individual control over the designation of authorities for the distribution of food. We do not want to lose that power to a Commission diktat. In that connection—here I may part company from some of my hon. Friends—I favour the retention of the charities as the distribution agencies. In many cases, they are economical. Their overheads are low and their effectiveness high. I understand that the Salvation Army, which bore the brunt of distribution in the United Kingdom, spent just over £100,000 on the job, which was cost-effective. Secondly, if the matter is remitted to charities, there is no question of any charge of political favouritism or jobbery. Also, it is an advantage if it is at arm's length.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that if we gave the job to local authorities we would have to ensure that they did not spend more money distributing the scheme than the scheme would bring into the country? We would have to watch some local authorities particularly carefully. Does he also agree that the suggestion from the Labour Front Bench that we should exclude GRE expenditure could allow councils to go haywire in adding on extra costs?

Mr. Boswell: Perhaps I should say that I think that some local authorities would do better than others. My right hon. Friend referred to the remarkable performance in a short time of the United Kingdom charities in mounting such an effort. If it is to be put on a long-term basis, we will need to consider how we monitor the scheme on a regular basis, not because we do not trust the charities, but because we need to see that there is proper accountability and that a pattern of control is established, particularly within the Community.

One or two points in the documents are disturbing. There is an assertion on page 4 of document No. 9277/87 that

"it is not possible to give a sound estimate of the total number of beneficiaries".

Presumably that means that it would be possible to give only an unsound estimate of the total number of beneficiaries. At page 5 there is reference to very few cases of abuse mentioned in the material that was received from the member states and the charities. My comment on that is: "Well, they would, wouldn't they." If this is to be made permanent, we should accept the scheme, with no illusions as to its tremendous benefit. It may have some marginal benefit, but if it is to do even that without becoming an abuse, it must be properly defined, we must keep some controls within our own purview and not remit the whole job to Europe, and we must ensure that both domestically and in Europe there is better accounting than there has been.

11.8 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I should declare an interest. I have a dual mandate. I am a member of the Common Market Assembly and I receive a third of the parliamentary salary which, after tax, is divided between the Sheffield and Bradford Labour movements. I have made that declaration publicly before.

Charities were not consulted and the Minister is disingenuous if he suggests that it was not open to the Government to recommend in the Council of Ministers that local authorities should be used. Of course, there was a political basis for the decision. An election was in the offing. The Government thought that it might be useful if they were seen to be distributing food and that it might also improve the tarnished image of the Community, which spends 67 per cent. of its expenditure on farming, a large chunk of which goes to building up the food stocks that cost about £2,000 million a year to store.

Since 1984 we have contributed £5·3 billion to the Community in net revenue. The free food distribution gave the false impression that we were getting something back for our money. In fact, we got very little, and in the new scheme we will get even less—£70,000 below the amount spent on the last occasion.

The British Government were rather parsimonious once the PR exercise had been completed. It should be emphasised that the charities, and even the Ministry, did not know what would be the organisational application of

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the scheme. The Minister rushed off to television studios, but his officials did not have the details of how the scheme would operate to make foodstuffs available to the charities or any other organisations.

The charities are cynical about any new scheme that is to be introduced, because they lost thousands of pounds that they could ill afford to part with in the course of distribution. Age Concern has estimated that the scheme cost it over £195,000, and it was not the largest charity involved. It has made various representations about that loss. If the Government want the charities to be involved, they must be prepared to meet some of the costs arising from the previous scheme. That will have to be done before the charities will show any enthusiasm for the new scheme.

The Government were even churlish in the way in which they approached the old scheme. They refused to distribute the foodstuffs that were involved and available such as flour, sugar, vegetable oils, fruit and vegetables. That reflected mean-mindedness on their part.

The efficiency of the old scheme in reducing the huge mountains of foodstuffs was laughable. About 13,624 tonnes of butter were distributed in the United Kindom, which was a small fraction of the 243,036 tonnes which were in store here when the scheme started. The distribution of beef was an even greater disaster. Only 1,041 tonnes were given away, but there were 48,671 tonnes in store at the end of January. By the end of the scheme, the amount of beef in store had increased. In terms of effectiveness, the scheme was counter-productive. I hope that the new scheme will result in a genuine distribution of significant quantities of food.

I must tell the Minister that my faith in the Commission is extremely limited. I would not allow it to run a fish-and-chip shop. I regard fish-and-chip shops as far too important to be subjected to that treatment. Indeed, the Commission is trying to impose a tax on vegetable oils to increase the cost of fish and chips. It is even now engaged in pursuing that absurd task.

I hope that the Minister will use his influence in the Council of Ministers, which in theory is the power organisation in the Common market, and press for a wider application of the scheme. Let him do so with a view to ensuring that the Commission produces a better scheme that will lead to the distribution of significant quantities of food.

When I was temporarily absent from this place, it enacted the Communities (Amendment) Act 1986. Hon. Members can see in document No. 9138/87 that there is now a qualified majority voting procedure. Even if the Government put forward sensible proposals, they can be out-voted. That is a consequence of the foolish legislation that the House enacted that gave more powers to the Common market, which continues to be a millstone round our neck.

The previous distribution of food humiliated many applicants. There were many who were told that they did not qualify, or that their friends did, because of the uncertainty of definition. Of course, those who did not have to go through that procedure thought that everything was all right. It would seem that there is common consent this evening that the scheme was a disaster and that there must be a radical improvement before a new scheme is even vaguely acceptable. I hope that the Minister will take these comments on board——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The hon. Gentleman has made an outspoken criticism of the arrangements for the distribution of food aid to the poor. Bearing in mind his attacks on the Government and the Common Market—and he knows that I share some of the concern that he has felt for many years—would he tell us how he suggests the European Community should tackle the distribution of surplus food to the poor of the world and how much his proposals would cost?

Mr. Cryer: I would certainly include a much wider range of foods, because they are presumably still available. I would define much more widely and generously those entitled to receive free food and I would ensure that the local authorities were involved because, of all our organisations, they are the best equipped to pick out people in need — [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] Hon. Members shout "Nonsense," but the local authorities run social services departments. They deal constantly with people in need of housing — people in private accommodation that is not fit to live in and who are forced to seek council housing. Social services departments deal with those in genuine need.

I suspect that the reason why the Government did not call upon the local authorities or press the case for their use in the Council of Ministers is that the distribution of free food might reflect a certain amount of credit on the local authorities. The Government are obsessive in their hatred of local government, as has been demonstrated in virtually all their legislation. I would call upon the expertise and knowledge of local authorities and ask them to help to produce an adequate definition of the groups that should qualify.

Furthermore, local authorities would have the facilities available to enable them to achieve a distribution that was not arbitrary. In the previous scheme, for example, some centres in Sheffield ran out of butter, although there were 30 tonnes stored in the central depot.

I have much greater faith in local authorities than in charities to achieve efficient distribution. Although the charities tried their best, they found the whole exercise very burdensome, and the costs enormous. Consequently, the charities are cynical about future distributions. We probably need both local authorities and the charities, but we certainly need to invoke the local authorities' support in defining those eligible for the food.

That is a thumbnail view of what I would do, and when we have a Labour Government we shall make sure that the thing is done properly.

11.17 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I welcome the debate because it gives us an opportunity, at least in principle, to consider ways in which the elderly, less well-off and needy in our society can be helped. Many people are understandably concerned and bemused by a system that allows vast quantities of food to be stored at vast cost when many in our society go without.

I remind Conservative Members who criticise the scheme that it is a valuable aid to the pensioner living on a state pension who has to decide in the middle of a cold snap in winter how best to spend his or her money—on heating, on food or on clothing. Similarly, a single parent has to decide between the competing claims of herself and her children. One could go on to list many more examples of needy people in our society.

Personally, and on behalf of my party, I welcome the provision to allow intervention stocks to be made available to those who desperately need them. I also welcome the fact that such distribution need not be linked to the cold-weather provision, as it was last winter.

I ask the Government to note a few points, already made, in part, by Opposition members, based on the experience of the distributing organisations during the winter of 1986-87. It must be made clear to those who administer the system exactly who is to benefit. It was appalling that in some parts of the country people who turned up with their benefit books were turned away because some members of some distributing organisations interpreted entitlement differently from others. Many people who were already embarrassed at having to make a claim left empty handed, feeling humiliated and degraded.

We must ensure that the distributing organisations have the capacity to do the work properly. I do not criticise the volunteers who worked extremely hard last winter, but I am sure that some did not appreciate the enormity of the task that they had taken on. It is in the nature of people who work for charities, many of whom are volunteers, that they often do what is asked of them. They were asked to distribute the food. They volunteered, not realising in many instances what was really asked of them. We should not take for granted those who work for charitable organisations. What the scheme involves should be made clear to them at the outset.

The Government have shown, through the Minister's remarks, what can only be described as less than enthusiasm for the proposed scheme. I urge the Minister to reconsider, because a great deal can be achieved, provided that the scheme is worked out properly, that we know who is to benefit from it, and that the distributing organisations—I agree that a combination of charities and local authorities would be an excellent concept—are agreed. The Minister should make a positive contribution at the Council of Ministers. We are talking about a scheme which helps the needy. If it is a proper scheme, I am sure that it will benefit everyone in need.

11.22 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): This has been an interesting debate. The tone was set by the Minister's opening comments. He did not give us a lot to go on, other than a heavy dose of scepticism. I understand the reasons for that, and it is interesting that his scepticism found ready echoes in the speeches of the hon. Members for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Daventry (Mr. Boswell). Our scepticism is reflected in our amendment. I am surprised that the Government, in the shape of the Minister, have not been more conciliatory towards it.

I welcome the comments of the hon. Members for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), both of whom supported the views of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). I welcome particularly the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). I assure him that it is in a sense of comradeship that I say his speech was moderate, well thought out and constructive. I look forward to continued contributions by him in that light. *[Interruption.]* I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has taken those comments to heart.

The Government's proposition represents a fairly important landmark in the development of the European Community. Last year, the arrangement for the distribution of what we call free food was a one-off, justified as a response to help those in need during a period of cold and inclement weather. This year it has been made clear that the scheme is to be permanent. That is a major transition. Last year, through the Government and through charities, the EEC was using its surpluses for a social purpose. This year it is to be written into EEC regulations that common agricultural policy surpluses will be an instrument of social policy rather than a mere by-product of a financial mechanism for the control and development of agriculture. That is a significant development.

The irony is that the concession has been drawn from the Government — they are perhaps not kicking and screaming, but we have argued for it on a number of occasions—at a time when the era of surpluses is almost at an end. As a result of catastrophic climatic conditions which even I would not attribute entirely to the Government, wheat will be in short supply for the first time, the dairy industry expects to pay no superlevy for the first time in several years, creamery sales are 39 per cent. down on last year and there are unlikely to be any additional surpluses of butter or cheese. Moreover, beef production is suffering as a result of quota systems and by 1989 we shall be importing beef. It is ironic that now that surpluses are coming to an end the Commission is moving towards using them for this social purpose.

I think that the Minister was teasing the House, as is his nature, when he seemed to imply that the Government might not proceed with a food distribution policy if the Commission decided to authorise such a scheme. In view of the Government's take-note motion and the political realities that they will face, I believe that they will proceed with the policy because the pressure will force them to do so.

We recognise the benefits of the scheme, as we did last year, and we unstintingly praise the efforts of the voluntary sector. In the debate last year, the Minister took issue with some Opposition Members, but I assure him that my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields and I do not believe that last year's scheme should be subject to heavy criticism, despite the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South.

Our view is clearly shared by the Minister. In April this year, in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), the Minister said:

> "The hon. Gentleman is right to say that we should learn lessons from the scheme. I hope that he would not say that it was a complete loss."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1987; Vol 114, c. 783.]

That was an honest comment from the Minister. Indeed, he could do little other than take that view, given the publicity that the scheme had received. For example, on 8 February *The Sunday Times* carried the lurid headline:

> "Great meat handout is pie in the sky".

A few weeks later *The Guardian* reported:

> "DHSS blamed as free food fails to reach needy".

That was followed by *The Independent* on 6 March saying perhaps most disturbingly of all:

> "Scramble for free butter turns violent".

Those were the descriptions in the press of last year's scheme, and those were some of the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South.

Mr. Spearing: If there is to be a scheme of definitions — which, on the face of it, is equitable — will not amounts and quantities also follow? Therefore, the whole logistics, especially when taken in conjunction with a permanent scheme, would take on a different tone. Permanent problems would result from a permanent scheme. Is not that one of the dilemmas?

Mr. Davies: I agree absolutely—and I know that the Minister also agrees. The essence of the debate is that the scheme is to be permanent. It cannot be operated with the assistance of charities, as happened last year, with the Minister saying "So what?" if a few million deliveries of butter go astray or if the charities have to meet a few pounds of extra costs. We are now being asked to institutionalise a system for the dispersal of European surpluses. That new institution requires that we are especially vigilant in our examination of the proposals and that we put these valid points to the Minister.

I wish to put to the Minister a number of specific points on which I hope that he can reassure the House when he replies. Last year, there were criticisms of the quality of food distributed. Certainly in south Wales—and it will not be lost on the Minister that my constituency is Caerphilly—there were a number of complaints about the quality of cheese. It had clearly passed its shelf life and was unfit for human consumption. I understand that that cheese was not out of intervention, but was bought on the market. That is worrying, and I ask the Minister to tell us what steps he will take this year to ensure the quality of food distributed.

I understand that about 50,000 tonnes of beef are in store in this country. I note that the Minister acknowledges that. He will recall that earlier this year the Government agreed to the Commission's proposal to outlaw the production and sale of beef produced using growth hormones. Therefore, that 50,000 tonnes of beef cannot be sold on the open market. It would be quite inappropriate if beef that is not fit for human consumption, not fit to be produced and not fit to be sold on the open market, is now to be given to charities. Do we now have food that is fit for the poor but not fit for the open market? That is an important question, and I hope that the Minister will tell us the Government's attitude.

Much has been said about the costs that the charities had to bear last year. We will not criticise the Minister if he says that, this year, the charities will play some part. I understand the strong feelings expressed by some of my hon. Friends who said that local authorities would have to be involved. The comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South were constructive. He said that local authorities would best be able to identify those in need——

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Why?

Mr. Davies: We would have welcomed the hon. Gentleman's contribution to our debate, but he chose not to make it. However, he has asked a question and I will answer it. Despite the ravages of the Government, local authorities still understand the needs of their local communities. They are still able, through their welfare and social services departments and their contacts with the voluntary agencies, to identify those most in need. However, to some extent I take issue with my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South because I have my doubts about the extent to which they should be involved in the distribution of food. That is a role well fulfilled by the charities, even though the local authorities have a valid role to play.

Mr. Harris *rose*——

Mr. Davies: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman asked a question and I answered it. He could have made his speech during the debate. On another occasion I will give way to him, but not tonight. I also know that the Minister is anxious to reply to the debate.

I hope that the Minister will give some assurance on the extent to which charities have been involved in the consultations. There were difficulties last year. We will support the Minister if he uses the charities again this year, but as a prerequisite we expect them to be involved in the consultations.

I take issue with the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire. He talked about the subsidy that was given to charities last year. His comment was unfair to the Minister. The Government did not give subsidies to charities. They helped to meet the costs that were quite properly incurred in the distribution of free food to the needy. I understand that they will do so this year. Frankly, to talk about subsidies is not only a gross misrepresentation of the fact, but is a quite deliberate and offensive insult to the recipients of the food and to the thousands of people who were involved in the distribution of it.

I now refer to the way in which the food will be distributed. I understand that it is likely that the food surpluses in this country will involve only beef and butter. They are the commodities that we have in store. Despite some of the claims, particularly those made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), we shall not participate in the share-out of the wine lake. This year, the share-out will be restricted to beef and butter. I know that the Minister will assure me that he will examine the matter. Will he assure the House that we will ensure that we get our fair share of the commodities from the European Community? What steps will he take to ensure, as far as possible, an acceptable spread of such commodities throughout the different parts of the country? I am well aware that some counties that were first off the mark last time were those in the south of England —I make no criticism or party political point—and were geared up because of their network of social support. Frankly, they have a network involving the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and the Red Cross. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may mock cynically. It is a fair point. Many deprived communities in the country, where free food needs to be distributed most urgently, do not possess that social network. What steps will the Minister take to ensure that, as far as possible, that distribution applies equally?

Will the Minister state his attitude to individual requirements and the criteria that voluntary organisations and charities will adopt in the distribution of products? For example, it will be quite wrong if the WRVS, in establishing its criteria, determines that one individual is entitled to receive free beef, and the Red Cross or the Royal British Legion, in adopting their criteria, say that that individual is not entitled to it. I do not ask the Minister to lay down guidelines or to dictate. I ask him to state whether he will advise charities that certain broad criteria should be met. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire's comments are fatuous. He made a speech. Frankly, he did not have the guts to attack his Minister. On this occasion, he did not have the wisdom to support his Minister. In future, if he has comments to make, perhaps he will make them openly and honestly in debate, rather than snipe from a sedentary position. His remarks certainly carry no weight with me. He will find that the Minister is equally dismissive of his comments.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I have no intention of giving way when I have responded to an intervention which the hon. Gentleman made from a sedentary position. He had an opportunity to make a speech. He has been sniping at my comments. I suspect that he has been elsewhere this evening and has not followed the debate as carefully as he should have. He left the Chamber for a large part of the debate. On those grounds, I shall not give way. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have future opportunities to make his case.

I ask the Minister to give an assurance that the guidelines that I seek will be available to the charities involved.

We have tabled an amendment setting out our position. Given the response of hon. Members to the Minister's opening statement, we are entitled to give the proposals a cautious welcome. The Minister is surrounded by sceptics on his own side. Our view is best expressed by saying that we wish to see the system changed so that surpluses are not produced, but, if there are surpluses, this is the best way of dealing with them. We hope that the new scheme will be an improvement on last year's scheme, and in that expectation, we shall not divide the House.

11.39 pm

Mr. Gummer: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank hon. Members for this evening's helpful debate. Again, I apologise to the Scrutiny Committee for the fact that the debate had to take place in these circumstances, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) will agree that it has been worth having it in advance, rather than in retrospect.

I agree with the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that there is no such thing as a free lunch, or free food, in the European Community. His comments lead me to remind him that, because, in his terms, we have paid four times over, we should be hesitant about paying for it yet again. One of the difficulties is that if it were shown that the handing out of so-called free food meant that people did not buy food that they would otherwise have bought, and that that food then went into intervention, the British taxpayer would have paid for it yet again. That does not seem to help anybody. We must face this problem, and I say that with great care because if we could find a way that avoided it we should take it. That is why I am being sceptical, but not dismissive. I am always hoping that some answer to this central problem can be found, but so far I have not found it.

I shall not follow the hon. Gentleman's general condemnation of the Government. However, when he talks about disadvantage, I remind him that, on average, pensioners' incomes since 1979 have grown twice as fast as those of the population as a whole. I could give a whole series of arguments to answer the points that the hon. Gentleman has put forward, but I must say that one part of his speech was party political rather than helpful.

The hon. Gentleman was absolutely right to describe the efforts of the charities as commendable. We are at one on that. However, I hope that he will agree that the efforts of the many civil servants who were involved in making the scheme work as well as it could in the circumstances were also commendable. His hon. Friends have pointed out that there was a feeling of a lack of consultation. However, consultation with the charities took place the day after we were first consulted. We were bounced into the scheme and brought the charities together at 4 o'clock the following afternoon, which was as fast as we could. I apologise, but I do not see how we could have done that any quicker. I hope that our bona fides are supported by the fact that I brought the charities together immediately we knew that there was any possibility of a new scheme. They kindly came in and we discussed the matter.

Opposition Members have asked about the response of the charities. Again, I do not want to avoid the Government's responsibility for making up their mind on these matters. There should be no suggestion that I asked the charities for their opinion, acted on it and then blamed them for it. This is a genuine answer because, as far as I can see, the charities would be extremely reluctant to continue a scheme of the type proposed by the Commission. They feel that it lacks a whole range of extremely important and necessary features. Above all, they feel that it diverts their activities from the things that they should be doing. I do not wish to tie them to that, but at the moment that is their view.

Dr. David Clark: I am grateful for the Minister's response, but will he inform the House whether the charities would feel the same if their distribution and administration costs were met? As I understand it, that was one of the prime reasons why some of the charities felt that they could not go ahead with the scheme.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will accept that I try hard to understand what the charities feel about this. I do not think that that is the central issue. Without putting words into their mouths, I think they feel that they are set up for particular purposes. They seek to carry out those activities as well as they can and feel that a permanent scheme of this type would distort the activities in which they are engaged. They may well be prepared to take advantage of the availability of food in certain circumstances, and they would take that into account if they took on extra work or sought to work differently. I understand their feeling that they have a particular role and that, whereas it was possible to respond to the invitation in a one-off emergency, to be institutionalised into a permanent system poses a whole range of new difficulties.

The question then is whether this would be a role for local authorities. Whatever Opposition Members may feel generally towards Conservative Members, they will find it difficult to suggest that I have ever taken an antagonistic view towards local authorities. I am lucky in having two extremely good ones in my area. If they wished to participate I am sure that they would be most helpful in a distribution scheme of this type, but I ask myself whether it would be helpful for them to do so and whether it would not divert them from the job that they do.

I note that the hon. Member for Caerphilly said that he was opposed to local authorities distributing food, and wanted their advice. I can see that argument. The House

[Mr. Gummer]

must bear in mind that the scheme might divert people doing useful work into doing something less useful. We must consider that. I am sorry that this sounds so critical, but we have experience of people undertaking the work with the best will in the world who still feel that this is not what they should be doing. I think that many local authorities would feel the same.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) said that when the charities undertook the work there was a difference in application from one area to another. If some local authorities feel that it is suitable and some do not, if some distribute and some do not, and if some merely give advice and some distribute and give advice, we shall have exactly the same problems unless we force them to do something, but that would mean forcing them to take part in a scheme about which we feel unhappy. Surely there can be no question of giving a special advantage to those who choose to do this in order to avoid any penalties under the rules and not to those who choose to do what local authorities would normally consider more important. That distortion would be extremely difficult to promote.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My right hon. Friend is advancing a most constructive argument. Does he accept that local authorities, dealing with both services and housing, so being able to respond to the social service needs of many people, could supply to voluntary organisations the names of those—they are many—who could benefit from the free supply of surplus foods from the EC under this sort of scheme? Does he agree that they could co-operate more positively and constructively with the voluntary organisations, which did a superb job under the scheme that was operated a year ago?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right, but many local authorities did precisely that on that occasion. I am merely suggesting that voluntary bodies may feel that this would be a diversion from their normal activities.

The hon. Member for South Shields talked about involving food retailers. One of the problems that we face is that if there is a permanent scheme and an extensive amount of substitution, the small shopkeepers will be affected and they, after all, are used by the older members of the population. They play an important role in all our constituencies — town and country. There is no doubt that on the last occasion a large proportion of the products that were handed out resulted in people not buying what they would otherwise have bought. It is difficult enough to explain that to the small shopkeeper with narrow profit margins, but then to ask him to join in as a means of distributing the food would require a good deal of public relations over a long period. I wonder whether that would be the right direction in which to go.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) that I, like him, am concerned about the misuse of these products. The difficulty is that if there is a permanent scheme, there is more time in which people can work out ways of misusing it. One of the reasons why there was so little fraud — relatively speaking—during the emergency scheme was that there was so little time in which to organise ways of getting round it. I am much more worried about a permanent scheme in which the wide boys will find all sorts of ways in which to operate. That would make the situation even worse. It would be almost one of 100 per cent. substitution, and then we would, indeed, be paying five times over instead of the four times that the hon. Member for South Shields mentioned. That, too, worries me.

As for the issue of greed, I do not believe that the scheme creates greed. In some cases it merely brings it out. I am not sure that that would be a key issue in my mind if I were deciding about the scheme, although I might have a theological discussion with my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire about that at some time.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Howells) said that the scheme would ease embarrassment. I can see the hon. Gentleman's position. If I felt, in all honesty, that a scheme could be devised whereby, in addition to food already sent, food that would otherwise remain in intervention could be distributed, I agree that that would ease embarrassment and do positive good. The problem is that the present scheme does not do that. Unless we can find a way of doing it, it will make the embarrassment worse.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South is right. He said that if we were not careful there would be more in store when we had finished than at the beginning. He also said that that had happened last time. If so, the reason was partly that more was coming in than was going out, and partly that a large amount of the beef was substituted for beef that would otherwise have been sold. That is difficult to defend and makes for greater, rather than less, embarrassment.

The hon. Gentleman also said that there was a lack of consultation, and there was. I consider that it was not the Government's fault, and I believe that the charities would agree with that. I tried to avoid a lack of consultation by bringing in the charities even before we had had any official notice. I think that the hon. Member for South Shields would agree with that. The minute that there were rumours we discussed with the charities the basis for such a scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) made some important points. The scheme was an expensive one for many of the charities, but I remind the House that some charities managed to do their job at a lower cost than others. One of the problems is assessing the real cost. I do not pretend that there is an easy way of doing that. It is another of the many difficult areas. My hon. Friend was right to say that we must confine the costs, designate the authorities and be concerned with accountability. All that makes the scheme even more difficult for charities to be involved, because the more carefully one avoids fraud, and the more one tries to make the scheme operate successfully, the more problems one will lay on the shoulders of the charities. Once there is a permanent scheme, the Public Accounts Committee will seek to ensure that it is properly operated. That will mean the charities doing things for which they are ill-equipped. As the Opposition has suggested that this is not a suitable area in which the local authorities should become wholly involved, it is a difficult problem to overcome.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South was a little unfair. First, he said that the House was in some way remiss in passing the Single European Act. The Single European Act made no difference at all, because this would still have been a majority decision whether or not we had had the Act. Perhaps during his absence from the House he misremembered that. I am entirely in favour of the Single European Act. One of the great views of his party ought to be the growing together of countries so that they are able to make joint decisions. I find it difficult to understand why he believes so much in democracy in this country, but does not believe in it when it comes to nations working together. His views are extremely old-fashioned and very much out of line with those of most of his Socialist colleagues. The Single European Act does not affect the case. The decision would in any case have been made by majority vote.

It is odd for the hon. Member for Bradford, South to suggest that we should have distributed flour. We would have had to import the bread-making wheat from the rest of the Community, turn it into flour, and distribute it through charities that did not want to distribute it. That is a good reason for not doing it. It is not a question of meanness on the part of the Government, but one of trying to make the thing at least a little more sensible than when the Commission gave it to us.

We would have had to import sugar from Italy to give it away in Britain. I cannot think of a more barmy concept than that. If anything is substitution, it would be to follow the line suggested by the hon. Member for Bradford, South and import sugar from Italy in order to substitute it for sugar sent here by the Third world.

Mr. Cryer: Little Englander.

Mr. Gummer: I am prepared to be narrow on behalf of the poor, and prepared to be tough when it comes to defending the interests of some of the poorest nations on earth. I will take no seated attacks from the hon. Member for Bradford, South on that issue, because I have a record on that issue that bears examination. Perhaps he would like to refer to it. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman has been found wanting and might, therefore, be found more silent.

The hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) rightly raised the question of the cold snap and the difficulty with the weather. The problem that he has to face on this issue is that it is not an emergency scheme connected with specific difficulties. It is a permanent scheme and, because of the usual distribution of food, the problem arises of increasing the amount going into intervention because of the substitution. There is also the problem of deciding whether this is a proper use of resources. I cannot easily be convinced that money spent in this way is money best spent. We must ask if this is the way to help the poor, or whether we ought to look for other ways of spending the money, if we have the money to spend. Given its budgetary problems, the Community ought to ask itself whether it has much money to spend.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly said it was an instrument of social policy. I doubt whether it is a very useful instrument of social policy, and I do not know of any area where is has been successful. He said the era of surpluses is at an end. If they are, it is because of policies that the Government have carried through in Europe. I do not think that the surpluses are at an end. There is still a long way to go. I might tease the hon. Member for Caerphilly, but I never tease the House. I am worried about this issue. We should learn lessons from this scheme. So far the lesson that I have learnt is that it must be very different from the last scheme before it can be of any use at all. The hon. Gentleman will remember that no Caerphilly cheese is made in Caerphilly, unless some has suddenly been made.

Mr. Ron Davies: Some is made there.

Mr. Gummer: I am glad that some is now made there, but the cheese that was distributed under the scheme was bought off the market, and I find it difficult to believe that it was different from any other cheese sold on the market.

I must protest about the hon. Gentleman's comments on hormones. He has been eating beef with hormones in it all his life, because any self-respecting animal is filled with hormones. That is what makes the poor old thing wander about, and if it does not have hormones it does not wander. The hon. Gentleman wanders more effectively because of the hormones that are coursing round his body. The minuscule additional number of hormones that one gets from hormone beef make no difference at all. It is only the lunacy of the Common Market that suggests that we should get rid of hormone beef.

It being One and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business), to put the Questions necessary to dispose of the proceedings.*

Amendment negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9138/87 on general rules for the supply of food from intervention stocks for distribution to the most deprived persons in the Community.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

LEGAL EXPENSES INSURANCE

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 5156/82 on legal expenses insurance and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 23rd June 1987; and endorses the Government's intention to proceed in due course with legislation to implement the Directive in consultation with interested parties.

CREDIT INSURANCE

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7194/82 on credit insurance and the Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 16th September 1986 and 11th May 1987; and endorses the Government's intention to proceed in due course with legislation to implement the Directive in consultation with interested parties. — *[Mr. Maclean.]*

Question agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 10) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1804), dated 14th October 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Question agreed to.

AGRICULTURE

Question proposed,

That Mr. Tim Boswell, Mr. John Carlisle, Mr. David Curry, Mr. Martyn Jones, Mr. Calum A. Macdonald, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Paul Marland, Mr. Eric Martlew, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Jerry Wiggin and Mrs. Ann Winterton be members of the Agriculture Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: "Object."

DEFENCE

Question proposed,

That Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. John Evans, Mr. Bruce George, Sir Barney Hayhoe, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. Jonathan Sayeed, Mr. Neil Thorne and Mr. John Wilkinson be members of the Defence Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: "Object".

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND ARTS

Question proposed,

That Mr. David Evennett, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. Harry Greenway, Mr. Win Griffiths, Mrs. Maureen Hicks, Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson, Mr. Timothy Raison, Mr. Gerry Steinberg, Mr. Jack Thompson, Mr. Malcolm Thornton and Sir Gerard Vaughan be members of the Education, Science and Arts Committee. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: "Object."

EMPLOYMENT

Question proposed,

That Mr. Simon Coombs, Mr. Ken Eastham, Sir Philip Goodhart, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Ron Leighton, Mr. Iain Mills, Mr. James Paice, Mr. Ernie Ross, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Lewis Stevens and Mr. David Young be members of the Employment Committee.—*[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: "Object."

Mr. Speaker: I get the impression that, to save the time of the House, I can now put together the Questions on motions 10 to 18 inclusive.

ENERGY

Questions proposed,

That Mr. Michael Brown, Dr. Michael Clark, Mr. Geoffrey Dickens, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Ted Leadbitter, Sir Ian Lloyd, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Rhodri Morgan, Mr. Peter Rost, Mr. Alex Salmond and Mr. Tony Speller be members of the Energy Committee.

ENVIRONMENT

That Mr. Henry Bellingham, Mr. Paul Boateng, Mr. John Cummings, Mr. Richard Holt, Mr. Andrew Hunter, Mr. Robert B. Jones, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Tom Pendry, Mr. Peter Pike, Sir Hugh Rossi and Mr. Robin Squire be members of the Environment Committee.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

That Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Michael Jopling, Mr. David Howell, Mr. Ivan Lawrence, Mr. Jim Lester, Mr. Ted Rowlands, Mr. Peter Shore, Mr. Ian Taylor, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, Mr. Bowen Wells and Mr. Michael Welsh be members of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

HOME AFFAIRS

That Mr. David Ashby, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. David Clelland, Miss Janet Fookes, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. John Greenway, Mr. Ivor Stanbrook, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. John Wheeler and Mr. Tony Worthington be members of the Home Affairs Committee.

SOCIAL SERVICES

That Mr. Jerry Hayes, Dr. Lewis Moonie, Marjorie Mowlam, Mr. Terry Patchett, Sir David Price, Mrs. Gillian Shephard, Mr. Roger Sims, the Reverend Martin Smyth, Audrey Wise, Mr. Nicholas Winterton and Mr. Tim Yeo be members of the Social Services Committee

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

That Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mr. James Cran, Mr. Stan Crowther, Dr. John Gilbert, Sir Anthony Grant, Dr. Keith Hampson, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr. Barry Porter and Mr. Kenneth Warren be members of the Trade and Industry Committee.

TRANSPORT

That Mr. David Gilroy Bevan, Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Jim Callaghan, Mr. Derek Conway, Mr.Terry Dicks, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Peter Fry, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. David Mudd and Mr. Neville Trotter be members of the Transport Committee.

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

That Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark, Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. Nicholas Budgen, Mr. Neil Hamilton, Mr. Terence L. Higgins, Ms. Joyce Quin, Mr. Giles Radice, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Mr. John Townend, Mr. John Watts and Mr. David Winnick be members of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee.

WELSH AFFAIRS

That Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Sir Raymond Gower, Mr. Gwilym Jones, Mr. Richard Livsey, Sir Anthony Meyer, Mr. Paul Murphy, Mr. Keith Raffan, Sir John Stradling Thomas, Mr. Dafydd Elis Thomas, Mr. Gareth Wardell and Mr. Alan W. Williams be members of the Welsh Affairs Committee. — *[Sir Marcus Fox, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Hon. Members: "Object."

PETITION

Rating Reform

12 midnight

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I wish to present a petition objecting to the poll tax from 3,790 of my constituents. They call for the repeal of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 because they consider that it introduces a system of local taxation that takes no account of the ability of the citizens to afford such a tax. They also consider that it will cause further hardship to those who are already poor.

My constituents further consider that it will redistribute resources away from under-provided areas to areas that are already prosperous. They object to the introduction of a personal computer identification number as an attack on their civil liberties. My constituents call for the repeal of this iniquitous Act, and I give them my full support.

To lie upon the Table.

Smoke Detectors

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

12.2 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Adjournment debate on an issue relating to fire safety and the promotion of fire safety measures, in this instance, smoke detectors.

I should declare an interest as an honorary adviser to the Greater Manchester civil defence authority. I took up that post on my election to Parliament as I had been a former member of that authority. As a member of that authority one has the harrowing experience, at meeting after meeting, of reading fire reports showing loss of life, horrendous personal injuries and loss of property. Those reports become the all too familiar press headline, "Family wiped out", "Mother trapped with baby", "Father dies trying to rescue children", "The heroism of the fire fighters".

Behind the press headlines are the chilling facts. Each year there are 700 deaths and 7,000 injuries. More than 50 per cent. of fatalities involve the very old or the very young. Do we accept such deaths as inevitable in an age when human kind can harness the power of gas, electricity, coal and paraffin for better living, when the misnamed "pleasure" of smoking and the misuse of matches is so widespread and carelessness can arise with all fuels because of alcohol abuse? I think not.

It is not for me as a Scot, albeit from the safety of the south Lancashire coalfields, to argue that an Englishman's home should not be his castle, but I shall argue for some way in which we can ensure that the castle remains a safe haven rather than a seething cauldron of flame and toxic fumes that all too often ends in tragedy.

Smoke detectors are not a panacea that will dramatically alter the rate of fatalities and imjuries overnight or cut the millions of pounds lost to the economy each year because of fires. They must be seen in context of the flammability of domestic furnishings. I pay credit to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) who, on 1 July this year, introduced a debate on the flammability of domestic furnishings.

It is suggested that 3,000 lives will be lost over the next 10 years because of the flammability of domestic furnishings, and that, from other sources, a further 4,000 lives will be lost. It is in fighting fires involving polyurethane that the role of fire fighters has been changed radically and dramatically. Because of the flash-over point of between two and four minutes and the fact that the estimated arrival time of the fire brigade is between five and eight minutes, all too often the fire brigade goes not to save life but simply to cool down the area, use breathing apparatus and bring out the families.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene, as well as for his acknowledgment of the Adjournment debate that I introduced some time ago. Does he acknowledge the work that the Department of Trade and Industry has done, particularly my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs? He has gone a stage further by introducing arrangements for a match test for such material as the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. McCartney: Later in the debate I shall give some details of my views on the Government's position on that and in general on their attitude towards smoke detectors. I welcome the movement of the Government, but I shall await the final consultation to see whether that movement has been sufficient for those on both sides of the House who want a radical change.

Even if there is a radical change, we must accept that for the next 15 or 20 years a huge proportion of family homes will have within them combustible materials, which, at a flash-over point of two to four minutes, will still raise the horrendous possibility of a large-scale loss of life annually. Therefore the issues of foam-filled materials and smoke detectors are inextricably linked.

Over the past 10 years the fire services have been well aware of the need to change attitudes to the introduction of new technology—foam technology, ladder technology and telecommunications technology. On that score the fire service has been well served by ACO Bob Graham of Greater Manchester fire authority, the author of "Fire Safety in the Home" and CFO Karron of West Yorkshire, who did a great deal of work on promoting fire detectors in the community.

To be fair to the Government, the Home Office and the Department of Trade and Industry have responded to the pressure. Indeed, on 29 April this year Lord Caithness made a statement on behalf of the Government about fire detectors. He said:

> "Smoke detectors can give those precious few minutes warning which could make the difference between life and death.
>
> They can make a valuable contribution to fire safety, but, sadly, too few households know about their benefits and their relatively low cost. We are lagging behind other countries in their installation and are paying the price, in a horrifying toll of death and injury."

"Lagging behind other countries" is a significant but sad admission. I shall therefore refer to the experiences of Sweden and the United States on smoke detectors.

In 1981 the Swedish Fire Protection Association informed the Government of the day that only 79,000 homes in Sweden had smoke detectors. The association and the Government set themselves a target for 1986 of 60 per cent. of all homes being fitted with smoke detectors —2·3 million homes. They said that it would reduce property damage by 10 per cent. and the death rate by fires by 20 per cent. They also did a cost-benefit calculation, which showed that over 10 years' installation costs would amount to £2·3 million per annum while damage costs would be reduced to £5 million per annum, a net gain of £27 million to the Swedish economy.

The Swedish Government introduced the first stage of the five-year plan in 1982 with a series of television commercials. By Christmas, more than 400,000 devices had been sold. In 1983, almost 50 per cent. of one-family homes in Sweden had smoke detectors, and insurance companies started a programme of distributing smoke detectors free to policy holders. In 1984, about 700,000 smoke detectors were sold. One hundred lives had been saved directly because of the introduction of the device, and 45 per cent. of the population was covered by smoke detectors. In 64 per cent. of one family-households, smoke detectors had been introduced, while 83 per cent. had no problems with the alarms. Within 24 months, the Swedish Government were well on their way to reaching their 1986 target.

[Mr. McCartney]

The problem in the United States, with its different federal and state legislatures, is more complex and we do not have time to discuss it now. But I recommend the House and the Minister to read "Fire Safety in the Home" by Bob Graham, especially pages 25 to 31, which set out in detail the experience of the Greater Manchester fire authority's investigations into the American experience of smoke detectors. The new legislation introduced at federal and state level has cut by half the risk of death by fire. Most small fires are now dealt with at source by the householder, and fire safety awareness has increased dramatically. The introduction of such safety measures into households will increase people's awareness, and there is a new consciousness in people's reactions and attitudes to fire safety.

The installation of free smoke detectors in the homes of low-income families was the most important lesson learnt by the United States authorities. Those who need protection most are those with the least means to obtain it. The Government must tackle that central issue. Those who are most in need must not be left to the last if the Government decide to introduce a national scheme.

I welcome the views expressed by the Home Office and Department of Trade and Industry officials at the Fire Protection Association meeting on 12 June. They expressed support for several key elements: first, a pilot television advertising scheme; secondly, a home safety check scheme; and, thirdly, free provision for groups most at risk. I congratulate the Home Office and the Labour-controlled Tameside borough council on the recently announced pilot scheme to introduce smoke detectors to about 5,000 council homes at a cost of £50,000. My fire authority will monitor the success of the scheme, and we should wish everyone concerned in it well, in terms of its introduction and its effect in reducing the number of fires, fatalities and serious injuries.

The most recent data show that 83 per cent. of home fire deaths could have been influenced by the introduction of smoke detectors. In 48 per cent. of deaths, the time between ignition and the discovery of the fire was estimated at a staggering 30 minutes. There is no doubt that an early warning system would have played a significant part in saving many of those who perished.

I hope that the Minister will discuss the promotion of such a scheme. I wish to mention seven measures—I call them the magnificent seven. The first relates to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his next Budget. Will the Minister ask the Chancellor to reduce to zero, VAT on the sale of smoke detectors, and to consider the possibility of providing resources for free adaption to families on supplementary benefit or low incomes? Will he ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider changes in building regulations for new build and refurbishment? This is not an attempt to introduce more red tape. It costs, on average, £35,000 to £40,000 to build a new house and between £12,000 and £15,000 to refurbish an old one. With that sort of expenditure, it would seem common sense to introduce in the building regulations an awareness that, when that money is spent, included within that expense is a facility to include smoke detectors in redevelopments and refurbishments.

Thirdly, much money is spent by local government through improvement and repair grants on older properties. When improving and repairing properties it would seem sensible if cognisance were given to the introduction of smoke detectors.

Fourthly, I would like the Minister to look at local authorities' HIP allocations for refurbishment and rewiring programmes. In my constituency, for example, £3 million is currently being spent on house improvement on one of our run-down estates. Again, it would seem sensible if, included in that expenditure, was an allocation for smoke detectors. It is precisely in that sort of estate where major problems arise—where many fires, loss of life and injuries occur. In such large schemes it would seem sensible to include fire safety measures.

Fifthly, the Government are placing great stress on the role of housing associations. I would like to see housing association funds used to encourage housing associations to include smoke detectors in their refurbishment programmes.

Sixthly, the most difficult area in which to legislate is multi-occupancy dwellings. We need fire prevention regulations that require owners to install smoke detectors to a standard that one would expect in an ordinary dwelling house, but with an additional row frame sprinkler system to be fitted as part of a fire containment programme. In the United States there has been a dramatic decrease in fires in multi-occupancy properties because of fire containment programmes, at little cost but saving many lives and a great deal of property.

The seventh issue is security and insurance. The Government should exert pressure on companies to give discounted premiums to householders who fit smoke detectors. The Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities the Child Accident Prevention Trust, the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association and the Fire Brigades Union would generally support my views.

In conclusion, I ask the Government to reconvene the discussions held on 12 June with the Fire Protection Association so that priority can be given to the preparation of a five-year programme with targets similar to the schemes introduced in Sweden and the United States with such dramatic results. To do anything else is to be a handmaiden to the continuing unacceptable levels of carnage that currently exist around the nation's firesides.

12.18 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Trippier): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) for raising this subject and for the brief contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory).

I appreciate that the hon. Member for Makerfield has wide experience in this area. I acknowledge that fact and pay tribute to him for the work that he has done. He is right in saying that recent statistics produced by the Home Office show that about 700 people are killed in fires in the home every year and another 7,000 are injured. We believe that many of those deaths and injuries could be avoided if early warning of fire could be given while there was still a chance of escaping from the premises. It may interest the hon. Gentleman to know, if he does not already, that the 700 figure that he quoted has been constant over the past few years, but that the 7,000 injured figure has increased.

We believe that smoke detectors could help, but the potential benefits are not simple to assess. Fire conditions such as smoke behaviour and detection are especially complex and there may be equal or greater benefits to be derived from emphasising normal fire precautions, practice and personal vigilance. The hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that fire brigades throughout the country have played a significant part in increasing public awareness.

It cannot be assumed that one smoke detector in every home would give adequate warning of all house fires. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman knows of the joint research project that the Home Office is planning with the Tameside metropolitan borough council and the Greater Manchester county fire service, under which it is hoped to install smoke detectors in more than 5,000 homes in the Tameside area.

The neighbourhoods and dwellings selected for installations will be on a random basis to reflect as wide a cross-section of the community as possible. I listened to what the hon. Gentleman said about those who are on low incomes, and many of these people will be covered by the pilot scheme to which I have referred. The results of the scheme will be carefully monitored over a three-year period to ascertain the effectiveness of smoke detectors in alerting occupants to the outbreak of fire and reducing casualties. The proposed initiative will not offer the relevant households any guarantee of safety from fire in the home, although it will undoubtedly provide significant early warning potential if a fire occurs. Some valuable lessons are expected to be learnt from the experience of those who may be involved in the scheme. The Home Office is actively considering the possibility of a similar project elsewhere.

The hon. Gentleman has referred to building regulations, and he will be aware that currently they do not require the installation of smoke detectors. However, my Department is conducting a technical survey that will include a review of all the regulations. The consultation document that we issued recognised that there was scope for allowing a trade-off between active measures for fire protection, such as sprinklers and smoke detectors, and current passive measures such as structural fire resistance and compartmentation. Trade-offs will allow the degree of compartmentation or perhaps other matters now required by the regulations to be relaxed if active measures are used.

Mr. McCartney: Is this trade-off to be something similar to that which has been introduced in the United States, where the authorities, in active co-operation with the construction industry, are offering alternative building regulations? In some instances, compartments are most advisable in new constructions and in others smoke detectors and other measures are to be recommended. Will the trade-off be similar to that?

Mr. Trippier: My answer must be in two parts. First, the review to which I have referred is still at an early stage. We are seeking advice and opinions from everyone who is involved. We shall take full cognisance of what the hon. Gentleman has said; I am sure that that will impress him. Secondly, we must be careful to try to strike the right balance between deregulation and increased regulation. We have often believed that increased regulation, especially in the building industry, can act as a disincentive to enterprise. We must balance that consideration with the safety factor, which the hon. Gentleman has rightly dealt with at considerable length. It is our purpose to achieve the right balance, and we shall study all these matters and make comparisons with the United States.

For the moment, the possibility of trade-offs is being considered for buildings such as offices and shops which are covered by legislation for continuing control when the buildings are occupied. In domestic buildings, continuing control is a problem. Domestic smoke detectors can be simpler and cheaper than commercial types. They are mostly self-contained devices and they are often powered by batteries. There is concern about the lack of maintenance of such systems and the possibility of misuse.

Domestic smoke detectors are meant to be fix-and forget types that do not need much maintenance. The manufacturers thought that it should suffice to test the detectors by pressing the test button at monthly intervals. However, that was not enough. According to research in the United States, one third of installed domestic detectors in Dallas, Texas are not in working order, mainly because they have not been maintained properly. Detectors may suffer from an accumulation of dust and so on, so regular inspection and occasional cleaning are necessary. That concerns me, just as it will concern the hon. Gentleman.

Nevertheless, the desirability and cost-effectiveness of using smoke detectors for domestic buildings needs to be seriously examined. Any reservations about continuing control and misuse have to be balanced against the undoubted advantage of early fire detection assisting with life safety. To that end, my Department is currently undertaking a study of the potential of automatic smoke detection as a means of improving life safety in residential buildings.

We are considering the research that has already taken place in the United Kingdom and overseas and propose to move to an experimental programme which will examine the performance of various types of smoke detection under different fire conditions. However, building regulations apply only to new dwellings or dwellings subject to significant structural alteration. We have never imposed requirements retrospectively on buildings in single family occupation — whether owner-occupied or rented. Fire safety is no exception to that rule.

Mr. McCartney: I understand the Minister's point about the difficulties involved. However, when it comes to refurbishment, authorities have an obligation to agree a schedule of works and at that point, there may be a way round the problem. In providing grant it could be specified that the schedule of works must include a requirement to include smoke detection measures.

Mr. Trippier: It would be wrong if I said that we would ignore that point. We can certainly consider it while conducting our pilot scheme in the greater Manchester area.

The hon. Gentleman referred to resources for local authorities to fit smoke detectors. The local authorities' housing investment programme allocations are largely distributed in relation to a number of basic indicators of need — for example, to take account of housing stock condition and the need for renovation. These do not specifically include a measure of need for smoke detectors. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how that could be done. However, it is for local authorities to determine their spending priorities within the resources available to them and as the House heard last Tuesday, gross provision for local authorities' expenditure on housing has been increased for 1988-89 and for the third consecutive year to over £3 billion.

[Mr. Trippier]

In April this year we published a revised edition of the booklet "Smoke Detectors in the Home", which is available to the public, free of charge, from local fire brigades. I see that the hon. Gentleman has it. I am impressed to discover that about 658,000 copies of the booklet have been given out in the past six months, along with a further 12,000 copies of a shorter leaflet on the subject.

To increase public awareness of the importance of these devices a pilot television advertising campaign is planned in the Tyne Tees television area to promote better awareness of the value of smoke detectors. The success of that campaign will have to be monitored and if, as is hoped, this demonstration is successful, consideration will be given to extending it nationally. No doubt the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

My Department has already advised that the costs of providing any necessary means of escape from fire may be acceptable for improvement grant purposes. In the case of houses in multiple occupation, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, special grant is available towards the cost of such works. It is for local authorities to decide whether the provision of smoke detectors and alarms could be included as eligible works in any particular case to bring a property to the relevant standard. However, in the Department's view, it would not be appropriate for such works to attract grant unless they formed part of a wider scheme of improvement. Quite apart from the statutory provisions, it would clearly not be cost effective for grants to be assessed in respect of works costing only a few pounds and works which are unrelated to the basic condition of the property.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Would grants for smoke detectors be made available to homes that were considered particularly vulnerable to fire? There are what are called Spooner houses with timber frames in Heath in my constituency. Within the past three years there has been a fatality—three people were involved—and a fire gutted such a house. In such circumstances it might be appropriate if smoke detectors were installed. Will the improvement grant system relate to such buildings? Has anything emerged from the experiments under the Tameside scheme to direct assistance towards homes that are expected to be especially vulnerable?

Mr. Trippier: Nothing in the Tameside scheme deals with home improvement grants. I think that the hon. Member for Makerfield would acknowledge that. In answer to the first question, such grants may be appropriate, but there could not be access to a home improvement grant unless it was for a wider scheme of improvement. We have to devise a system whereby it would be cost effective for grants to be assessed. Obviously, that would be extremely difficult in relation to work that would cost only a small sum.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Trippier: With great respect, I have only a minute left to reply. The hon. Gentleman has asked me several questions and I shall try to deal with all of them. I shall answer by letter those that I miss because I have allowed so many interventions.

The hon. Member for Makerfield asked about zero-rating of smoke detectors. Obviously that is a question for my hon. Friend the Paymaster General. I shall pass the hon. Gentleman's points on to him. I shall draw the attention of my hon. Friends in the Department of Trade and Industry and in the Home Office the hon. Gentleman's point about insurance discounts on premiums.

The main thrust of the hon. Gentleman's comments concerned the use of smoke detectors in homes, whether they are owner occupied or tenanted. The traditional view has been that people in existing dwellings occupied by a single family are generally best able to secure their own safety without the need for legislation. We shall have to consider that point. It is obviously difficult for us to enforce this form of legislation mandatorily. How does one police it? I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that I gave him earlier—his points will be taken into account in all our deliberations.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Monday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-eight minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 10 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

DYFED BILL *[Lords]*

Order for consideration read.
Amendment agreed to.
To be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Air Defences

1. **Ms. Walley**: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to strengthen United Kingdom air defences.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): A major modernisation of the United Kingdom's air defences is now well advanced, including the build-up of the Tornado ADV force, the commissioning of improved United Kingdom air defence ground environment systems, and the purchase of Boeing E-3 airborne early warning aircraft.

I am pleased to announce that an order for a seventh E-3 aircraft has now been placed with the Boeing aircraft company. This will provide a significant enhancement over the six-aircraft fleet ordered earlier this year and a robust capability to mount continuous airborne early warning patrols. The cost of this aircraft will be accommodated within the provision for the defence budget announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 3 November.

Ms. Walley: Has the Secretary of State seen recent press reports and the "World in Action" programme describing the appalling state of our air defences? Does he agree that that is the real cost of Trident?

Mr. Younger: In the first place, the state of our air defences is not only very good, but considerably better than it has been for many years. Secondly, the Trident programme has been in our costings for a very long time and that is coming down in cost, not increasing. Neither part of the hon. Lady's question holds any water.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that when the Government came into office in 1979 we found to our horror that no provision had been made in the finances for the air defence part of the Tornado programme or for making the Hawk aircraft capable for local defence, and we inherited the Nimrod project?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The current dramatic improvement in the RAF's capability has been achieved although no funding had been laid ahead when we came into office in 1979. That position has been put right by the Government.

Mr. Beith: Following the tragic deaths of two pilots in my constituency just over a week ago, is the Secretary of State prepared to consider a major review of the low-flying programme, as its contribution to the effectiveness of our air defences must be reduced by the enormous loss of life and expensive equipment that has been sustained?

Mr. Younger: We believe that any loss of life is too much; the loss of even one pilot a year is one too many. We try to keep those distressing accidents to an absolute minimum. However, this year's accidents, however tragic, are no worse in number than last year's accident figures, which were the best for a very long time. We keep the position carefully under review and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we do not take any of those events lightly.

Mr. Latham: All Conservative Members will endorse the comments of my right hon. Friend about the skill and determination of the Royal Air Force. What progress has been made in sorting out the electronic difficulties relating to the Tornado—the Foxhunter system?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right to state that there were some difficulties about that. After prolonged negotiations with the company we have agreed a way to go ahead with the Foxhunter radar, which I am convinced will produce an effective instrument for the aircraft when it comes into service.

Mr. Rogers: In view of the recent news that the Americans are to cancel their order for the Harrier aircraft — that will obviously increase the unit costs of the production of the Harrier — and in view of the substantial cuts in that part of the Government's Estimates, how will that affect our purchases of the Harrier and our air defences in the near future?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. The Harrier AV8B, which is the American version, is an important Anglo-US collaborative project. The RAF is firmly committed to its side of it, the Harrier GR5, which will enter service next year.

During my recent visit to Washington I made it clear that it would be a serious blow to Anglo-US collaboration if the United States cut orders. I was assured, however, that no decision to do so had yet been made, and I understand that that is still the position.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates his Department has made of Soviet chemical weapons capabilities.

Mr. Younger: The Soviet Union commands the world's largest and most sophisticated chemical warfare capability. It has produced and stockpiled a wide variety of chemical agents and munitions, and has a massive tonnage of nerve agent alone. It also has specialist troops dedicated to the chemical warfare role. Soviet servicemen are trained in the doctrine and tactics of chemical warfare, and Soviet land, sea and air forces maintain a variety of modern systems for delivering chemical attack.

Mr. Powell: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the efforts by the British Government and their leadership in the Geneva talks are widely welcomed? Will he confirm that, as the process of nuclear and chemical weapon disarmament continues, the Soviets' attitude to the elimination of all chemical weapons will be a crucial touchstone in relation to how we judge their general attitude to disarmament?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The United Kingdom is playing a very active role in the 40-nation conference on disarmament in Geneva. We chaired the ad hoc committee responsible for negotiations in 1986, when considerable progress was made on the difficult subject of verification.

The subject of negotiations provides a good example of what happens when one side unilaterally renounces a type of armament. We have done that since the 1950s. However, so far there is no sign that the Soviet Union has, as a result, lessened any of its efforts on the chemical warfare front.

Mr. James Lamond: Have not the Soviet Government offered a treaty banning all chemical weapons, and also offered to open up their manufacturing capability to inspection, while, at the same time, the President of the United States is still demanding additional funds for the deadly chemical binary weapon?

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman has a very distorted view. The Soviet Union did not admit until six months ago that it had any chemical weapons. The United States has not made any chemical weapons, until now, for 17 years. During that time the Soviet Union has built up its capability vastly. While saying that they would like a worldwide ban—as we would—the Soviets have done exactly the reverse. We want a worldwide ban on all chemical and biological weapons. If the Soviet Union wants that, it can have it, as far as we are concerned.

Sir Anthony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is rather alarming that the Soviet Union has behaved in such a Machiavellian way?

Is it not some consolation, however, that the BAOR is probably better equipped to counter chemical weapons than are any of the other NATO allies?

Mr. Younger: My right hon. and learned Friend is correct. While it is extremely difficult to equip troops to survive chemical weapon attacks, our efforts are generally admired and considered pretty effective. However, the general, overriding impression is that the West wishes a total ban on all chemical weapons, and, as soon as the Soviet Union is prepared to agree to that, we can have it.

Mr. Douglas: As Soviet and Warsaw pact representatives are viewing Operation Purple Warrior, is it possible for the Secretary of State to ask for some reciprocity, so that we can see how Soviet troops are trained in chemical warfare? Could he also give us some further information on how well our troops are protected against it?

Mr. Younger: Our troops have the capability to protect themselves against chemical weapons, and most of our new equipment is devised with that in mind.

I understand that Operation Purple Warrior is proceeding very well and that the observers from the Warsaw pact countries are receiving every possible help to observe the exercises. We are entitled to observe their exercises when they are of a sufficient size to merit it, and we shall, of course, be glad to do so.

NATO Nuclear Planning Group

5. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear planning group meeting in Monterey.

Mr. Younger: At the nuclear planning group meeting in Monterey on 3 and 4 November Ministers discussed a variety of security matters pertaining to NATO's nuclear forces.

In particular, we welcomed and fully supported the agreement in principle between the United States and the Soviet Union for the global elimination of land-based INF missiles above the range of 500 km and looked forward to an INF treaty being signed and ratified in the near future.

We also reaffirmed that the strategy of flexible response would remain the basis of the Alliance's security and stated our determination to take whatever measures might be required to safeguard the effectiveness, responsiveness and survivability of NATO's nuclear forces, while maintaining only the minimum forces necessary for credible deterrence.

A copy of the official communiqué for the Monterey meeting has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Stevens: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the impending INF deal represents a triumph for NATO's dual-track approach? Does he also agree that it would not have been possible if the approaches that were advocated by the Labour party had been pursued?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct on both points. This represents a triumph for the dual-track approach which was devised by NATO and put into effect against tremendous opposition from many circles, particularly the Opposition. If it had not been for that stand, we should not now have the agreement. It is an absolute vindication of the policy that we have been following since 1979.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State accept that there is very little point in negotiating away ground-launched cruise missiles, only to bring them back again in an air-launched or sea-launched form? Does he also accept that there is a powerful case for improving the effectiveness of NATO's manned aircraft by providing them with a stand-off weapon that would ensure greater penetrability against Soviet air defences?

Mr. Younger: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's second point. As for his first question, the objective of all the negotiations and of the agreement that we very much hope is about to be signed is to reduce the number of nuclear warheads in Europe. I am convinced that the agreement will achieve that aim. When that has happened we shall have to make sure that our remaining armaments are credible and that they hold together as a coherent weapons system.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the presence in Europe of 326,000 American servicemen is the best guarantee that we shall not become decoupled from the United States? Does not this extraordinary agreement, which changes the defence landscape of Europe, make it even more important to start to address the imbalance between the Warsaw pact and NATO forces—in particular, its 2:1 preponderance of tanks and its 3:1 preponderance of artillery?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is correct on both points. The presence of American forces in many guises in western Europe is not only a guarantee of United States solidity with its European and free world allies against any threat, but shows that the United States takes the view that the first line of defence of the United States is in western Europe. The Government fully support what we hope will be the next stage—a START agreement on a reduction of up to 50 per cent. in strategic systems. During that period we hope that a major start will be made on dealing with the conventional imbalance and our long-standing demand for a worldwide ban on chemical and bilogical weapons.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Government have consistently maintained that the reason for the deployment of cruise missiles was the Soviet Union's deployment of SS20s. Under the INF agreement the Soviet Union will give up three times as much nuclear weaponry as the West. May we now take it, therefore, that we shall hear no more nonsense about compensatory adjustments in the wake of an INF agreement? I hope that the Secretary of State will make it absolutely clear that there will be no gap in NATO's defences.

Mr. Younger: There has been no so-called nonsense from me about compensatory adjustments. There are two separate strands here. One is the implementation of the decisions that were taken four years ago at Montebello for the modernisation and bringing up to date of the existing nuclear weapons that are part of the West's armoury against attack. That process is only half completed. It must be completed as soon as possible.

We fully support the INF deal, and once it is concluded it will be normal and natural for NATO to review its weapons systems to ensure that they make sense, are coherent and hold together. Any necessary changes will have to be put forward as proposals to the allies before they are agreed.

Mr. Favell: I welcome the present negotiations, but will my right hon. Friend remind the House of Sir Winston Churchill's words in his last speech to Congress in, I think, 1951, in which he said that we should never abandon our atomic weapons until we were certain—indeed, more than certain—that we had other methods of defending ourselves?

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. The object of the arms reduction process is to reduce the number of atomic weapons and warheads on the ground in Europe on both sides. At all times we must ensure that our security is preserved. For that reason we must ensure that we have a credible, flexible response to offer to any attack at low or high level, and that is our objective.

Norway and Denmark

6. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary for Defence what British forces are currently committed to the reinforcement of Norway and Denmark.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Ian Stewart): The 3 Commando Brigade, as part of the United Kingdom-Netherlands amphibious force and the United Kingdom mobile force, has the reinforcement of the northern region as its principal role. The United Kingdom also makes a significant contribution to the ACE mobile force, which has options to deploy there. In addition, RAF Jaguars are specifically assigned to the northern region and a number of other RAF aircraft could also be deployed there.

Miss Mowlam: Will the Minister say whether he plans any cuts in that United Kingdom mobile force? Is he aware that if he does the Danes' response may be that NATO is no longer worth the effort?

Mr. Stewart: I do not think that that is a necessary conclusion. We welcome the contribution of the Danes, and we should welcome a greater contribution from them. With regard to the United Kingdom mobile force, it is generally accepted that the current use is not the best one. That point was explained fully a few months ago by my predecessor in answer to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). That matter is presently under assessment at SHAPE, but no decisions have been taken.

Mr. Wilkinson: Were the British Government consulted before the Canadians decided to withdraw from their commitment to deploy a brigade to northern Norway? Will my hon. Friend say whether he will consider the possibility of compensating for that deficiency by deploying British troops on the northern flank? Paradoxically, the Canandians seem about to augment their presence on the central front.

Mr. Stewart: As my hon. Friend knows, these matters are extensively discussed among allied Governments. As to Britain being required to fill the role of the Canadians if they withdraw their CAST force, we have received no request from them or NATO to do that. As I said with regard to the United Kingdom mobile force, these matters are currently under consideration within NATO.

Mr. Sean Hughes: As the Norwegians can no longer depend on the CAST brigade, will the Minister say whether the Government will formally commit the Royal Marines to the defence of Norway? If not, who will be responsible?

Mr. Stewart: It would be unwise for me to prejudge the consideration that these questions are being given within NATO. It is in that context that our force is part of SACEUR's strategic reserve.

Mr. Ward: My hon. Friend is well aware of the activities of the Royal Marines in Norway, but will he continually bear in mind the need to increase its airborne assault capability for use not only in the northern sector but in other parts of the world?

Mr. Stewart: Like my hon. Friend, I have the highest regard for the Royal Marines and their capability for amphibious operations. The Purple Warrior exercise that is currently under way has demonstrated their professionalism. My hon. Friend should not underestimate the scale of equipment and ships that are available, but we are anxious to ensure that we maintain our capabilities.

Armilla Patrol

7. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what point defence the Royal Navy's frigates and destroyer currently on Armilla patrol have against sea-skimming missiles.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The ships serving on the Armilla patrol are provided with self-defence equipment relevant to the range of threats in the region.

Mr. Barron: Is the Minister saying that the three ships do not have the last-ditch point defence system that is needed for them to defend themselves against sea-skimming missiles? Why were the Phalanx-equipped type-42s or batch 3 type-22s not sent out?

Mr. Stewart: As the hon. Gentleman will know, we rotate the ships on the Armilla patrol. They have a variety of layers of air defence, including long-range surveillance radar, medium-range Sea Dart missiles and point defence Sea Wolf missiles, close-in weapons systems such as Phalanx and Goalkeeper, and also soft-kill measures such as jammers and decoys. *[Interruption.]* It may be a matter of amusement to Opposition Members, but the protection of our ships in the Gulf is a matter that we take seriously.

None of our ships is likely to have the whole range of all the available weapons systems. I should like to add a final point—*[Interruption.]*—if I am allowed to do so. It is not in the interests of the safety of our ships in the Gulf for us to comment on the likely form of response to particular kinds of attack.

Mr. Hayward: Were not there recommendations, arising out of the Falklands war, that type-22s and type-23s should urgently be fitted with vertical-launch Sea Wolf defence systems? Are such programmes somewhat behind schedule? In the interests of the Royal Navy, could they be brought forward?

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate the importance of Sea Wolf, as does my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement who is pursuing the matter. We hope that the systems will be available and operative as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Banks: Where does the Minister get terminology such as "soft-kill"? How many perverters of the English language are employed in the Ministry of Defence to dream up such expressions? How much is the Armilla patrol costing the British taxpayer? What contribution is he asking for from multinational oil companies such as Shell and Esso for protecting their ships?

Mr. Stewart: The Armilla patrol is part of the Royal Navy's operations. We do not separately cost individual aspects of it. I should have thought that taxpayers—individuals and companies—would be perfectly willing that part of the revenue that they pay to the Government for income tax, corporation tax and other taxes should go to maintain freedom of British shipping in the Gulf.

French Minister of Defence

8. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet the French Minister of Defence.

Mr. Younger: I next expect to meet M. Giraud in December.

Mr. Soames: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the inter-service co-operation that has flowed from the talks is warmly to be welcomed? What are the ultimate objectives of his talks with the French?

Mr. Younger: Certainly, co-operation on the level of exercising and liaison between British and French forces is developing well and is increasing every year. The ultimate objective is to have closer defence relations with our friends across the Channel, in the hope that we can have mutual equipment collaboration with them and, of course, have close liaison with their forces.

Dr. Owen: Now that President Reagan has called for a more equal relationship between the United States and Europe within NATO, is it clear that the United States would welcome greater Anglo-French co-operation on nuclear matters and, in particular, would not impair our entering into a joint collaborative project to extend the range of the ASMP—air sol moyenne portée—to 400 km or beyond?

Mr. Younger: Certainly our friends in the United States would greatly welcome closer relations between ourselves and the French and between ourselves and other NATO allies. We should be glad to discuss a French air-launch missile in case there is any way in which we and France can collaborate in this important matter.

Sir John Farr: When my right hon. Friend meets the French Minister, will he point out to him that there is still a chance for France to join in our plans for the European fighter aircraft? Will he bear in mind also the fact that, years ago, the French not only refused to join in plans for this modern aircraft, which is the most advanced in the world, but did their best to torpedo the scheme?

Mr. Younger: The French fighter aircraft Rafale is a matter for the French Government to deal with as they consider best from their point of view. As we have made clear, the European fighter aircraft is being considered by ourselves and our partners—not including the French—and I am glad to say that discussions of the next stage are proceeding well.

Mr. O'Neill: While on the subject of collaborative projects, will the Minister confirm that his discussions with the French have included the NFR-90? Will he confirm that the project, which seems to be the best hope for the warship building industry in this country, will go ahead and that yesterday's report in the *Daily Mail*, maintaining that Britain is about to back out of the project, is wrong?

Mr. Younger: I have seen the reports and I confirm that at my next meeting with the French Minister—as at my last meeting with him—I expect the NFR-90 to be one of the matters for discussion. The Government's concern about the programme has been related to the method by which to address the next stage, and we are still negotiating with our allies about that. There is no truth in any suggestion that we have pulled out of the project.

Mr. Hind: In his discussions with Mr. Giraud, will my right hon. Friend resist the blandishments of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) in suggesting that there should be co-operation over nuclear deterrence? Does he agree that if that happened it would mean that the Trident submarine deterrent was deployed at a much later date, with the result that the United Kingdom would be undefended once Polaris became obsolete?

Mr. Younger: I should make it clear that although I have discussed a whole range of defence subjects with my French colleague, there is no proposal for any joining together of the French and British deterrents, which operate separately. At the moment I cannot envisage circumstances in which it would make sense for only one deterrent to be operated or for the other to be expected to operate on our behalf. Further co-operation is a very good idea, but it falls short of amalgamating the two systems.

Nimrod Airframes

9. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what use is currently being made of the Nimrod airframes.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): We are considering a number of possible uses for the Nimrod airborne early warning aircraft. In the meantime they are being held in storage.

Mr. Cummings: Instead of leaving the 11 Nimrod airframes to rot, why does the Secretary of State not convert them for use as maritime surveillance aircraft or, indeed, use them to supplement the five aging and antiquated Shackleton aircraft and so recoup some of the taxpayers' money that has been spent?

Mr. Sainsbury: We are considering a wide range of possibilities for the aircraft's use. We are anxious to make the right decisions and we are taking time to ensure that we do.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend consider much more seriously and urgently the need for more maritime patrol aeroplanes? Is not the greatest threat facing the Supreme Command Atlantic the submarine threat? Is not that threat becoming more sophisticated, with boats that are ever quieter and deeper-diving? Is there not an imperative need to enhance the maritime patrol aircraft availability of our Alliance?

Mr. Sainsbury: My hon. Friend has made some valid observations about Warsaw pact submarines. The points that he has made will be among those taken into account when we reach our decision on the future of the airframes.

Trident

10. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what precise extent the operational efficiency and viability of the Trident missile is dependent on United States maintenance and supplies.

Mr. Younger: As I said during the defence debate on 27 October, arrangements were made in 1982 for United Kingdom-owned missiles to be processed at the United States facility in Kings Bay, Georgia. This processing will take place at the same time as the missile-carrying submarine is undergoing major refit. The arrangement with the United States is, of course, intended to maintain the operational efficiency of the missiles and thus of the United Kingdom deterrent. I am fully satisfied that this aim will be achieved and that the return of the missiles to the United States in no way affects the continuous deployment of the United Kingdom deterrent force, which is at all times under the operational control of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Allen: Has the Secretary of State read the Ministry of Defence papers from the 1940s when the United Kingdom was last involved in a lend-lease arrangement with the United States? Will he admit to the House that we are in a position of complete dependency on the United States for maintenance and that the independent nuclear deterrent is a charade?

Mr. Younger: I would have thought that there was every evidence that, during the last war, in the 1940s the United States lend-lease arrangement was a lifeline for this country. However, there is no connection between that arrangement and the Trident system where, at all times, Britain owns all the missiles that it needs for its system.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that while Trident is on station, and between the major refits on the submarines, the remaining submarines will be serviced in Scotland and that that will be good for Scotland and for jobs in Scotland, because the missiles can be serviced in the tubes?

Mr. Younger: That is correct. At present the Polaris submarines are refitted at Rosyth in Scotland and the Trident submarine will also be refitted at Rosyth. The only difference is that the missiles will be refurbished in Georgia and not Britain.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is it not an indictment of the Government that, while billions of pounds can be found to pay for Trident, the National Health Service relies on charities to buy the equipment that it needs to keep people alive? Is that not something that the Government have to face up to and explain?

Mr. Younger: Fortunately, under this Government not only are we able to find enough money to keep our defences in good shape, our security safe and peace in our time, but we are able to increase substantially the funding for the National Health Service, which is to be seen in falling waiting lists and better service generally throughout the country.

11. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Younger: The Trident programme continues to make good progress. It is on time and within budget and planned to enter service in the mid-1990s.

Mr. McLoughlin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the cost of the purchase of Trident has fallen dramatically since the first decisions to go ahead were announced? Will he inform the House of the contractual commitments of the Trident programme, for example up to the year 1992? Does he agree that the Labour party's plans to scrap it and spend more money on conventional defence will look even less sensible in 1992 than in 1987?

Mr. Younger: I agree with my hon. Friend. I was able to announce earlier this year, when I announced the annual recosting of the Trident programme, that not only had there been a substantial reduction in its cost because of favourable exchange rates, but that there had been a real reduction in its cost because of economies of about £546 million. Therefore, the cost of the Trident programme is going down, not up. Fortunately, the Labour party's plans are unlikely ever to come into effect. Any idea that the Labour party had, however unrealistic, of cancelling Trident and using the money on something else is now completely impossible because by the earliest time the Labour party could form a Government, the Trident programme would be substantially completed.

Mr. Flannery: Is it not a fact that the whole world is now hoping that the scaling down of intermediate nuclear missiles will take place and that following that there will be a scaling down of the strategic missiles owned by the

Soviet Union and the United States? Is it not also a fact that in those circumstances the Trident missile would be just a status symbol in the hands of this country, costing at least £10 billion, and that it will not mean anything if the great missiles of the other two nations are not scaled down?

Mr. Younger: I share entirely the hon. Gentleman's aims and views on the reduction of nuclear missiles in the world, both intermediate and strategic. It is the hon. Gentleman's sadness that he is having to rely on a Conservative Government to achieve the reductions, rather than just talk about them. Of course, it is the case that the reductions in nuclear weapons are designed to lessen tension in the world, but we get no further forward by pretending that in some way we can do without any defence or security for ourselves. That is simply unrealistic.

Defence Contracts

12. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of defence contracts in the latest year for which figures are available were subject to competition; and how this compares with 1979-80.

Mr. Sainsbury: The proportion of defence contracts placed by competitive tender or otherwise by reference to market forces in 1986-87 was 53 per cent. The comparable figure for 1979-80 was 30 per cent.

Mr. Watts: Has my hon. Friend made any assessment of the impact of the competition initiative in reducing defence costs, and has that had any effect on the proportion of contracts that have been awarded to smaller defence contractors?

Mr. Sainsbury: It is difficult to make an accurate assessment of what the price would have been for any particular contract if it had been awarded other than by reference to competition. However, we are confident that substantial savings are being achieved, and a number were listed in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates". On the percentage of contracts going to smaller firms, which we regard as important, we are striving through the small firms initiative to ensure that the maximum number of small firms have a real opportunity to participate in work for the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Duffy: Is the Minister aware that much the more meaningful comparison between now and 1979-80 in respect of defence contracts is that, unlike then, a gap is now opening up between commitments and resources, which some analysts compute as being as high as £8 billion? When he gets back to his Department, will he ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State why there was no mention of that in the Defence Estimates?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government are spending substantially more on defence than would have been spent under a Labour Administration. Furthermore, we are ensuring that we get the best possible value for money in our expenditure.

NATO (Flexible Response)

13. **Sir Antony Buck:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's strategy of flexible response.

Mr. Ian Stewart: NATO's strategy of flexible response remains fully valid and continues to be a sound basis for the security of Alliance members.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my hon. Friend agree that the credibility of that doctrine depends on our maintaining our defence capability at all levels—in the nuclear and conventional spheres, on land, in the sea and in the air? Does he agree that unilateralism is the enemy of multilateralism?

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that the unilateralist campaign has obstructed not only the improvement of our own security, but progress in arms control. Now and at all times, the security of the United Kingdom and of our NATO allies is the prime concern of our policy.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Minister confirm that that flexible response includes taking compensatory measures to introduce nuclear warheads and air and sea-launched missiles to compensate for those that have been removed under the INF talks? Will he give the House the categorical undertaking that any such compensatory measures will not result in a greater number of nuclear weapons being committed to Europe than is currently the case with INF weapons?

Mr. Stewart: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said earlier, we intend that the INF agreement, if and when it is achieved, will result in fewer nuclear weapons in Europe. On force adjustments, it is always necessary for us to deploy our assets, whether conventional or nuclear, in the way that is most effective for our own defence. We shall continue to do that in the light of changing circumstances, including arms control.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister join me in acknowledging the role played by the mercantile marine in our flexible response to every past conflict? Does he share my astonishment that, in Exercise Purple Warrior, which is taking place in the south-west of Scotland and is being observed by east European countries, virtually the entire Merchant Navy presence has had to be brought in from foreign countries because of its systematic rundown by the Government? Does he agree that, from a defence as well as a civil point of view, the destruction of the British Merchant Navy and the virtual elimination of the Red Ensign is one of the Government's badges of shame?

Mr. Stewart: I have a high regard for the British merchant marine, just as the hon. Gentleman has. What I do not accept is the assumption that it is being run down in a dangerous or unsatisfactory way. May I point out that the reason why the ships taken up from trade for Exercise Purple Warrior came from other countries in Europe was that they were willing to make ships available on more competitive terms than British operators. Had it been otherwise, we would have been glad to take British ships.

Mr. Denzil Davies: In a previous answer the Secretary of State mentioned the Montebello agreement and what is described as modernisation. Will the Government now support the West German Government in pressing for talks on the removal of battlefield nuclear weapons at the same time as talks on conventional weapons because, very often, those battlefield weapons are present because of the conventional imbalance?

Mr. Stewart: I have no doubt that we shall have to address seriously the whole question of conventional balance in the light of the arms control agreement that appears now to be in prospect. The question of battlefield nuclear weapons comes into that context, but I certainly do not think that it should come first.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Prime Minister accept that, when the state causes an avoidable injustice to a citizen, compensation and help should be swift and substantial? That being so, why is there such a delay in dealing with the legitimate claim of 1,200 of our fellow citizens who suffer from haemophilia and who have contracted the AIDS virus from the use of dirty blood products? They were not to blame and we need to help them.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is considering this matter and I hope that he will have a statement to make shortly.

Mr. Peter Robinson: During the course of the day, will the Prime Minister reflect upon the massacre in Enniskillen on Sunday? As Ulster once again buries its dead, will she attempt to project herself forward into the meetings at council chambers up and down Northern Ireland where Unionists councillors and others have to sit down with representatives of the Provisional IRA? Will she take the obvious and logical step to proscribe Sinn Fein and any other organisation that supports terrorism?

The Prime Minister: We are concerned about the presence in Northern Ireland of district councillors who support terrorist violence. We believe that parties should choose between violence and democratic ways. A recent discussion paper canvassed a number of possible solutions to this problem, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will consider what further steps should be taken in the light of comments received. The possibility of proscribing a number of organisations, Sinn Fein and UDA among them, is kept under review, but proscription is a blanket measure that would go further than the specific problem. We shall await further consultation results before we make up our mind.

Mr. Kinnock: May I first say how much I agree with the view expressed by the Prime Minister that those who pursue the so-called joint strategy of the ballot and the bullet are guilty of both hypocrisy and complete incompatability with a democracy. Will the right hon. Lady accept that, even in the wake of the barbarism at Enniskillen, she is completely right to resist demands for the return of internment, since that would be more likely to give some form of perverse reward to the terrorists than enhanced security? Can the Prime Minister now tell us whether she will be meeting the Taoiseach, Mr. Haughey, to consider new joint initiatives to improve security and intensify the use of the Anglo-Irish Agreement for that purpose?

The Prime Minister: At the moment I have no plans to meet the Taoiseach. I shall be seeing him in the margins of the European Council at the beginning of December. I believe that at the moment events are speaking very loudly to those who have important decisions to make.

Sir Giles Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend consider that the unity of condemnation in the House against the outrage on Sunday should be followed by unity of purpose in dealing with terrorism? Does that suggest to my right hon. Friend that those who have consistently opposed the Prevention of Terrorism Act should now reconsider their position?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. The Prevention of Terrorism Act will come up for renewal in the coming year and I hope that we shall have unity of purpose in supporting it.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marshall: Is the Prime Minister aware of the Age Concern prediction that almost 1 million pensioners are at risk this winter? As she has stated that she needs the comfort of a £100 cashmere sweater to keep warm, what does she intend to do to prevent less well-off pensioners from freezing to death this winter?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the heating additions are higher than they have ever been, both on the regular supplementary benefit, where they go the whole year through to enable people to buy cheaper coal during the summer if they wish, and the severe weather payments, which have been the object of many questions in the House and which we have changed so that we now believe that they will achieve the best possible results.

Mr. Hayes: I hope that my right hon. Friend is greatly encouraged by the fact that on Sunday every Catholic priest in Ireland will be preaching on the sinfulness of those who harbour the Remembrance Day butchers. Does she agree that when those people are brought to justice, it must be British justice, before a British court and a British judge, and that any foreign Government who attempt to foil this will not be forgiven or forgotten by the House?

The Prime Minister: I think that we are all encouraged by the universal condemnation and repugnance felt by the whole world about the vile act that took place in Enniskillen. I agree with my hon. Friend that the justice in Northern Ireland is the justice of the United Kingdom and the courts of the United Kingdom.

Select Committees

Q3. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Prime Minister what representations she has received about the establishment of Select Committees to monitor Government Departments.

The Prime Minister: I have received a small number of representations, including one from the hon. Member.

Mr. Allen: Does the Prime Minister agree that the inability to bring forward and to find time on the Floor of the House for a given number of reports from Select Committees that are meant to oversee Government Departments weakens the accountability of the Government in the parliamentary process? Will she make representations to her hon. Friends to bring forward the recommendations of the Procedure Committee to ensure that Select Committees have a proper place in our parliamentary process?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, there were motions on the Order Paper about Select Committees which were objected to yesterday, and which are still on the Order Paper today. Select Committees have an important role. They have a considerable number of days allocated to them for debate, but if the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is not enough he should have a word with his Front Bench to secure more of the Opposition's days.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Ombudsman committee already does an excellent job in overseeing Government Departments? Will she consider extending the jurisdiction of that committee to include the Police Complaints Authority?

The Prime Minister: Any such questions should be addressed in the first place to the Leader of the House. I am wary about saying anything about Select Committees without first consulting my right hon. Friend, for very good reasons.

Mr. Bell: When the Prime Minister considers the establishment of Select Committees to monitor Government Departments, will she consider a Select Committee to monitor the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Does she agree with the Government of the Republic of Ireland that, with the Government of the United Kingdom, we can use the agreement to put behind us the tragic events of Sunday and seek peace, stability and reconciliation for the whole of Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement offers the best chance that we have of enhancing security co-operation with the Irish. My right hon. Friend will be having further urgent talks with Irish Ministers about security. Perhaps the statement that we had yesterday and the universal expressions of opinion from both sides of the House spoke volumes more than any Select Committee could.

Sir John Farr: Will my right hon. Friend also bear in mind that quite a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House think that we are getting on rather well without Select Committees? Bearing in mind the excesses of some of the Select Committees in the last Parliament, will she not be in a hurry to see that they are re-established?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, motions on the membership of most of the Select Committees were put before the House yesterday and objected to. They remain on the Order Paper and the House will have an opportunity to consider them in the normal way.

I have heard what my hon. Friend has said about the Select Committees. The House decided that they should monitor each Department, and we therefore do not have anything like a Science and Technology Committee. If I am allowed to have a personal opinion, I must say that I have always rather regretted that.

Engagements

Q4. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: In the discussions between the British and Irish Governments, will the Prime Minister look carefully at the establishment of a joint security commission and the need for a unitary judicial system and joint anti-terrorist legislation, passed both by the Dail and Westminster? Does she agree about the paramount importance of the Dail enacting the new extradition agreement on 1 December?

The Prime Minister: I see no reason at all to have a joint security commission. The Anglo-Irish Agreement enables us to consider security matters—the Republic of Ireland to raise them with us, and we to raise them with Ministers from the Republic of Ireland—so that, by co-operation, we may achieve better security. We must operate that agreement, trying all the time to enhance security.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that every nation should fight terrorism — every single one. I hope that people will consider, among other things, where the arms are coming from and what action they can take through their ordinary policies about that. We must all fight terrorism, but between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom we must fight it through the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Thornton: Is my right hon. Friend aware of an initiative by the Liverpool Society of Chartered Accountants and the Merseyside task force that is called "Business Opportunities on Merseyside"? Is she also aware that that initiative was launched at a well-attended conference this morning at the Barbican? Will my right hon. Friend congratulate those bodies on showing the real face of Merseyside, and reaffirm her view that a partnership between the public and private sectors is the best way to regenerate our inner cities?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend, particularly about the need for more businesses — especially small businesses — to start up. It is vital that the local authority welcomes private enterprise and the operations of the private sector.

Q5. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Welsh: Is the Prime Minister aware of the anxiety expressed by Scottish parents, teachers and churches about the Government's school management proposals, which are designed more for England than for Scotland? Does she agree that, after a period of prolonged industrial dispute and massive curriculum changes, we require stability rather than divisive, alien ideas, which have been forced upon an unwilling population and on what is still arguably the best education system in Europe?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Bill coming before the House concerning education in Scotland is designed to give parents more power and influence over their schools. That is a good thing to do and will be welcomed by many Scottish parents.

Q6. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Coombs: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in terms of sustained growth and profitability, British industry is stronger now than it has been for 20 years? Will she further confirm that, in addition to making representations to the United States Government about reducing their budget, and, therefore, their trade deficit, representations should also be made to countries such as West Germany and Japan — which have practised unduly restrictive trade and monetary policies over the past few years—to avoid an unnecessary fall in world trade?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that British industry is healthy, fit and flourishing, that its profitability is higher than it has been for many years and that it is exporting well, particularly manufactured products. With regard to the wider economic scene, it is absolutely vital that we first have decisions upon the deficit in the United States and how the President and Congress together propose to deal with it. I agree with my hon. Friend that as soon as we have that it is vital for there to be a meeting of the G7 countries and to get co-operation, especially from Japan and Germany, about what they and we can do to help implement the decision from the United States to restore confidence in the world economic community.

Q7. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Salmond: Is the Prime Minister aware of the growing concern that NIREX, having failed to dump nuclear waste in East Anglia, is turning its attention to Scotland? However poorly the Prime Minister may think of us, does she accept that the people of Scotland will not tolerate the country being used as a dumping ground for Europe's nuclear waste?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Member is aware, the question of how nuclear waste will be disposed of is still under consideration. He will also be aware that we all, including Scotland, have nuclear power stations. I am sure that he supports those nuclear power stations and also supports the interesting experiments at Dounreay into a different method of nuclear generation.

Data Protection Act 1984 (Amendment)

3.31 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Data Protection Act 1984.

Data protection is a complicated subject. Some people think it has its own language. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If hon. Members are leaving the Chamber, will they please leave quietly?

Mr. Cohen: The Minister last week described me as an aficionado on the subject for asking parliamentary questions and trying to extend the rights of individuals. Data protection is like a freedom of information right for individuals to see the computer records that are held on them. Access should be as wide as possible. Exemptions, restrictions and denial of access should be kept to a minimum. The Data Protection Act 1984 does not do that. It is much too narrow and seriously deficient in many respects.

Tomorrow is data day when subject access will be available, but it will be far too expensive. For example, answers to parliamentary questions that I have asked show that someone may have to spend £900 to get information from the Department of Employment, £720 at the Scottish Office, £700 at the Home Office, £420 at the Welsh Office and £300 at Agriculture. As well there are loopholes. Some universities have already devised ways round the Act to ensure that students will not have access to examination marks to which they should be entitled.

Already under the Act the new rights can be used to the disadvantage of the data subject. For example, an insurance company could require a data subject to obtain a copy of his own medical data before offering life insurance and treat the person as a bad risk or uninsurable if he did not supply the information. This will work to the detriment of data subjects. Also, under the Act access to one's personal information held on a computer is constrained by a multitude of subject access exemptions. There is no consistency or logic to justify what should be properly held. There needs to be a proper procedure for data subjects to check suspicions effectively.

My thorough Bill will provide for that, will rectify many of the deficiencies in the Act and will make substantial improvements. I have had wide-ranging consultations with many groups to find the best compromise to improve the current Act. Last summer I distributed the first draft to many representative groups which are in contact with the registrar. The constructive comments I have received have been most helpful in drafting the revised Bill. I should like to thank all those who offered advice and support.

For example, the Freedom of Information Campaign called the first draft of my Bill a very valuable reform. The Churches Main Committee told me that my reform of registration "would be welcomed" and the Institute of Data Processing Management said that the concept of using data codes of practice instead of registration was delightful. Even the National Computer Centre, although not agreeing with every point in the previous Bill, thought that some of my ideas were useful improvements.

The main improvements put forward in my Bill are, first, that registrations will be necessary in relatively few cases. That aspect of the Bill should be attractive to small businesses, as it will remove at a stroke all the red tape, or should I say blue tape because the Act is a Tory creation, which businesses so frequently complain about.

My Bill contains a list of categories of personal data and purposes that require to be registered, but for the first time they will embrace many public sector data records. These will relate only to the most sensitive personal datum, which is specified. Most businesses will not have to register, and so they will be relieved of bureaucratic arrangements.

My Bill would allow statutory codes of practice to be introduced. The arguments about statutory or voluntary codes were dealt with by the Lindop committee. I agree with its conclusion—that bad apples, so to speak, might take advantage of non-regulatory regimes.

Last year, the consumer protection legislation incorporated statutory codes of practice, and I have taken the opportunity to use the same wording. My Bill allows for a gradual change-over from registration to operation under codes of practice, which is favoured by industrial, commercial and public sector data users. These codes of practice will be supervised by and agreed with the data users to comply with the law; they will clarify the responsibilities of users.

Properly adhered to, such codes of practice provide security for data users against prosecution and claims for compensation. Thus, the changes will bring benefits to data users, who will also have responsibilities.

In particular, there will be a need to provide data subject access. In that respect, my Bill provides for stronger policing powers for the registrar, who is given power to undertake random spot checks, and to inspect personal data that are the subject of a complaint or a dispute. In addition, a data subject will be able to appeal to an independent data protection tribunal against the refusal of the registrar to serve an enforcement notice on a data user. I propose that the registrar will be able to use the new powers to scrutinise developments such as the Government's data network, the proposed poll tax registers, share and electoral registers, and even records of the security services and the police national computers, subject to proper safeguards.

I frankly admit that these proposals are not likely to find favour with the Government, who have shown scant regard for civil liberties. They have Sarah Tisdall, Clive Ponting, Peter Wright and raids on the BBC on their record, so they almost certainly do not want to see legislation that might get in the way. However, we need a data protection watchdog with the ability to bite as well as bark, not one of the authoritarian fiefdoms that form part of this Government, who abuse the collection of personal data on computer.

For the first time, my Bill will bring within the ambit of the Act personal data held on individuals for national security purposes. This will be done by allowing one of the data registrar's staff who has sufficiently high security clearance, or a member of the Security Commission, to investigate a complaint and make reports. My Bill, unlike the current Act, will ensure that data subjects will have an uncomplicated right of access to their personal data. Where an exemption applies, my Bill establishes a consistent test with which it must comply. The registrar, in the circumstances surrounding an access exemption, can inspect the data in question before deciding whether to allow access to it. A data user and a data subject can appeal to an independent data protection tribunal.

The registrar, subject to issuing a warrant signed by a circuit judge, is given powers of inspection of any data user or computer installation, if he suspects a breach of the law and data protection principles.

Instead of the subject access fee, which I have already said is exorbitant, my Bill provides for a maximum fee to be prescribed for all personal data held by a user. I get rid of the crazy non-disclosure provisions, which are complex and confusing, and fundamentally designed to deter people from realising that they can obtain computer information that is held on them. *[Interruption.]* I also provide an order-making power to extend those principles to manual records. The National Consumer Council has already said that some people are putting information on manual files to avoid the Data Protection Act and that should be stopped.

My Bill is based on the Data Protection Act as far as possible, as many data users, as well as the registrar, have already established procedures to deal with the current legislation. *[Interruption.]* But it improves it substantially and builds on that existing legal framework, experience and knowledge. It is a forerunner of future change in this area, and that may even be necessary in this parliamentary Session as the deficiencies in the Data Protection Act gather pace. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Gerry Steinberg, Mr. Robert N. Wareing, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Gareth Wardell, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. Alan Meale and Ms. Joan Ruddock.

DATA PROTECTION ACT 1984 (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Harry Cohen accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Data Protection Act 1984: and the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 15 January and to be printed. [Bill 51.]

3.41 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In presenting his ten-minute Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) had to battle against a chorus of noise for most of his speech. I and, I suspect, many other hon. Members who wished to hear what he was saying were prevented from so doing. The usual procedure is for Members to have 10 minutes, but if that tactic is to be pursued in this Session, will you, Mr. Speaker, extend the time so that Members can be heard in reasonable conditions?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the House will be aware that as Members left the Chamber immediately after Prime Minister's questions I drew attention to the need to leave the Chamber quietly. However, I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I heard the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) perfectly clearly, and I am sorry if my microphones are stronger than those for other hon. Members.

Palace of Westminster (Security)

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I ask you about the internal security of the Palace of Westminster? Two services now exist — the custodian and security service, and the police. It seems to be a growing practice for the custodian service — no insult to it — whose members cannot be as well trained as the police force, whose members have a rigorous training for some years, to replace the police force in some of the passages of the Commons that lead from the Members' Entrance. Do you agree that we should not diminish the power and right of the police in the Palace to save a few pounds by replacing them with a custodian service, good as it is, which is not as well trained as the British police force?

Mr. Speaker: This is one service, under the control of the Head of Security. I shall look carefully at what the hon. Gentleman has said. Deployment is not really a matter for me, but I take note of what he has said.

House of Commons (Services)

Mr. Speaker: Before we start the debate, I should tell the House that I have selected all the amendments on the Order Paper. It might be for the convenience of the House if we had a general debate based on the main motion, although it will be perfectly in order for right hon. and hon. Members to draw attention to their amendments in the course of the debate.

In addition, I have accepted a manuscript amendment to amendment (c) from the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd). At 7 o'clock I will call upon hon. Members to move their amendments formally in the order in which they appear on the Order Paper.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order. Mr. Speaker. May we know the terms of the manuscript amendment that you have decided to call?

Mr. Speaker: Copies of the manuscript amendment are in the Vote Office. However, it may be for the convenience of the House if I state that the amendment reads:

"line 1, leave out 'research assistants' and insert 'Members' personal staff'".

3.45 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I beg to move,

That this House endorses the application of the recommendation contained in paragraph 23 of the Second Report of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 195); and invites the Select Committee to consider the wider implications for control over access to the precincts of the House.

The threat of terrorism and the physical limitations of the Palace of Westminster raise issues which require debates in this House from time to time and on which it is appropriate for the House to seek the advice of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services). Security is of the greatest importance. It does not need me, of all people, to remind the House of what terrorism means. Not only have we been shocked in recent days by a new outrage in Northern Ireland; this House has itself been the victim of terrorism, when the late Airey Neave was murdered in New Palace Yard and when Westminster Hall was damaged by a bomb. Hon. Members must be able to pursue their duties to their constituents and the country in safety, with a reasonable balance between the numbers of staff working in the Palace and the facilities available to them and other hon. Members in these historic buildings.

I shall deal at once with the specific occasion for this debate—the suspension of the pass issued to a research assistant employed by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). The free and unescorted access to all parts of the precincts of the House conferred by a photo pass is a valuable privilege. Not only does it allow the holder to use the limited space and facilities of the House; it allows the holder to mingle with hon. Members and to pass unhindered through the building. There is, therefore, a clear threat if a pass should fall into the wrong hands.

Mr. Speaker, you are charged personally with the responsibility on behalf of the House for the part of the Palace of Westminster that we occupy. The safety of hon. Members and of the staff who serve them is given the highest priority by you, by the House authorities and by the police, and in my view it is absolutely right that this should be so. The Serjeant at Arms has day-to-day responsibility for the security of the House, liaising with the police. The Serjeant is answerable to you, Mr. Speaker. Ultimately, of course, as your predecessor Speaker Lenthall said more than 300 years ago in a famous remark often recalled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), you are the servant of the House. As you exercise your responsibilities to ensure the safety of the House, you are entitled to expect its support.

A Speaker bears a heavy responsibility, and it is right that he should be free to call for advice as he thinks fit. You have confirmed, Mr. Speaker, that like your predecessors you have been advised on security matters by an informal committee including hon. Members drawn from both sides of the House, although I am sure that you are ready to listen to advice from any quarter where it may be offered. The Services Committee, for example, may take, and does take, security considerations into account in any advice it may give you and any recommendations that it may make.

The arrangements made by the House authorities for regulating photo-identity passes have been much discussed in recent months.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Leader of the House accept that there is no dispute between hon. Members about the danger of terrorism? It did not take Sunday's tragedy for us to recognise that and, as the right hon. Gentleman has said, he has had tragic experience of the effects of actions by terrorists and their capabilities. Is it not a question of the Leader of the House trying to ensure that, if there is an adverse report on anyone intended to be employed by an hon. Member, that person should have some redress? The divide between the Government and the Opposition is that that does not happen now and the Government do not intend to change that position? Therefore Mr. Bennett, who is considered to be unsafe and unworthy to be employed here, has no way of clearing his name. Is not that very important?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course, that is a very important issue, and I shall deal with it directly in my speech. However, I should prefer to deal with points in the sequence in which I have organised them in my speech.

As I have said, the arrangements made by the House authorities for regulating photo-identity passes have been much discussed in recent months, but I hope that it will be for the convenience of the House if I draw attention to some of the key points now. First, passes have never been awarded lightly. Even before the introduction of the new photo pass system in 1982, the police carried out checks in cases where this was appropriate on applicants to whom passes had been issued.

Second, although the term "vetting" has tended to be used in discussions of this procedure, it is misleading. The checks carried out by the police are not the same as the vetting procedures applied to civil servants and others concerning matters of national security. They are limited to checks which have a material bearing on the level of risk to the safety of these buildings and the people in them.

Third, I should stress that the checks made in the past took place immediately after the issue of a pass. This was no doubt for the convenience of Members, who understandably preferred a new employee to have a pass without delay.

However, the Services Committee did warn in its report of the problems that could arise from issuing passes before checks had been carried out. In the paragraph referred to in the motion, it recommended that a short delay should be accepted between application for and issue of a photo pass. This delay would permit the police to carry out their check before a pass was issued. The Committee recommended that Members should abide by the results of any adverse, and necessarily confidential, report that might be made on a particular application on behalf of an employee.

The wisdom of that recommendation has been demonstrated by recent events. It is clearly far better for the checks to be carried out and any adverse result communicated privately to the Member concerned before a pass is issued.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the Leader of the House tell us exactly what are the criteria used to decide whether someone should or should not be given a pass? For example, there have been a good many young American students here, some of whom have worked for me. Were they checked to find out whether they were CIA agents? The same may apply to other people. What are those criteria?

Mr. Wakeham: The decision is made by Mr. Speaker, and the advice on which that decision is based is confidential. It is not for me to say—indeed, I do not know—what that advice is. It is for Mr. Speaker to decide whether he thinks that the applicant is a fit and proper person to have a pass and be allowed to come into the House.

I know nothing of the particular evidence on which the advice given to Mr. Speaker in individual cases is based. Those matters are, as the Committee noted, necessarily confidential. I have complete confidence in the responsibility and professionalism of the police, who are well aware of the significance of their conclusions in matters of such sensitivity.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Normally, I would not dissent from what the right hon. Gentleman said about the professionalism of the police. However, the question that bothers a number of us is how what purport to be confidential police files or security service files from time to time end up, by some alchemy, in the hands of newspaper reporters. Is that done on an authorised basis? Is it done with or without ministerial authority? I would hate to think that it was done with such authority. How does such very sensitive information, which could be extremely damaging to individuals, find its way into newspapers?

Mr. Wakeham: Most of the leaks that occur from Government and other sources seem designed to damage rather than to support the Government. Nevertheless, no leaks that I know of have been authorised by Ministers or by anyone else. I regret such leaks as much as anyone when individuals are affected, and, as I stated a moment ago, I believe that such matters should be kept confidential. It is much better for the House and for the individuals involved if that is so.

Fourth, and most important, I must emphasise one point on which I believe there should be no misunderstanding. There is no question of any interference on security grounds with a Member's right to employ whom he chooses as a secretary or research assistant. The hon. Member for Islington, North is free to go on instructing the Fees Office to apply his office costs allowance to pay Mr. Ronan Bennett for his services out of public funds. What is at issue is prudent control over the privilege of free, unescorted access to these buildings. It is necessary to balance the proper desire of Members to have their staff on hand every working hour of every day, if necessary, with the need to keep the level of risk to themselves, their colleagues and others in these buildings to the lowest practicable level.

I turn now to the second limb of the motion, which invites the Services Committee to consider the wider implications. That brings me to the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), which I am happy to support, In 1985, the Services Committee made a number of recommendations about the regulations governing research assistants with access to the House. These included a limit on the number of one particular category — temporary research assistants whom Members expected to employ for less than four months, to bring these more into balance with the capacity of the facilities of the House.

The capacity of these facilities is, as we all know, limited. The parliamentary building programme is proceeding and the Services Committee's New Building Sub-Committee, in the last Parliament, published a report on the whole programme. Phase 1 of the Bridge street project is still on track to be completed by the end of 1990. This will provide not only a much-needed increase in the accommodation for Members and secretaries but also new Library and refreshment facilities. It is, however, clear that for the foreseeable future we shall have to contend with limited space and facilities for Members and their staff, working in a historic building that is designed for the needs of an earlier age.

The number of research assistants in particular continues to cause concern to right hon. and hon. Members. In the report referred to in the motion, the Committee made clear its own concern at the rate of increase in the number of research assistants. It asked for regular reviews of the situation to be carried out. I recognise the pressure for a further look at this stage, and I look forward to hearing the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Woking, if he should be fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, later in the debate.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, as I represent the largest constituency in the House, with over 100,000 constituents, my parliamentary allowance is fully used up for secretarial purposes and that there are many hon. Members who believe that the employment of research assistants strikes at the heart of parliamentary democracy? Is it not time to banish political parasites from the House of Commons and to expect hon. Members to do their own research, which lies at the very heart of British democracy in this House?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot go quite so far as my hon. Friend. I have never employed a research assistant, but I am sure that my hon. Friend could make his views known to the Services Committee, which would consider them, together with any other representations that he may wish to make.

It would also be open to the Services Committee, in the course of such a review, to consider the representations that hon. Members may wish to make, whether on security

[Mr. Wakeham]

grounds or otherwise, about other categories of people who have access to the House, on whatever terms. I am sure that the Committee will take note of any points that hon. Members raise in the debate, or with the Committee direct.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is there not another aspect of this matter that the right hon. Gentleman has not touched on concerning so-called research assistants? He knows that there has been a large influx of this type of personality into the House and that some of us who have experienced their services have been rather less than happy with what they have offered and with what they have accomplished. A very serious problem that has not been raised in this regard is, how on earth can there be proper security vetting of the large number of people who are foreigners and whose background it is very difficult for the local police or anyone else to check?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a relevant question for the Services Committee when it is considering the recommendations that it will make on the number of research assistants the House should allow to be employed and the steps that should be taken to check on them.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that for hon. Members, who work very hard, the use of research assistants to dig out facts and information is not only a positive benefit to our constituents but of great assistance to those of us who use their services for their intended purpose?

Mr. Wakeham: I would happily agree with the hon. Lady, unless by so doing I was being critical of her hon. Friend, who after his unfortunate experience some little while ago has managed quite well without research assistants.

I come now to the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). I recognise that it has been drafted in a responsible spirit. None the less, parts of its analysis and prescription are flawed, and I shall therefore ask the House to reject it. First, the arrangements for the security of the House are perfectly clear. Control is vested personally in the Speaker on behalf of the House. Secondly, judgments on security in the House are in the hands not of a branch of the Government but of the Speaker, who seeks advice as necessary from hon. Members, the Serjeant at Arms and the Metropolitain police.

The Opposition amendment calls for consideration by the Privileges and Services Committees. I remind the House that the Government motion provides for wider implications to be considered by the Services Committee, which should meet the point of that part of the Opposition motion. With regard to privilege, the House is sovereign in such matters, and I believe that it will see no basis for referring the issue before us today to the Privileges Committee for its advice.

I note that the amendment calls for the procedures permitting evaluation by the House of information furnished by the Metropolitan police. This point was made by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I should tell the House — this point is where we may differ, so I shall choose my words carefully — that this information is likely to be of a nature that cannot be disclosed. But the main point, I repeat, is that the Speaker rightly has personal responsibility for our security, and it would be wrong for the House to overrule his judgment without calling into question the whole structure, or which I am quite clear is, although not perfect, better than the alternative that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has in mind.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose*——

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): The point about the disclosure of information is crucial. Hon. Members are entitled to know where the information came from and the basis for it. The House will hear from the Metropolitan police, but not from MI5 or MI6 unless the information is provided to the Privileges Committee or to hon. Members. That point is central to this issue.

Mr. Wakeham: In matters of security, the police should give confidential advice and their opinion to Mr. Speaker; he can then make a judgment on that advice. I do not believe that it is possible to reveal details of confidential security advice without damaging the security of the nation in an unacceptable way.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): As the right hon. Gentleman said, this is the nub of the issue. It is perfectly possible for false allegations to be made about somebody. In the system that the right hon. Gentleman is advocating there is no way in which a false allegation can be checked, which is intolerable. I sincerely ask the right hon. Gentleman to consider that point. If someone's character can be blackened, the hon. Member concerned can have his character blackened. The allegation may be false, but there is no way in which it could be checked.

Mr. Wakeham: I have already said that these matters should be confidential. Therefore, there should not be any need for any public disclosure of an adverse report. Our security system requires confidential advice from the appropriate authorities to be given to the Speaker. It is not possible for such confidential advice to be referred to a Committee of Privy Councillors or any other Committee of the House. The advice must be confidential and given to the appropriate person.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Leader of the House confirm that not one Member of the House, including Mr. Speaker, knows the details of the allegations made against this gentleman?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not in a position to confirm or deny it—I do not know.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Answer the question.

Mr. Wakeham: I will answer the question if the hon. Gentleman will keep quiet. I do not know the details of the allegations that have been made, and I am unaware of anyone else having details of it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham: If the hon. Gentleman wants me to answer his question, he must shut up for a minute and I will do my best to answer it. I have no knowledge of this information. It is a matter of security, it is a matter for the Speaker and not for me.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): This is an extremely important point because the right hon. Gentleman has said that he does not know any of these details. On a previous occasion Mr. Speaker has told us that he does not know any of these details. That is the curious position that we are in; nobody seems to know any of the details. Is that satisfactory?

Mr. Wakeham: We cannot run a security system unless the police and other authorities are trusted to bring forward confidential information on which the responsible person—in this case, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that you do not know the details of these allegations?

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is for the House to debate. I have nothing to add to what I have said earlier on this matter.

Mr. Wakeham: I am also asking for the amendment of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield to be rejected. The right hon. Gentleman has a remarkable capacity for setting himself up as a defender of fundamental principles. Democracy, human rights — even the pure essence of Socialism — have all been the doubtful beneficiaries of his protection. On one matter I can agree with the right hon. Gentleman. The issue that lies behind today's debate is one of democracy and one that touches on the rights and privileges of the House and its Members.

The right hon. Gentleman takes the view that hon. Members should have unfettered right to confer free access to the precincts of the House on whomsoever they wish. It is my belief that hon. Members on both sides of the House, proud and jealous though we be of the privileges that we enjoy, do accept that those privileges carry with them responsibilities. The House rightly accepts a limitation on its right to free speech where cases are sub judice. For example, you, Mr. Speaker, have warned us against the abuse of that privilege in making allegations against private citizens.

In the difficult area that is the subject of today's debate, the House has placed its trust in you, Mr. Speaker by giving you discretion in this matter, bearing in mind your personal responsibility for security in the precincts of this part of the Palace of Westminster. That trust and discretion was vested in you when you were elected to the Chair by the democratic decision of the House. In accordance with that decision, you acted on advice in the interests of the security of all of us. You have the authority to make that decision.

I ask the House to support the motion and in so doing to express its confidence not only in you, Sir, but in its own democratic procedures.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order to ask you whether the remarks made by the Leader of the House about your personal responsibility were cleared with you before he made them?

Mr. Speaker: No speech in this place is cleared with the Chair. I am here to ensure that speeches are in order. The speech made by the Leader of the House was in order.

4.9 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): We must address many difficult issues, but the central question that we must try to answer relates to how a society which prides itself on being open and democratic responds to terrorism, the threat of terrorism and the fear of terrorism. Everyone must acknowledge that the existence of terrorism poses a threat to the safety of this building, the people in it, and Members of Parliament, when here and outside.

Two terrorist explosions have shaken these premises in modern times; the bomb in Westminster Hall in 1974 and the device that killed Airey Neave in 1979. Since then, Robert Bradford has been shot dead at his advice surgery, and Anthony Berry has been killed in the Brighton bombing. In the explosion at the Grand hotel, the Leader of the House was seriously injured and his beloved wife was killed. The right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) was also seriously injured and his wife was cruelly maimed. Other hon. Members were hurt in the devastation at the hotel. Members of the Conservative party who were going about their political business were killed or injured.

Everybody in the House has the utmost sympathy for the victims of violence and their relatives and friends. Many hon. Members of all parties represent constituents and even whole constituencies that have suffered grievously at the hands of terrorists. Those experiences deeply colour the views and responses of many hon. Members — indeed, all hon. Members. That is one reason why everyone in the House recognises the reality of terrorism.

Everyone has a duty to prevent terrorists from securing their objectives, but it is from the desire to deny terrorists their objectives that our democratic dilemma stems. Assassination or arson may be the immediate object of a terrorist attack, but that is not the end of the story. The death or destruction that is directly caused by a terrorist is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end. Terrorists wish to bring about a reaction from those in authority, which reduces the openness of our society, undermines our democratic values and casts doubt on our judicial processes. They also seek a form of prestige — the prestige of being acknowledged to be a dangerous threat to the rest of us.

We must bear terrorists' objectives in mind when deciding how to try to maintain the safety of the House and hon. Members. Whatever steps we take which may add a measure of safety will certainly curtail the arrangements and conventions that we treasure or used to treasure.

If hon. Members consider the changes that have been made in the House—most hon. Members on both sides do not like those changes, but they have been adopted to make terrorists' tasks more difficult—they will see what I mean. I refer to identity cards—never popular in this country—the examination of baggage, visitors being put through metal detectors and explosive sniffers, the examination of vehicles before they enter the House, and the installation of green mesh security fencing, which would look more appropriate around a prison or an Army than around the ancient democratic House of Commons. Such measures may make it harder for terrorists to blow us up, but we can be certain that all of them have been chalked up by the IRA as symbols of how afraid it has made us. To us, such safety measures are a sign of our watchfulness. To the IRA and its friends the same measures are a sign of our fearfulness.

There may be many people whose personalities lead them to take delight in being protected by the sort of measures that I have mentioned, but I am sure that delighting in security measures is not the right response in a democracy. We all know how non-democratic Governments respond. They counter terror with terror.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

Sometimes, we hear people say, with a touch of envy, "At least regimes like that know how to deal with terrorists. They have no inhibitions and consequently appear to have fewer problems." Because of our democratic instincts and institutions, we have more inhibitions and, consequently, more problems, but it is worth reflecting that, although many dictatorships have been undermined and have fallen as a result of terrorist methods in recent times, no democracy has fallen to terrorists.

The strengths of democracies may be less apparent, but they are deeper and more lasting. We do best when we err on the side of caution in our response to terrorists. Most of us still prefer not to have generally armed police on the streets. Most of us are pleased that our Head of State and her family take some risks so that they can meet the people rather than be driven everywhere in closed bullet-proof limousines. Their behaviour is all the more admirable in view of their own direct bitter experience of the ruthless murder of Lord Mountbatten and some of his family.

Hon. Members may think that this is a little above and beyond a discussion about whether to vet the people whom hon. Members choose to work for them as research assistants and secretaries, but I remind the House that all changes in and erosions of our usual arrangements come in tiny increments. No one proudly announces that we have just decided to dispense with a treasured aspect of our open society. Democratic practices drift into decay. Their departure is seldom signalled by those who make the decisions or even recognised by those on whose behalf the decisions are supposedly made.

Most people accept some vetting of some people as a necessary evil, but, however necessary vetting may be, I submit that it remains an evil. Vetting is ultimately authoritarian and counter-democratic. I do not seek to join any artificial dispute with Conservative Members. I am being careful and am not exaggerating when I say that. One of the basic concepts of democracy is that those in authority must account to the people for their actions. Vetting stands that concept on its head and requires the people to account to those in authority for their actions.

I must confess that, when recent events made it necessary for me in my new job to find out about the security arrangements for hon. Members and the people who work in the House and how such arrangements have developed, each succeeding piece of information was generally more surprising than its predecessor. Most surprising of all was the fact that the security of the House has never been discussed at any length in modern times, least of all by the House itself. Arrangements have just grown up, and the process, although not secret, has not been open.

We have ended up with arrangements that have received little or no overt authority from the House, put you, Mr. Speaker, in an invidious position, leave security decisions in the hands of a branch of Government, and can undermine the civil liberties of individuals by providing no redress for any person accused of being a threat to the security of the House.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does the hon. Gentleman concede that effective security depends in large measure on those who might breach it without knowing its arrangements? There is a real difficulty in following the path that the hon. Gentleman wishes us to follow by saying that we should be open about our security. Does he recognise the inherent contradiction in that aspect of his argument?

Mr. Dobson: I have tried to make it clear throughout that there is an inherent dilemma — an inherent contradiction — in any open democracy which tries to deal with terrorism. Opposition Members do not advocate that every measure that is taken in an effort to make this place safer should be disclosed to possible enemies of democracy. We do not suggest that the location and operation of devices such as television cameras should be disclosed. However, other aspects of our security system would benefit from proper evaluation by the House and I shall suggest some of them later.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Does my hon. Friend agree that an additional argument is that a number of the other democratic countries that have faced terrorist threats have structures that are much more open and democratic than ours but those countries have not been trapped into the dangerous degree of secrecy in which this country has become involved at times?

Mr. Dobson: I agree with my hon. Friend, although if we consider the spectrum of democracies and the way in which Parliaments conduct themselves, we find that some are much more fortress-like than our own while others are rather more open.

As the Leader of the House said, we now know that all the staff of the House are vetted before they are appointed and that all research assistants and secretaries are vetted after they are appointed. That practice began in the 1970s and was made more systematic with the aid of a computer in 1982. However, the arrangements were not thought through. Recent events have revealed that no procedure was established to deal with circumstances in which the security services advised that they thought that someone was a security risk. That is rather like having an emergency procedure that works well except when there is an emergency. The House may feel that the time has come for more formal and accountable arrangements.

I come now to the question of Mr. Ronan Bennett who was apponted as a research assistant by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in August this year. He was duly issued with a photo pass and filled in his declaration of interest form. Then, with great publicity, he was fingered by the security services. The event raises a number of important issues that affect us all.

Twelve years ago, Mr. Bennett was convicted by a single-judge Northern Ireland court of the murder of a Royal Ulster Constabulary inspector. Thirteen months later, he was freed when the Appeal Court quashed the conviction. Two years after that he was arrested in Yorkshire by the special branch and served with an exclusion order under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. After two weeks, the order was quashed. In 1979, Mr. Bennett was charged with conspiracy to rob, and found not guilty at the Old Bailey.

In short, the highest courts which have considered accusations against Mr. Bennett have set him free. He has not been found guilty of any offence. Under the laws of this country he is innocent of the crimes with which he was charged.

People are innocent until found guilty. If found not guilty, they are innocent. That fundamental point is a vital thread in the very fabric of our society and has been a point of pride for the people of this country for hundreds of years. It is a vital part of the rule of law which should not be ignored or set aside by any man or woman or any branch of government, still less challenged in this freely elected democratic House of Commons. It is one of the basic liberties which it is the duty of all of us to uphold.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is the hon. Gentleman really telling the House that only a person who has been convicted of a crime in the courts in this country or elsewhere can be considered a threat to the security of this place?

Mr. Dobson: Had the hon. Gentleman waited but a moment he would have heard what I have to say about that. In deference to the hon. Gentleman I say that I know that matters are more complicated. The fact that one has been found not guilty cannot prove that one is not a security risk. However, if the only thing that the security services have against Mr. Bennett is the record that I have just related, Opposition Members do not believe that it can or should be used to justify excluding Mr. Bennett. It could be—I say "could" because I do not know; like all hon. Members I have no evidence—that Mr. Bennett is a security risk. He could be using his access to these buildings to put our safety at risk. However, until evidence to that effect is provided Opposition Members are not prepared to support his permanent exclusion on the basis of his known record.

The motion asks us to endorse the application of a recommendation of the Services Committee made in January 1985. I am afraid that I cannot invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to support it. The recommendation was patently not applied in Mr. Ronan Bennett's case. One crucial aspect of the recommendation—included by the Committee in an effort, no doubt, to add an element of equity—was that an hon. Member whose would-be researcher or secretary was the subject of an adverse and confidential report on his or her security status should be told and that the hon. Member should be given the opportunity to decide whether to accept the advice or make representations.

In the case of Mr. Ronan Bennett, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North was neither informed in confidence nor given an opportunity to consider what to do next. Even more extraordinary is the fact that the *News of the World* was informed in confidence so that the first that my hon. Friend heard of the security services' objection to Mr. Bennett's having a pass was when he was told by a *News of the World* reporter, who claimed that the security services' information had been made available to him. That is quite unacceptable.

I must ask you, Mr. Speaker, together with the Lord Chancellor, who shares your responsibilities——

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay) *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I would like to finish this point. After that, I may give way to the hon. Gentleman or I may not.

I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, together with the Lord Chancellor, who shares your responsibility for the safety of the Palace of Westminster, to undertake an inquiry into the identity of the person who passed the information to the *News of the World*. If, between you, you do not have the resources to conduct such an inquiry, I must ask the Prime Minister, as head of the security services, to institute an inquiry into the leak, to report promptly and frankly to the House on its findings and to dismiss the person responsible from the public service. The Prime Minister has justified the legal actions relating to the book "Spycatcher" on the ground that its author was bound for ever by his oath of secrecy. The person who leaked the information about Ronan Bennett to the *News of the World* was bound by the same obligation of perpetual secrecy. Surely that obligation is all-embracing. It cannot be dispensed with just because it suits someone to dispense with it.

The leak to the *News of the World* raises a number of questions, not least whether some of those involved were more concerned with lining their pockets or getting bad publicity for a particular hon. Member belonging to a particular party than with the security and safety of the House.

Mr. Allason: Would not the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a curious contradiction in his argument? At one moment he expects everyone automatically to agree that evidence offered in court should not be disclosed, while at the next he says that if an individual is refused access to the House on the basis of confidential information that information should be disclosed. Surely information supplied to Mr. Speaker by the security services, the police or any other agency is supplied on the basis that it will remain confidential. Would not the hon. Gentleman agree that if such information is disclosed it is likely to put lives at risk?

Mr. Dobson: It is a general requirement in our courts —particularly the criminal courts—that evidence should be pleaded in public, and most people think that that is a good thing. We recognise that it is not necessarily of benefit for information from the security services to be widely spread, despite the efforts of the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) from time to time.

I believe that if the House chose—and it would be the House which chose—the members of a committee to have access to confidential information of that nature, we should have sufficient faith in the people we chose to be sure that the information would remain confidential. That is what I would hope.

There are other objections to the Government's motion——

Mr. Faulds: There is another aspect of this matter that my hon. Friend has not touched upon. In view of Mr. Bennett's known record, is it not less surprising that the security services fingered him than that a Member of Parliament appointed him?

Mr. Dobson: I do not wish to bandy curiosities with my hon. Friend, but there is a further curiosity: that is to suggest that an organisation, even one as inept as the IRA, would select Mr. Ronan Bennett as a secret agent.

There are other objections to the Government's motion that I hope are made clear in our amendment. First, we believe that responsibility for the safety of the House and those who work in it must be left to the informed decisions of the House itself. A freely elected Parliament is clearly not properly discharging its duties if it becomes dependent on the unsubstantiated assertions of any branch of the Executive. When those assertions affect the privileges of the House and the rights of individual hon. Members it is imperative that they should be subjected to the informed scrutiny of the House. That is not a point of parliamentary

[Mr. Dobson]

self-importance but literally a point of parliamentary rights. The sovereignty of Parliament is basic to the rule of law and we must have total sovereignty over our own affairs.

It is also our view that the physical safety of hon. Members and others working in the Palace of Westminster should be the only consideration in the scrutiny or vetting of any person concerned with this place. Assessments of the political suitability of someone seeking access to this place must be left to the electorate alone.

Ms. Short: Is it not a fact that one of the problems is that many of us do not trust the judgment of the special branch? For example, there was the case of Madeleine Haig in Sutton Coldfield who simply wrote a letter to a local newspaper saying that she supported nuclear disarmament. She was checked out by the special branch. Her Member of Parliament, a member of the Cabinet, was lied to about that check. When we know that the special branch is making misjudgments of that sort we need a system to check the basis of its vetting.

Mr. Dobson: I agree with my hon. Friend. However, the fact that we must require information from the security services to maintain our position as a free Parliament would apply even to those hon. Members who have absolute faith in the accuracy of anything that the security services do. It is a matter not of practicality but of principle.

I believe that the Leader of the House accepts that there can be no suggestion that hon. Members cannot employ who they wish. That must be a question for individual hon. Members. I agree that we must all recognise the fact of life that the access that researchers or secretaries have to the House means that their action could have an impact on the safety of others working there. Therefore, I believe that rules governing the appointment of people with access to this place are a proper matter for the whole House and cannot be left to each individual hon. Member. We have a duty one to another.

If any vetting procedure is operated——

Mr. Heffer: Is not it clear that if somebody intends to come into the House deliberately to plant a bomb and becomes a research assistant or a member of the staff he would never say who or what he was? It would be like Willy Brandt's secretary, who was an agent for East Germany. Herr Brandt did not know that he was an agent and neither did anybody else, except the individual concerned. On that basis, if people are serious about coming here they will do it without us, the security services or anyone else. Therefore, the people who come as research assistants and in other jobs and tell us who they are have a right to be employed, as long as we are satisfied.

Mr. Dobson: I agree with my hon. Friend because he said "as long as we are satisfied." I take the view that it is a matter of the House laying down rules as a freely elected assembly and that those rules must apply to any aspect of the conduct of the House that could have an adverse effect on other hon. Members. Whatever doubts people may have about vetting processes, which as we all know are notoriously slipshod and unsatisfactory——

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's line of argument. From what he said prevously, I assume that he does not intend that issues involving a dispute about the security rating of an individual should be debated by the House in the open. However, would he tell us what body of the House should have the delegated responsibility for considering such matters?

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman will find that my logic appears to tally with his. I am coming to that point.

If a vetting procedure is operated and the Metropolitan police make an adverse report on someone that an hon. Member wishes to appoint, they should make a confidential report to the hon. Member concerned. If, on the basis of that report, the hon. Member decides not to proceed with the appointment, that should be the end of the matter. However, if the hon. Member is not satisfied, he or she should be able to appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, and you should determine that appeal after seeking the advice of a specially established Committee of the House, to which the police would have to produce evidence to justify their adverse report. We recognise that that might pose problems for the police, but it is the least that could be expected of a Committee of the House advising on the rights of an individual hon. Member and who should have access to this place.

There are alternatives to vetting. For example, the European Assembly requires everyone, including Members and staff, to pass through metal detectors and baggage examination at the entrance every time they enter the building. That approach to security may be more or less acceptable to hon. Members, but it would be valuable for the Services Committee to look into the advantages and disadvantages of various alternative approaches so that the House could make an informed judgment.

The major part of our concern for safety must be for those working in the House, bearing in mind that the 1974 bomb exploded in a staff canteen and that such threats as letter bombs would be likely to do more harm to staff than to hon. Members. At present, all those working in the House, including the people in the Press Gallery, are vetted. I believe that whatever security measures are taken should be discussed with the representatives of the people concerned, including the representatives of the people in the Press Gallery. If any vetting procedure is operated for all those working here, there should be appropriate machinery to enable persons affected to appeal. In no case can it be acceptable for people to be rejected anonymously by the security services. We have to look to the safety and civil liberty of all the people working here, just as in all our deliberations we have to look to the safety and civil liberty of our people.

In short, we do not think that endorsing the January 1985 recommendation of the Services Committee is an adequate response. After all, the Committee's recommendation formed but one paragraph out of 28 in a report on the overcrowding problems caused by an upsurge in the number of researchers. The report was never discussed by the House. Given everyone's doubts—I mean everyone's —about retrospective legislation, it would be unfortunate to give retrospective approval to a matter affecting the rights and privileges of the House and individual hon. Members.

However, we wish most earnestly to see this matter given, for the first time, the thorough and informed scrutiny that it deserves. That is why we recommend that the matters of principle should be referred to the Privileges

Committee and the practicalities to the Services Committee to ensure the maximum physical safety for hon. Members and others who work in the Palace of Westminster, compatible with the need to preserve the rights of hon. Members, and free access to this free House of Commons.

The safety of this place and of the people in it is a matter for us and for us alone. It must not be a matter for the Executive arm, still less for the security services. Our proposal would bring the matter back within the authority of the House and maintain the rights and privileges that are necessary to a free Parliament.

However, as the Leader of the House said, with those rights go duties. We have a duty to all the people who work for the House or for individual hon. Members. We have a duty to ourselves and to one another. We have a duty to secure the safety of the House because it is a symbol of our democracy, and its injury would cause rejoicing among the enemies of democracy. We have a duty to frustrate the intentions of terrorists. We can help to discharge that duty by ensuring that the House is not a soft target. However, we can best discharge that duty if, at the same time, we have the courage and confidence to accept some risks in maintaining the open institution and practices of our democracy, for whose preservation thousands of our people, of all political persuasions, have laid down their lives in wars against the enemies of democracy. We must stick up for democracy; we must make ourselves safe. But we must also maintain our ancient liberties.

4.44 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): This is an important debate, but it is not about the freedom of Members of Parliament to speak, to vote, to enter this Chamber, or to conduct their activities in Committees. The debate is about only one thing—the control of the issue of passes to persons who are employed not by the House but by individual hon. Members who wish that employee not only to be employed by them, but to have uncontrolled access to the precincts of the House.

If the proposition were that the Government or the security forces should have the right to decide who should or should not be issued with such a pass, I should be among those hon. Members who would say no to it. The House of Commons must trust somebody, but the question is whom it should trust. There was a time when the office of Speaker was used as a depository for unsuccessful Ministers. It was regarded as being in the gift of the Government as a reward for political service in the Cabinet. I am happy to say that Back Benchers, not Front Benchers, have ensured that that is no longer the case. Back-Bench Members have reasserted—not before time—the right—they always had the power—to choose as their Speaker the Member in whom they reposed their trust, rather than to acquiesce in the desire of the Government of the day to reward one of their faithful servants with the office of Speaker. It is entirely within the power of the House to preserve that reality, and the House will neglect it or allow it to fall into desuetude at its peril.

As we are conducting this debate in the circumstances that I have described, and as all hon. Members agree that the matter is important, my answer to the question, "In whom should the House repose its trust?" is, "In its elected Speaker." He carries that heavy responsibility and it is one from which he can never escape while he is Speaker of this House. Indeed, there are other responsibilities from which he can never escape while Speaker. The consequences of his decisions will continue after he has ceased to be Speaker of this House.

As we have been reminded, it took Parliament and the House of Commons many generations to establish certain important phenomena. The independence of the office of Speaker was historically late in coming. That independence did not always exist, although, as I have pointed out, the recovery of the right of Back-Bench Members to choose whomsoever they believe fit to occupy that office has been recent.

In exercising that onerous duty, I have no doubt that Mr. Speaker would come to the House if questions that he wished to ask were not answered. It is inconceivable that he would not do so.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Yes, but I must finish this line of argument before doing so.

If Mr. Speaker is to get at the truth in matters of security, it is necessary that the source of his information that satisfies him in that unique performance of a duty to the House, cannot be publicly revealed or questioned. Similarly, there have been many decisions by previous Speakers over the years that the House has come to accept as decisions that must not be challenged. The House can have redress by putting down a motion of censure if it disagrees with his decisions or actions. However, there are certain decisions and responsibilities, including the processes that lead up to the decisions, that are not open to question by the House while the House reposes its confidence in him as Speaker.

Mr. Winnick: I have been following the hon. Gentleman's argument, but surely that places Mr. Speaker in a difficult and invidious position? If Mr. Speaker is given the total authority to decide, on the basis of information that was presumably given by the security authorities, there would be no right of appeal. It is most unlikely that Mr. Speaker would be in a position, or would wish to be in a position, to speak to the House on that issue. Therefore, as the hon. Gentleman has just said, the only course would be the unfortunate one of a censure motion on Mr. Speaker. What is wrong with having an appeals machinery along the lines that were set out in the amendment that was tabled in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson)?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I agree that Mr. Speaker is in a difficult position in this matter. But he is in a difficult position on many matters that fall to him for decision. The fact that a question is difficult does not mean that it will go away. The fact that it is so crucially difficult is the nub of this debate. Experience of the past 25 years has not satisfied hon. Members on both sides of the House that Committees are leak-proof. We all know that they are not. However hard we try to preserve confidentiality in Select Committees on certain issues, we know that it is an imperfect system. In most matters it is not a question of life and death if there is a leak, although there may be ill consequences. In security matters, however, it can be exactly that. That is why confidentiality becomes more important when sources of information are revealed, and the source of the information is at risk of assassination.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point, which is not that it is a difficult decision for Mr. Speaker

[Mr. Soley]

—we all accept that—but that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends are asking Mr. Speaker to take responsibility with what is at best inadequate knowledge.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I have no reason to suppose that the basis upon which Mr. Speaker would take such a decision is any more inadequate than if the responsibility were shared by three other hon. Members. There is nothing inherent in numbers that produces accuracy. At the end of the day, where should the responsibility reside? It resides either with Mr. Speaker, or with a Committee. Since the matter was first raised I have given it considerable thought and my opinion is that the best, though not the perfect, solution would be to entrust this decision, so that it is taken as impartially as possible though not infallibly, to the person to whom, above all others, we entrust so many crucial decisions. That is Mr. Speaker.

4.53 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The House is aware that we are having this debate on the morrow of the horrific killings at Enniskillen. The debate was opened by the Leader of the House who has suffered personally, as his wife was the victim of an earlier murder, and it takes place in a Chamber which has lost two hon. Members and has been the subject of attack in the past. We must also consider that we are responsible for the safety of all people who work here all the time, whether or not they are hon. Members. Those facts are bound to be in the forefront of today's debate.

I am all the more grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for selecting amendment (a), in line 1, leave out from 'House' to end and add:

> 'rejects the recommendation in the Second Report of the Services Committee, Session 1984-85, on security, on the grounds that it would infringe the principles of Parliamentary democracy, under which electors must have the right to elect the Members whom they choose, and honourable Members must have an equal right to employ whoever they wish to assist them with their Parliamentary duties; knows of no powers that this House has, has ever had, or could legitimately, take or assume, to determine who may work for an honourable Member in the Palace of Westminster; believes that the withdrawal of the pass issued to Mr. Ronan Bennett has publicly, and unjustly, identified him as a potential threat to national security, without any evidence having been disclosed, or any hearing or trial, whereby he, personally, has suffered a serious injury; warns that, if the security services are permitted to vet any person, including staff, lobby correspondents, or honourable Members, and effectively veto them, fundamental civil and democratic liberties will be eroded to the point where those affected would become licensed by the Crown, its ministers and servants, thus reversing centuries of struggle by the people of the United Kingdom through this House to gain control of the Executive, and hold it accountable for its actions; and therefore demands the immediate restoration of the pass to Mr. Ronan Bennett, and the complete discontinuation of the present, and wholly unauthorised, practice of vetting those who work in, and for, this House and its Members'.

It is necessary now, more than at almost any other time, to reaffirm the freedom of individuals and the rights of hon. Members and those who elect them.

A great deal has been said about confidentiality and the need to preserve it. Anyone who has read Mr. Peter Wright's book will know that:

> "Facsimile copies of some files were made and distributed to overseas newspapers, and the matter was to be raised in Parliament to maximum effect."

When it comes to security, the greatest leakers in the country are the security services. There have been journalists who have made a living by being the recipients of the views of dissatisfied security officers, especially when those officers have not got their way with Ministers.

How did the House imagine the first account of Mr. Ronan Bennett appeared in two newspapers owned by the same proprietor on 6 September? They were put there by somebody in the security services who wished to have the effect that he or she must now manifestly feel has been satisfied by subsequent events.

You, Mr. Speaker, exercising the responsibilities that have been referred to by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), withdrew the pass from Mr. Bennett and acted in a way that you no doubt regarded as right. If I understand your answer, Mr. Speaker, on 5 November you said:

> "That evidence was not seen." — [*Official Report*, 5 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 1080.]

I take that to mean that you did not think it right or proper, or did not choose, to see the full report from the security services. If I am wrong I hope that I will be corrected. I presume that you were advised, Mr. Speaker, of its import by your principal adviser, the Serjeant at Arms, who is not an elected person or a servant of the House as a whole in that respect.

My fear and the reason why my hon. Friends and I tabled this amendment is that your decision, Mr. Speaker, identified Mr. Bennett as a security threat without giving him, or my hon. Friend, the opportunity of defence or providing any independent assessment of evidence in accordance with the most basic principles of British law, upon which my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) touched so convincingly.

Mr. Bennett is now completely unemployable and, unless we decide otherwise today, the House will share the responsibility for the decision to make him unemployable, also without seeing any of the evidence whatever—not one Member of the House has seen any of the evidence. I believe that our amendment for the restoration of Mr. Bennett's pass would be fully justified by any objective test of justice and fair play for that, if not for any other reason.

The issue raised by this case goes far beyond the position of Mr. Bennett. It touches upon the right of electors to choose whom they want to represent them in the House and upon the right of Members, once elected, to select those they wish to work for them in this place. It is not for the majority in this House to determine what minorities may do, because when the tables are turned I can visualise circumstances when Conservative Members might be the first to resist the application of the principle that they now so loquaciously uphold.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall give way when I have finished this point.

It so happens that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) employed Mr. Bennett in part to assist him in establishing the innocence of the Guildford four. The question of the Birmingham six is now, at the instance of the Home Secretary, before the Court of Appeal. Those people were convicted on the morrow of the Birmingham bombing, when the attachment to impartiality and the application of justice, as the court may hear, may be the hardest to sustain.

Mr. Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I wish to finish before I give way.

The question that I must ask myself—I am bound to—is would the security services, which no doubt played some part in bringing about the prosecution and conviction of the Guildford four, be pleased that the hon. Member for Islington, North had a person assisting him who was engaged in trying to show that they were wrong? There are obvious motives in this as well.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am cautious of interrupting the right hon. Gentleman, but can he tell the House whether there are any circumstances in which he feels people should not be allowed to be employed in the House by a Member of Parliament? Is he saying that there should be a carte blanche? Nobody is saying that a Member of Parliament cannot employ an individual, but what is being said is that a Member of Parliament must have recourse to information, information that came before Mr. Speaker in this case, as to whether that individual can work on the premises.

Mr. Benn: The principle is straightforward. If an individual seeks a Civil Service appointment the Government, as the employer, can apply what restrictions or vetting they wish. If a Member of Parliament decides to employ somebody, he or she is entitled to employ whomsoever they wish, so long as that person is not disqualified by law or any conviction.

Mr. Greenway *rose*——

Mr. Benn: I shall not give way again.

I know of no law in Britain, no Standing Order of this House and no precedent in parliamentary history that empowers the House or the Speaker to lay down who is to work for an elected Member. There is no authority whatever for the decision that led to the withdrawal of Mr. Bennett's pass. Indeed, I might add that the informal advisory committee set up more than 10 years ago—I remember it very well because I was a member of the Cabinet at the time—to examine and report upon the Starritt report on the physical safety and security of the Palace and to which you referred, Mr. Speaker, has never been formally approved or its members elected by the House. Therefore, it carries no authority, and it is not even clear whether it played a role in the Bennett case. Even the recommendation in paragraph 23 of the Services Committee report 1984-85, which we are invited to endorse, has never been accepted by the House, nor does it have any bearing on this case, because even if the motion is carried the ban on Mr. Bennett was not applied according to the procedure that the Services Committee recommended.

In this case the basis of the ban came from the Crown and its servants in the form of the security services. The information that those services receive is not normally available even to the Home Secretary. If the House looks at the Maxwell-Fyfe directive of 24 September 1952 it is laid down clearly that the Home Secretary does not expect to be informed. Therefore, we are not dealing with the Executive in its accountable form through Ministers, but in its wholly unaccountable form through the security services.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I will not give way at the moment.

There is not even the most tenuous link of accountability to this House, through a Minister, for the security services and what they do. Questions about the security services are not allowed to be tabled or are disallowed by you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barry Porter: Will the right hon. Gentleman find time to address himself to what I consider to be the impeccable logic of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) in respect of the ultimate authority and responsibility of Mr. Speaker to take what advice he can and from where? Surely that must be right. The House of Commons must, in the end, give authority and respect to some individual or body. I believe that my hon. Friend has put forward arguments to which the right hon. Gentleman has not addressed his mind.

Mr. Benn: As a matter of fact, I am glad that the hon. Member for Tiverton raised the 17th century question because Mr. Speaker Lenthall, whom I have often quoted in this House, said:

> "May it please your Majesty, I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am here."

The House has never directed the Speaker to take away the right of a Member to choose his servant, so the Lenthall case works my way. What has happened now is that the Crown, in the person of the security services, has come, not to arrest the five Members, but to arrest one research assistant. I believe that Mr. Speaker did not respond in a manner that I believe that the House might, on reflection, think would have been best.

The House does not know for certain what is the definition of a security risk. The only one I know is contained in Lords *Hansard* of 26 February 1975 in column 947 when Lord Harris of Greenwich gave a description that covered almost anything. Essentially the definition of what is a security risk is political, for everything else is criminal. If a person is guilty of an act contrary to the laws of the state he can be brought to the courts by prosecution. A security risk is someone who cannot be brought to the courts, but who is politically unacceptable.

Anyone who has had any experience of the security services as a Minister knows full well that the security services take a highly, almost totally, political view of what is a security risk. For example, when I was Minister of Technology I acquired the vetting responsibility of the old Ministry of Supply over officials in Whitehall and I saw some of the files. Later, as Secretary of State for Industry, I was told that Jack Jones, who was then the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, was considered a security risk. I was told that Hugh Scanlon, who was then president of the AEU, was considered a security risk. We know from Cathy Massiter that people who favoured a non-nuclear defence policy are considered a security risk. The Government are still fighting to prevent such people, even when hon. Members, from being able to question Ministry of Defence officials. The most ludicrous example is that of Mr. Peter Wright, who said that when he was with the service the Prime Minister of the day was considered a Soviet agent. Is any hon. Member going to tell me that that was not a political decision? Trade unionists, activists in the Labour movement and those who campaign for peace are

[Mr. Benn]

considered security risks in the minds of those who work in the security services. That is the background against which we have to look for understanding.

If we endorse the vetting of research assistants, we are endorsing the vetting of Members. It is an absolute, manifest, principle of vetting that, to get an adequate response on vetting, one has to contact or observe the relations between the person one is watching and that person's closest associates. Who could be closer to a research assistant than the Member who has employed him? If the House does not challenge that, we shall be authorising the interception of Members' letters and telephone calls, making elected Members' staff and lobby correspondents, who, through their union as well as individually, have an interest, into persons "licensed" by the Crown before they can perform their duties. That argument was developed by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

The use of the term "security" can be extended to cover almost anything about the Government of the day, whichever party is in government. This works both ways and, although it may seem strange, I am defending the rights of future minorities in the House against future majorities—forming a Government who might wish to deny matters to be discussed.

For example, it was on security grounds that the Zircon film was banned and the BBC raided. It was essentially on security grounds that Peter Wright's book, in which he alleged illegalities on a massive scale, was suppressed by the High Court. It was by the use of the sub judice rule that the House was prevented from even discussing it. Security prevents Members from asking questions about GCHQ or the security services. Even though some of the books being asked about were written by Members of the House, they cannot be pursued in Parliament. Members of Parliament are in danger of being licensed only to discuss what Ministers want them to discuss. We accept that principle at our peril.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): The right hon. Gentleman is saying: "Love me, love my friend". He said that anybody we choose must automatically be a good person, otherwise we are being vetted. Is the right hon. Gentleman certain that he has never chosen an unreliable, disloyal or untrustworthy friend? Why is it so bad to have that person put to a reasonable test to see whether the Member's judgment is right? Members are not always infallible, as the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman has to be careful before the House claims for itself the right to assess the conduct of its Members, including the conduct of a Member in selecting an assistant. No hon. Member got here by the consent of the House but by the consent of the constituents. I am probably one of the few hon. Members who has been expelled by a vote of the House on, of all things, the absurd ground of peerage. I have experienced what it is like when a majority is used to expel a Member in defence of some ludicrous medieval principle. Since that day I have always defended the rights of Members of any party to come here, with the authority of their electors, and to exercise their power in the interests of their constituents and in the pursuit of their beliefs.

If we do not challenge this rule, we shall be reversing centuries of struggle—some of it, as in the 17th century, violent and bloody—by which the people fought to elect Members of Parliament explicitly to control the Crown and its Ministers in the name of democracy and not to be licensed by the Crown to tell them what they can do, and whom they can employ.

Nothing that I say could be taken as questioning the need for the most stringent physical security of the building in which we work or the necessity to have those convicted of an offence to be dealt with by the courts. My right hon. Friends have tabled an amendment that seeks to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges, on which I have the honour to serve. I will certainly support that proposal, as I did earlier this year when I moved an amendment concerning the Zircon case designed to have that effect.

But even if the House, in its wisdom, decides to follow that course, it in no way detracts from the importance of making a clear declaration, before the Committee of Privileges meets, on the rights of one individual not to be named, without a hearing, in a way that would damage him, and on the importance of maintaining the basic principles upon which parliamentary democracy is founded, which is that Ministers are responsible to hon. Members and that hon. Members are not responsible to Ministers. Break that rule and we shall throw away centuries of struggle.

In the light of what has happened, I recognise that there is a great deal of fear and anger in the House. But those emotions are not a good guide as to how we should react, least of all in the defence of personal freedom, and our ancient democratic rights which offer the surest long-term safeguards against violence. I commend my amendment, in that spirit, to the House.

5.11 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) spoke with characteristic zeal. He elevated every difficulty—heaven knows, there are enough difficulties—into matters of high principle. That is understandable in that the Chamber has witnessed more violence than enough, not just recently, but nearly half a century ago, when part of the Chamber was devastated during a bombing raid that was designed to underline the challenge that will always be made to this cradle of authority by those who seek to set that authority aside. The debate has generated feelings of passion. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that we ought to be debating this not in anger but rather in more measured terms.

I shall put three points to the House, and I apologise at once if they fall below the level of drama in the preceding speech. They are not intended to be points of great principle but points of great practicality, pending some other occasion when perhaps the matter can be further considered. There is a strong argument for not involving too much innovation in such matters. The first point is that for quite a while we have had an informal committee. That informal committee has done a thoroughly good job. It has been relatively quiet, occasionally almost inaudible, certainly in the last Parliament, but none the less I think the House is indebted to those who have served on that informal committee for all the work they have done to try to improve the workaday security arrangements of the House. The committee considered many pedestrian matters that involved hon. Members and their working practices and in no way involved great issues of principle, let alone being taken for some further consideration or resolution elsewhere.

The second point is that, in the very nature of how we conduct our affairs, that workaday informal committee had a whole range of problems to address. Recently it has invoked a major challenge to the practices in the recommendation that was made before the withdrawal of Mr. Bennett's pass. On the whole, the House has responded with remarkable maturity to that challenge.

First, the authority was clearly vested in Mr. Speaker. That has not terminated the matter. There was wider concern, and the House, using its procedures, is holding today's debate. It is not in any sense a censure of Mr. Speaker—it is much more akin to the Zircon affair, in which a holding position was taken, which was subsequently confirmed by the House. The House has the capacity to resolve these matters on the Floor when they involve a matter of that magnitude.

Mr. Benn: The right hon. Gentleman inadvertently said that the House had confirmed the Speaker's decision. The House has never debated the report of the Select Committee on Privileges.

Mr. Biffen: The House has considered the decision about Mr. Bennett. Today represents a judgment on that decision, and if anyone pretends otherwise, he is the victim of such casuistry as to undermine the entire debate. We enjoy the happy circumstances of operating from the almost subterranean activities of the informal committee, and when it demands the attention of the House, we can debate the matter here. Let us understand and grasp that simple, great virtue of our position. Let us think hard before trying to rationalise or set up any new committees that will try to operate in conditional circumstances all the paraphernalia of some sort of sub-structure to handle the intimate affairs of security.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) has done the House a great service by emphasising how, at the end of the day, so many of these matters turn on the authority of Mr. Speaker. I believe that that authority can be sustained by this Parliament in relevant and appropriate circumstances. We do the cause of security no great advantage by over-reacting and producing a host of new committees and considerations. Opposition Members pointed out how important it was not to over-react in the face of terrorist attack or threat. So saying, I commend the motion of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to my hon. Friends and the whole House.

5.17 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): All hon. Members who have taken part in the debate have committed themselves to the concept of stringent security around our activities in this place. When I bring parties into the House they do not object to going through the security checks at the entrances. They regard that as common sense in the sort of world in which we live, and they are right to do so.

I also strongly agree with the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) about the informal committee that advises you, Mr. Speaker, on security matters. I was slightly surprised to hear it referred to in some of the earlier exchanges as some sort of secret committee. Anyone who recalls the enthusiasm with which Mr. Walter Harrison used to display some of the new techniques and equipment that had improved the security of the House would find it hard to believe that the committee was a secret operation—good job though it certainly did.

There may be a case for regularising the arrangements of that committee and, perhaps, making it a little more formal to ensure that the House is aware of its activities and that it is broadly representative of the House. Its activities and procedures will thereby be sanctified by the endorsement of the House rather more than now. Perhaps the Services Committee could examine that suggestion in the light of our debate.

We should have debated security issues rather more than we have in the recent past. It is right to regularise the present procedures affecting staff; all staff should be treated in exactly the same way. The procedures set out in paragraph 23 of the report are sensible and we should support them.

All of us recognise that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made a clear and sincere attempt to bridge the differences between us on a difficult issue. He recognised the need for stringent security, but wanted, too, to protect the rights of individuals who may come up against the security system. I was relieved to hear that he does not want the facts of any individual case to be laid before the House, because his amendment speaks of evaluation by the House of information furnished by the Metropolitan police. He seems to be imagining a committee of senior Members, but that immediately brings us up against the sort of problems that have already been mentioned. It is very difficult for the security forces to reveal sources of information without endangering those sources.

Any committee worth its salt will not accept just like that information laid before it. If such a committee is charged by the House with investigating these cases, it will be duty-bound to demand to see all the evidence and, perhaps, the witnesses, and to indulge in a full-scale inquiry. That raises the question whether people should be legally represented in such an inquiry. Even if it were sensible to go down that road, I doubt whether it would be feasible. In any case, knowing this House as well as you do, Mr. Speaker, you might agree that any committee of the great and the good that examined these matters behind closed doors and produced a report might well not satisfy hon. Members if its conclusions endorsed the recommendations of the security services.

We must face the fact that any vetting system will be unfair to the individual. One must make a balanced judment between the rights and needs of the individual and the security of the majority. As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras rightly reminded us, one of the problems of dealing with terrorism is that it forces us steadily to change our procedures in ways that we do not much like. I do not care for that process, but it is a fact of life and we must accept it. The hon. Gentleman said that we should be prepared to take risks in this place to protect the rights of the individual. I take exactly the opposite position — I would rather risk an injustice to one individual to protect the rights and security of the House. I argue for erring on the side of safety and security, and that is why I shall vote for the motion.

5.22 pm

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): This has been an interesting and valuable debate. I rise, first, to support you, Mr. Speaker, in the decisions that you have taken that have brought us to the debate today. Secondly, I wish to support the speech and motion of of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. As regards the amendent in the names of my hon. Friends and myself, I want to anticipate by saying that the manuscript amendment that my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) is seeking to move to it is entirely acceptable to me, and I hope that the House will accept it, too.

I must be careful in my choice of words. The House has been helped — wittingly or unwittingly — by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who has brought matters to the point at which we are considering them today. I agree with those hon. Members who said that the horrible tragedy of the weekend should not make any difference to our decision. The issues before us were pretty clear before, and we do not need to be so unhappily reminded of the security threat that faces so many people in all parts of the United Kingdom. However, we need to take our own security seriously, and the hon. Member for Islington, North has given us the chance to do that.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will speak in due course, because there are one or two questions that he has yet to answer. One of them was expressed vividly by his hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), who drew attention to what he described as a curiosity. It strikes me as one, too. I wonder why it should have been necessary for the hon. Member for Islington, North to apply for a pass for his research assistant, Mr. Bennett, in the middle of the recess so that he could come into the precincts of the building. Was he aware of the proceedings and recommendations of the Select Committee, and did he give them any thought?

I have to say to the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that I do not rate it as one of our treasured conventions that any hon. Member should not merely have the right to employ whom he wishes — which we are not challenging — but should have the right to demand for that person, whoever he may be, unfettered access unescorted to the entire Palace of Westminster. He says that he knows of no votes of the House which forbid it; I certainly know of no votes of the House which sanction it. So let us agree that that is uncharted territory unexplored even by Mr. Speaker Lenthall.

When the right hon. Member for Chesterfield describes Mr. Bennett as being completely unemployable, I think he may be exaggerating. I detected at that moment the faint harmony of that haunting music, "The entry of the men in white coats". We are not talking about making Mr. Bennett completely unemployable. All we are saying is that if the hon. Member for Islington, North wants to employ him, he cannot by decision of this House do so on terms which permit him to roam about this building on his own. It is possible to have two views on this matter, if I may put it that way. I do not normally pray Mr. Edward Pearce in aid of my argument, but some hon. Members may have seen an article which he wrote in *The Sunday Times* on 26 October in which he said — and this is really the question for the hon. Member to answer:

> "But who with a particle of sense invites a man once charged with murder to be his research assistant, knowing that he is certain to remain a suspicious person to any competent security man?"

It may be helpful to the House if the hon. Member addresses himself to that point in due course. But it is essential that the House should preserve the distinction between employability, which is not affected, and access, which can be.

I was glad that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) conceded the principle of possible exclusion and that he granted the House that there may be people whom hon. Members do not want to have roaming freely about the building. These people may come from many different directions. The hon. Gentleman and I might not necessarily always agree on who they are, but we would agree that such people may exist and that we should all be protected against them; and so should everybody who works in the building. There is no difference between us on that. The difference rests on how the sanction is best to be exercised.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras wants to have a committee of great and good. I share the reservations of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on that. It may prove difficult for the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee to carry the burden which the Services Committee recommendation indicates that it would be willing to accept that

> "A Member dissatisfied with an explanation of a refusal to issue a pass is at liberty to make representations to the Accommodation & Administration Sub-Committee whose decision on the issue of a pass we would normally regard as final."

I am much inclined towards the argument put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). There may be abnormal cases where you, Mr. Speaker, will inevitably have to consider a difficulty which the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee cannot resolve. But it may equally be that in the ordinary case, if I may use that word, that Committee will have no difficulty in coming to a conclusion that a certain person should either be admitted or barred.

What is absolutely essential is that we should recognise the sheer dimensions of the problem with which hon. Members themselves have confronted our security force. I hope that the House will find helpful information which I was able to discover this morning from the Pass Office computer on the current number of passes on issue for Members' secretaries and research assistants. They total 1,247, of which, by my rough calculation, two thirds are for secretaries. I did the sum earlier; there are 859 secretaries and 388 research assistants. What may also help the House is the knowledge that of that grand total 103 are American nationals and 26 are other foreign nationals of 11 different nationalities. Anyone who is curious to know what those nationalities are can get the information, but this shows the size of the task which we invite our defenders to perform so that we should not be subject to risks of which we are not aware and against which we want to be protected.

In all this I must agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton: the ultimate responsibility is yours, Mr. Speaker. As you will remember, at the beginning of this Parliament I proposed you for the Chair that you now occupy. So I am absolutely content that you should have that responsibility, but I also recognise, and I think every hon. Member recognises, that you cannot perform your task unless we give you every possible help in exercising it.

5.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I recognise the atmosphere in which the debate is taking place, but I think that you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is very important that the debate is actually about the issue before us.

I believe that the House is in serious danger of taking a decision which will take powers away from itself and hand them over to a secret, unelected and unaccountable security service which will ultimately have power over hon. Members. That should worry every hon. Member, whether they agree with my views on the rest of the world or with any Conservative Member. It will have an effect on every one of us if we vote through the proposal of the Services Committee which, in effect, would take powers away from the House. Once the House has accepted the principle of removing powers from itself, the precedent has been made, the process will continue and other powers will be removed at other times.

The question also extends beyond merely the research assistants of individuals hon. Members. It also extends to staff in the House, to members of the press in the House and to the principle of secret vetting and secret evidence being made available against an individual but not being made available to that individual or to his employer or his defender.

I am delighted to defend Mr. Ronan Bennett. The only problem I have is that I know not with what he has been charged. Nobody has told me at any stage what Mr. Bennett is supposed to have done. This is a democracy. Mr. Bennett has been smeared in every newspaper in the land; he has been smeared by a large number of Conservative Members; he has been smeared by innuendo. Yet no one, not one person, is prepared to come forward and say exactly what the evidence against him is.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn: No, I will not give way.

That is a serious matter and the House should consider very seriously what it is about to do.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn: No, I am not giving way. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members do not wish to listen to the serious attack on democracy that is taking place they are free to leave the Chamber, as I am sure you are well aware, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. No hon. Member has to give way if he does not wish to do so.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I intend to put exactly on the record what happened on the occasion of my engagement of Mr. Ronan Bennett as my research assistant. It is important that it is put on the record and it is only in the House that I am able to do so. Many other forms of media are not interested in the matter; they are more interested in smearing an individual for what they believe to be his beliefs without even asking what they are.

I engaged Mr. Bennett on 18 August as a temporary research assistant to work with me and to provide me with advice, information, background notes and all the rest of it on matters of denial of justice in this country. He is eminently qualified to do that. He has a number of references from very well qualified lawyers and academics in this country who will attest to his ability, knowledge and understanding. It is important that that is placed on the record.

I applied for his pass in the normal way and it was issued immediately in the normal way by the Pass Office. He was then sent a form to ask for his declaration of interests and other employment, which he completed and returned. Indeed, the completed entry in the register of interests of research staff was returned to me. As far as I was concerned, he was employed by me to undertake work for me.

There then appeared outside my constituency surgery on 5 September 1987 two extremely aggressive and unpleasant people, who introduced themselves to me as being from the *News of the World*. They demanded to know why I had employed Mr. Bennett, and they went on to describe in graphic and colourful language that they had numerous statements from Conservative Members condemning me for employing this man, and asked what I thought about that.

The following day, an article appeared in the *News of the World* in lurid and colourful tones condemning me and Mr. Bennett. Only in passing did it admit or mention that Mr. Bennett has not been convicted of anything, because the conviction was quashed by the Court of Appeal in 1975; it did not say that the exclusion order placed on him under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1978 was lifted, after a three-month trial at the Old Bailey during which he defended himself and was complimented on his ability to do so by Judge Alan King-Hamilton. The article did not say these things in an open and overt way; it sought merely to condemn Mr. Bennett. That was the start of all this.

During my many conversations with journalists from the *News of the World* on 5 September 1987, one of them said to me in reply to my question how he had all this information and on what basis he was saying that Mr. Bennett was a security risk, "I have seen the security file."

I echo strongly what my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said. If the security services, in their attempt to smear an individual and a Member of Parliament, are passing information to the nastiest and most unreliable gutter press that the world has seen, in the form of the *News of the World*, which is then used to condemn people, that merits at least an inquiry into what the security services are up to.

What then followed was again interesting for the connection that appears to exist between people who support either the Government's point of view on the matter or the security services and News International. On 3 October, I was telephoned by some journalists from *The Sunday Times*, who are far more competent than their colleagues on the *News of the World*, and far more reasonable in their approach. The subsequent article was considerably better written, but again they had information that Mr. Bennett's security pass was about to be withdrawn.

I had not been told about this; I had not been told anything about Mr. Bennett's pass during this time. The article appeared the following day on 4 October. Subsequently, Mr. Speaker, I received the letter from you confirming that Mr. Bennett's pass had been suspended

[Mr. Corbyn]

because of advice that we know not, from whom we know not, saying we know not what, except that Mr. Bennett had some sort of stain on his character.

A very serious issue is at stake here. Mr. Bennett, having been cleared by courts at every level in this land, pursuing an academic career and employed by a Member of Parliament, is smeared by the press. The *News of the World* then claim a victory, as do Conservative Members, in having his pass suspended—it is a victory, as they put it. Mr. Bennett's pass is suspended, but how do we defend him? We do not know what he is supposed to have done. We do not know what allegations are being made against him, although there is a big question mark.

It is a bit rich and mealy-mouthed of the Leader of the House and other hon. Members to say that this is not taking away my right to employ Mr. Bennett. Of course it is not taking away my right to employ him; I know that it is not. But it does implant the view through every television screen, radio broadcast and newspaper in this country that there is something badly wrong with Mr. Ronan Bennett, to the extent that he is not allowed to be employed in the House of Commons. Yet there is no charge against him, nor a criminal record outstanding against him. I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is a bit of a risk if the House, with Members elected to defend democracy, allows someone to be condemned without charge, trial or hearing in the way that it is apparently about to do this evening.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Corbyn: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

It is important for us to remember many of the other issues that are before us. This House is an elected place because people struggled to make Parliament an elected and representative democracy. Hon. Members are elected by their constituents to make laws. Hon. Members are not invited to join the House of Commons by a majority decision. It is not a golf club committee that decides to invite me to come here and represent Islington, North, any more than it is a case of the Rotary club inviting people to join us. This is an elected Chamber. I was elected on behalf of the people of Islington, North in just the same way that every other hon. Member has been elected by constituents, whom they represent.

Therefore, if the House approves the motion, which will prevent Mr. Bennett from having a pass, because it believes him to be some kind of risk—nobody has ever said what sort of risk he is—obviously the message that will be received outside the House is that I am somehow or other unacceptable to the House. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Gentlemen might well find the matter very amusing. But I say to them that once the House of Commons allows a tyrannical majority opinion to be imposed on a minority, we shall be on a downward slope and the trend will become irreversible. This is a very serious matter, and I urge all hon. Members to think through the basis on which they were elected to the House, and operate as Members of Parliament. I urge hon. Members to think whether the majority in the House should start to remove rights and privileges from minorities and hon. Members; that is a very dangerous process.

I believe that we should also consider the running of the——

Mr. Porter *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

We should also consider the running of the security services in this country, and the way they operate. I have just given an example which I believe is the tip of an iceberg. I have given an example of what I believe to be a case where the security services, probably having not persuaded somebody that Mr. Bennett's pass should be withdrawn, decided to leak the matter to the *News of the World.* They set the hounds running to create an atmosphere in which Mr. Bennett's pass could be withdrawn. It must also be said that we do not know anything about the security services from statements made by Ministers to the House; they are an unaccountable force. In fact, to find out anything about the security forces which is in a published form we have to go to Australia, or buy "Spycatcher", which tells of the experiences of one senior member of the security services.

That book contains many examples of the way in which the security services have sought to undermine democracy and free living in Britain. For example, on page 54 Mr. Peter Wright goes in detail into the way in which in 1955 the membership files of the Communist party were stolen from someone's flat, illegally copied and used for the next 20 years as a basis for the surveillance of trade union and Labour movement activity in Britain. There is nothing illegal about being in the Communist party in Britain or in living in Britain and supporting the Communist party.

There are many other examples throughout the book. On page——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind the element of sub judice in that that case is before the British courts? He must not quote from the book, but he may refer to it.

Mr. Corbyn: I was seeking to refer to the description of the way in which members of the security services sought to flout the democratic results of several general elections in Britain, to undermine, destabilise and ultimately remove the elected Government of Harold Wilson, now Lord Wilson of Rievaulx. There are many other examples. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members find the matter so amusing, it shows how shallow their judgment is on these matters. Ultimately, if no control is brought over the security services and the way in which they operate, they will destroy the very democracy under which they are hiding. They have proved to be a fundamentally undemocratic force which seeks to impose its rather curious, cockeyed view of the world on elected people, elected Governments and society generally.

The events of the past few years bear close examination. We have seen British newspaper offices and the BBC's offices in Scotland raided. We have seen the disconnection of telephones all over Salisbury plain when cruise missiles are out. We have seen the surveillance of people who are opposed to the presence of nuclear missiles in Britain. We have also seen the prevention of the publication of a large number of books. Why could not "British Intelligence and Covert Action" be published in Britain? It had to be published abroad because legal threats were made against anyone who sought to publish it. There is also the informal threat through the D-notice system.

If the House is genuinely concerned about liberty and freedom of expression, it must stand up for these issues. The British newspapers should not continue their supine support for an increasingly aggressive and authoritarian Government who are destroying and denying many liberties in Britain. It is important that everyone should be warned of exactly what has happened to one research assistant and the denial of justice that is implicit in the decision that Conservative Members clearly wish to take against that person. They know perfectly well that there is no court in the land to which he can appeal because all that has been said against him has been said in secret and an administrative decision has been taken against him against which he cannot appeal. That is the first thing that is so wrong about what has been said.

We should also deplore the secret agenda that is being imposed on us by the security services in this matter. If we accept that secret agenda—that secret power—and the secret smearing of individuals that goes on, further damage will be done later.

All hon. Members are elected to represent their constituencies, not the House. Therefore, they should be concerned about taking powers away from the House and handing them on somewhere else. Hon. Members should also be aware that people outside the House will consider it rather curious that we sit here hour after hour, night after night, debating and discussing the fine detail of the law that is to be administered to the rest of the country, but at the same time take a draconian decision that would have done credit to the Court of Star Chamber in removing the pass of someone employed by a Member of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Corbyn: No, I shall not give way.

That episode, to which I have been a party since the early part of August, has taught me about the sordid nature of the private, secret relationship between the security services, certain newspapers and some hon. Members, hiding behind the cloak of immunity and off-the-record remarks made to newspapers in the attempt to smear and destroy one individual.

It might be said that it would have been much easier if I had merely dispensed with Mr. Bennett's services at the first sign of any flak. I refused to do that because that person has no convictions against him and he has a right to work for me. Above all, I, as a Member of Parliament, have a right to employ him.

If we do not do something about the power of unelected, secret and unaccountable security services, untold damage will be done to many other British people. Other smears will take place and other damage will be done. I invite the House to think seriously about those matters and to support the Opposition amendments which seek to protect the very democracy on which Conservative Members are so often pleased to preach in such a sanctimonious manner to the rest of the country.

5.51 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): If there were any lingering doubts in any part of the House about your wisdom, Mr. Speaker, in suspending Mr. Bennett's security pass, they have been removed by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). It is now confirmed, as many people outside the House knew already, that a loony-Left Labour Member had appointed a Left research assistant.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw that remark because it touches on the honour of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)?

Mr. Gow: I thought that it was a term of endearment, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that it is a term of endearment to certain Labour Members.

Mr. Gow: Of course, I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Islington, North asked what employment prospects there would be for his former research assistant. As my hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) made clear, it is open to the hon. Gentleman to continue to employ Mr. Bennett as a research assistant, but not within the precincts of the Palace. It will also be possible for Mr. Bennett to find employment—here you will not rule me out of order, Mr. Speaker—with some of those loony Left-wing councils. I am one of those who have the misfortune to live in the London borough of Lambeth. I am sure that Mr. Bennett will be able to find employment among those who control Lambeth borough council.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: No, let me get on a little and then I shall give way.

I hope that after the community charge has become law the ability of Lambeth borough council to employ people such as Mr. Bennett will be diminished.

Mr. John David Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Gow: No, let me get on a little.

I want to examine some of the assertions in the amendment of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). They are assertions in which even the right hon. Gentleman and his friends cannot believe. Those who have signed the amendment have done a service to the House and to the country because they have exposed once again how the hard Left in British politics uses high-sounding phrases such as "principles of parliamentary democracy" to cloak its determination to advance its own interests by any means, including those that are incompatible with democracy.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield concluded his speech by saying that he was the champion of democracy. However, the right hon. Gentleman encouraged and supported violence on the picket lines to prevent miners who wanted to work from doing so. He was one of the principal allies of Mr. Arthur Scargill. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman, the self-proclaimed champion of democracy, was anxious to deny democracy to the trade unions. At every stage he voted against proposals to make secret ballots compulsory. How dare the right hon. Gentleman include his amendment in the Order Paper and then conclude his speech with a statement of his own commitment to democracy?

I want to consider some of the assertions in the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

Mr. Benn: I shall not make any response to the hon. Gentleman's comments about me, but will he comment on the fact that Ronan Bennett served 13 months in prison for an offence that he did not commit? Is not it right that some apology should be made by someone to him for his false conviction and that that should be taken into account when references are made to him and his prospects?

Mr. Gow: It is not up to a Back-Bench Member to comment on the original conviction of Mr. Bennett or on the subsequent occasion when that conviction was quashed.

I want to consider some of the assertions in the amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. The amendment states:

> "Hon. Members must have an equal right to employ whoever they wish . . . in the Palace of Westminster."

That is a breathtaking proposition. Is an hon. Member to be allowed to employ a member or a supporter of the IRA within the precincts of the House? Is he to be allowed to employ within the precincts of the House a member or supporter of the Ulster Volunteer Force? Is an hon. Member to be allowed to employ in this place a member of the PLO? Are the security services to be denied the opportunity of protecting innocent people who visit the House of Commons and the hundreds of people who work here?

It is not possible to put hon. Members on a special pinnacle which makes them exempt from the proper scrutiny of the security services. The amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield continues:

> "The withdrawal of the pass issued to Mr. Ronan Bennett has . . . unjustly, identified him as a potential threat to national security".

The security services reported to Mr. Speaker and, on the basis of that report, Mr. Speaker decided to withdraw the pass. In effect, the amendment challenges Mr. Speaker's judgment on a security matter.

Less than five months ago a motion was moved that Mr. Speaker

> "do take the Chair of this House as Speaker."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1987; Vol. 118, c.2.]

That motion was seconded by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) who said:

> "throughout the period for which he has sustained the office of Speaker, the right hon. Member for Croydon, North-East has discharged his duties in such a way as to bring great honour to this House."

He went on:

> "Principalities, powers and Prime Ministers all have to be resisted at times, and the right hon. Gentleman has shown that he knows that to be a part of his function."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1987; Vol. 118, c. 2-4.]

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent has not signed the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent used to be the darling of the Left. Now even he is embarrassed by the amendment. Not one of those hon. Members who have signed the amendment voted against your taking the Chair, Mr. Speaker. Why not? Surely it would have been in accordance with those principles of parliamentary democracy referred to by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield in the amendment if there had been an alternative candidate for the Chair. Perhaps they could not agree among themselves which of them would fit more engagingly into wig, gown and buckled shoes. Perhaps some of the signatories to the amendment would claim that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) would have been the best choice, although some adjustment to the dress would have been required. Others would have preferred, as in former times, that there should have been a beard under Mr. Speaker's wig and the choice could then have fallen on the principal author of our discontent this afternoon, the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

Mr. Benn: Be serious about a serious matter.

Mr. Gow: On Wednesday last week the right hon. Member for Chesterfield raised a point of order with you, Mr. Speaker. He said:

> "I understand that for some time, and unknown to the House, an unofficial security committee of Members of all parties has been meeting".—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 932.]

I stress the words "unknown to the House."

Your predecessor, Mr. Speaker, made two statements to the House, on 29 March 1976 and 27 July 1977, in which he made it perfectly clear that the informal joint committee of both Houses was a continuing one. The earlier statement records Mr. Speaker stating:

> "I have consulted the Leader of the House and the authorities in the House of Lords, all of whom are in agreement that a Permanent Joint Committee should be set up."—[*Official Report*, 29 March 1976; Vol. 908, c. 896.]

I stress the word "permanent".

The amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield asserts that the House:

> "knows of no powers that this House has . . . or could legitimately, take or assume, to determine who may work for an hon. Member in the Palace of Westminster."

However, more than 22 years ago the Lord Chamberlain, with the consent of the Queen, surrendered control of the accommodation and services of this House to Mr. Speaker. Of course, Mr. Speaker exercises that control on behalf of the House and as its servant. Page 219 of "Erskine May" makes that very clear:

> "In the House of Commons control is vested in the Speaker on behalf of the House."

The Standing Orders of the House provide that the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) should advise Mr. Speaker on the control of accommodation and services. The amendment tabled by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield rejects the unanimous recommendation of that Committee. Six Labour Members served on that Select Committee. Not one of them dissented from the recommendation from which the amendment moved by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield dissents. The House might have more respect for those who support the amendment if the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends had voted in favour of the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984. Not one of them has done so. The amendment in the name of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield will give comfort to those who wish to undermine the security of this place.

The amendment is at best mischievous and at worst dangerous. However, we may leave the final verdict on the right hon. Member for Chesterfield to someone who knew him much better than I. On page 80 of the third volume of his diaries, the right hon. Gentleman's friend and mentor Dick Crossman states that his one concrete suggestion is that we should have government by electronic referendum. He concludes:

> "The real problem about him is that his presentation is brilliant, but what he says is normally second rate and sometimes disastrously stupid."

I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree with that conclusion.

6.4 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): All that I wish to say in my initial response to the contribution of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is that it does no credit to the House or the hon. Gentleman to start a debate on such a difficult and technical matter by resorting to abuse or superficiality. That does no good to anyone inside or outside the House, particularly in view of events that have taken place over the years.

My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) made a good and constructive contribution. He pointed out that the immediate threat to the House comes from terrorism in one form or another. He went on to say what I have been saying for many years —that in its wake it brings another threat, the threat to democracy. Terrorist groups in various parts of the world often seek to destroy democracy. We must establish whether we are getting the balance right between protecting the House and the institutions of democracy, and protecting the lives of individuals who may be at risk.

It comes as a relief to me, because I began to point this out in 1980 when I was first involved in the politics of Northern Ireland, that people now recognise what Conservative Members certainly did not recognise before — that the aim of paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland is to make the state here act in a more and more repressive manner. No less a person than the Prime Minister said yesterday that it was necessary to react more rationally, and, despite the emotion engendered by the events of the last few days, to exercise great reason and care. I support her in that. I only wish that Conservative Members had said it earlier in this decade; we might have reached the present position rather sooner.

My concern is not whether the Government have got the matter right, but that neither we nor the Leader of the House can know whether they have got it right. The difficulty is that the Conservative party seems to believe —this theme runs through nearly all the contributions that we have so far heard—that efficiency in the security services cannot go hand in hand with democracy. We take the opposite view. We believe not only that the security services operate effectively in a democracy, but that, unless a good many democratic checks and balances are in place, the security services will not only pose a danger to the country but, at times, do themselves a disservice and make a mockery of themselves. That can be seen from the "Spycatcher" escapade.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The hon. Gentleman has raised a valuable point, and has done a service to the House, which was in danger of trivialising a very serious issue.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, because of the unique set of circumstances that would surround such a judgment, the information presented to whoever made the necessary decision would fall into the category of either evidence, intelligence or suspicion? Surely the more protection exists within the group of people making a decision, the less chance there will be for suspicion to rule, and the more chance there will be that justice will be done for the individual, and protection given to others in the Palace.

Mr. Soley: The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) is much more experienced in such matters than most hon. Members, and I urge the hon. Member for Eastbourne to listen carefully to what he says. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh knows, as I have known for many years, that such legislation as the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 are a required recruiting sergeant-major for the Provisional IRA and other paramilitary groups. If the hon. Member for Eastbourne would at least consider that point, I would listen to his remarks with more respect. By not taking it seriously, the hon. Gentleman does what he accuses everyone else of doing. He plays into their hands.

The threat is real. Members of Parliament have been killed, members of the staff of the House have been injured —we need only remember the letter-bomb campaign of a few years ago—and there is a threat to the Houses of Parliament themselves, because they are a prestige target. The problem, as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras pointed out, is the balance to be struck in protecting the institution.

My hon. Friend touched on two other points. First, he talked about risk-taking. We in the House ask members of the general security services—for instance, the police and the armed forces—to take risks, and, as my hon. Friend said, we too must take such risks. Let me give an example from Northern Ireland. If a police or prison officer feels that his life is under threat—as is frequently the case—because his address is known or because of activities that have taken place near it, he can apply to be moved. That practice is well established. When the necessary checks have been made, he may indeed be moved. However, the definition of risk is a tight one and officers who feel that they are at risk often have to stay where they are. Any Northern Ireland Member will know the feeling on this issue in both the prison and the police services. We are asking those men to take that risk as a consequence of debates in the House, and decisions that we make. We, too, must take risks.

Secondly, my hon. Friend pointed out—as I have pointed out over the years—that the paramilitary seeks to make a state more and more repressive. I remember that, soon after I was appointed as Front Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland in, I believe, 1981, I met a number of people who required far heavier security than I did, in both the Republic and the north of Ireland. I remember being driven to one appointment and receiving the usual special branch attention in the south. A senior Member of Parliament in a Government position said to me, "I did not know that you received that kind of security. I decided not to do so."

I thought hard about what that person had said, and discussed it with him. He said that if we continued down that road—and this applies in the United Kingdom as much as in Eire—we would end up with the police outriders, the sirens, the guarded politicians and everything that makes the democratic state seem remote, apparently controlled and protected by the police. We must resist that. I take my hat off to those in Ireland, north and south, who have faced the problem much more consistently than we have over the years. We have usually had to face it only when the Provisional IRA has chosen to launch a bombing campaign on our mainland.

The security services are the key. One of the reasons for our problems in today's debate is that the security services are not effectively accountable. We have two of the most

[Mr. Soley]

famous security services in the world, MI5 and MI6: everyone knows about them, from Australia to Britain and back again, even in China and Tibet. But they do not exist in statute. Debates such as this would be much easier if we knew that we had a system in which the security services were accountable, as they are in other countries such as Australia, Canada, the United States and West Germany. They would then be no less effective—in many respects, they would be more so—and we would have a check that does not now exist.

I strongly recommend the amendment. What worries me about so many of the interruptions from the Government Benches—usually made from a sedentary position—is their apparent wish to believe that Mr. Bennett is guilty, and that the court got it wrong. I can understand why they may wish to believe that, but I must point out the other side of the coin. After all, Conservative Members are always making this point about law and order and the courts.

If it is assumed that everyone who has been before a court and found not guilty is possibly guilty, it must also be stressed that the courts may get it wrong when they find someone guilty. Nevertheless, when someone is found guilty whom Conservative Members want to be found guilty, they defend the court's decision like mad. We cannot have it both ways; we must place our judgment in the court. As my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras rightly pointed out, if someone is found not guilty, it does not mean that he is not a security risk. We cannot have appalling scenes, with Conservative Members, some of whom have now left the Chamber, shouting, "Yes, we know, we know." They do not know. The courts do not know. We do not even know what the police believe about Mr. Bennett. Some of the police who brought Mr. Bennett before the courts, as opposed to the security services that might have been responsible for giving the information, may accept that Mr. Bennett is innocent.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Would the hon. Gentleman's view be different if I, or other of my hon. Friends, applied for a security pass for a research assistant if that person had been discharged recently from Lambeth magistrates' court, having been arrested on the charge of attempting to kidnap members of the African National Congress? Such a person would not have been either found guilty or convicted of anything by the courts. I understand that most Opposition Members believe that those men represent the interests of the South African intelligence service. Would not the hon. Gentleman's view be different about that, if I sought to employ such a man?

Mr. Soley: In that case I should assume innocence until guilt had been proved in a court of law. If there were a system such as my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras has set out in his amendment, we should be able to deal with the case that has been put to me by the hon. Gentleman. We should also be able to deal with the case that was outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn).

If Mr. Bennett cannot be employed by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North, I am not sure what would be the advantage of saying that he could still enter this building. If he were able to enter the building, all that we should have done would be to limit the areas that he could enter. If the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Mr. Adams) chose to take his seat, he could sit down in the Chamber, measure it and go anywhere else that he liked. He could bring all his personal belongings into the building without any check being made upon him. The policy of the party that he leads in Northern Ireland is that of the Armalite rather than the ballot box. I do not know what the hon. Member for Belfast, West would seek to do if he chose to take his seat, but there is merit in my hon. Friend's point: that there may be far better ways of doing this than the way that we are doing it at the moment.

We should forget about vetting. The EEC makes everybody—members of the European Parliament and others—go through a security check when they enter secure areas. We should consider such options rather than vetting, because vetting provides opportunities for paramilitary groups. If there is to be vetting, there is pressure to vet everyone — research assistants, secretaries, the press, canteen staff. If the Provisional IRA, INLA or one of the Unionist paramilitary groups decided to blow up something else, we should have to vet everybody in that area, too. For example, post office boxes were a favourite target fairly recently. Everybody in the postal service, right down to the canteen staff, would have to be vetted.

Vetting can be singularly inefficient. If it becomes too heavy a burden, all one can do is run the names through a computer. If I wanted to plant someone from the Provisional IRA or the Soviet Union in this building, I should not plant them with the obvious person; I should plant them with the least obvious person. I have pointed out on a number of occasions that those who have betrayed this country have not been members of the Labour party. They have been members of the Conservative party. To be effective, that is the side on which to plant them. We need to be more sophisticated than that. We need the committee structure that my hon. Friend has suggested.

Contacts by both Unionist and Republican parties in Northern Ireland with paramilitary groups have at times been very close. Members of Parliament, both Conservative and Labour, have also had contacts with those groups—contacts that many of us would regard as too close for comfort. We cannot make assumptions about one person who has appeared before a court.

We need to look with much more care at security in this building. I am more concerned about the vetting of cars than I am about the vetting of people. The changes over security checks on cars during the last couple of years are a much greater cause for concern than the vetting of secretaries and research assistants. A Member of Parliament has no way of knowing what is alleged against a particular person. If we trust democracy, we must sufficiently trust the elected representatives and set up a committee structure in which we can have confidence. It must be provided with information that will enable it to enter a proper judgment. We cannot presume guilt by making assumptions that the courts of law have said are not correct. However, that is what is happening now, and that is fundamentally wrong.

Democracy is not lost by a grand, overnight coup. It is lost by the slow erosion of civil liberties, usually at times of economic distress or war. In the 19th century, when Britain became the world's greatest democracy, we set ourselves remarkably high standards. Sadly, in the 20th century we have been found guilty before the European

Court of Human Rights of violating many basic democratic rights. We have violated those rights more than any other country has violated them. That is the by-product of two world wars and the Northern Ireland emergency.

There has to be a political solution to the Northern Ireland problem, but that is not relevant to this debate. Unless we address ourselves to the way in which we are allowing the democratic process to be eroded, it will continue to be eroded, and that will lead to a miserable existence for us all.

6.22 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The general tenor of the contributions to this debate has been more than marred by the continual resurgence of the Opposition's vendetta against the security services. I have listened with great care to all the contributions, and I must confess that I am very worried that we shall lose sight of what we are trying to achieve — better security and the better protection of hon. Members and staff—in the greater argument about whether or not we agree with the techniques of the security services.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was very kind to his own party in seeking to provide in his amendment a mechanism by which it could get off the hook of the amendment that has been tabled by his own friends—if that is what they are called—on the far Left. I am disappointed that he advocated that the House should divide at the end of the debate, on the basis of his amendment. I thought that he supported the need for better protection of hon. Members and staff. He needed an excuse to try to build up pressure for the calling of a Division, and the grounds on which he wishes to divide the House are spurious in the extreme.

The House was in recess when the case arose that has given rise to this debate. No Committees had been set up. It might have been prudent, therefore, not to say that the Opposition would divide the House because the matter had not been referred to a Committee but to accept the reasonable course that reference to Mr. Speaker was the right action to take at that time. I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras backed away from the logic of his argument.

I was interested in the hon. Gentleman's request for an inquiry into the source of the leak. I have heard leak after leak and, whatever party has been in government, the requirement for a journalist to give his source of information has always been denied. If Labour Members are asking for journalists to be able to protect their sources of information——

Ms. Clare Short: The security services behaved improperly.

Mr. Shepherd: I am told that it was a journalist who asked, "Is it true that you have employed an undesirable character?" That journalist has now been pressed to give his source of information. He might say that the security services is the source of the leak, but he would have to be a lot more precise than that.

Ms. Short: This is an important point. We know that vetting of some sort occurred. We know that reports were sent to the Speaker but not seen by him, but we want to know how the reports got from the security services to a journalist. The people who behaved improperly are those in the security services, not the journalists.

Mr. Shepherd: I am not sure that that is what happened. However, because of the nature of this inquiry, a journalist would have to disclose his sources. Therefore, an inquiry would fail. It is a spurious reason for the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras to seek to divide the House. However, he gave two reasons for wishing to divide the House: first, the inadequacy of the way that the information was handled and, secondly, the demand for an inquiry, which he suspected would not be granted.

Along with the late and lamented Mr. John Silkin, I was a co-author of the Services Committee's report. The Committee recognised that we could not ignore the security dimension. It was not within our remit, but as time went on it was clear that we had to take cognisance of the fact that there was a security dimension to everything that we were recommending. That is why paragraph 23 is in the report. We felt that, although the House had not given us the specific charge of considering security, we had to put down the appropriate markers and make suggestions accordingly. It is interesting to note that, when the report was debated on two previous occasions, no inquiries were raised about that specific subject. It is only when the whim or wish of an hon. Member is denied that we seek to return to the question again.

The fundamental point is the responsibilities that all of us in the House have to the others. A self-denying ordinance is always involved; we cannot always have our own way regardless of its effect on other people. As the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said, we have a responsibility not only to the 649 other Members but to the 2,500 employees of the Palace of Westminster who depend on us for their security, safety and ability to go about their work without fear. Therefore, we cannot say, "It is my right to employ whom I want and to hell with the rest of you." If we are told that somebody whom we have put forward for employment in the Palace is suspect, we must heed that advice; we cannot afford to be sorry afterwards. I can imagine an hon. Member making a personal statement after a disaster and saying, "Mr. Speaker, it did not occur to me," or, "I did not think." We cannot take that risk. If there is a shadow of doubt, we must accept the advice that we are given. The right and proper way to proceed was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who said that the Speaker is the custodian of trust in the House, and that we should heed Mr. Speaker's advice if it is tendered.

The mechanism that was set up by the report that was laid before the House in January in 1986 is perfectly fair, but some amendments could be made as to how advice is tendered. The delay to enable the Serjeant at Arms to have inquiries made is prudent, and it ill behoves us to ignore advice. If there is a shadow of doubt, we must not ignore it.

As to the self-denying ordinance, another more mundane dimension has been hovering around the edge of the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) raised it in his amendment, and I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has agreed to accept it. I hope that he will accept my manuscript amendment because when we debated the matter in 1986 the resolution was wrong; we made it too narrow in referring only to research assistants. The term "research assistants" needs to be broadened to include hon. Members' personal assistants and hon. Members' personal staff.

[Mr. Shepherd]

When we adopted the report and put into effect its recommendations we were able to limit the numbers involved to 50 "overseas temporary research assistants", but as pressure increased, more 9C passes for temporary secretaries were being used and more 9D passes for temporary research assistants were being used, although those 9D people were not necessarily staying for the full four months that they were supposed to be employed. The consequence of that was that unreasonable pressures were being put on the Library—I had the honour of being Chairman of the Library Sub-Committee in the last Parliament—and the staff were placed in the invidious position of asking research assistants, "Who are you? What are you? What is your pass number? Are you entitled to be here? If not, go away."

Hon. Members who are not exercising this self-denying ordinance are loading the system, regardless of what happens. Some hon. Members have five research assistants working here, for whom there is no accommodation, and have no regard for the effect that it has on other people working in the House. We must reconsider this matter again because some hon. Members are not exercising this self-denying ordinance or regard that we have preached at us so often. It is a question of, "Don't do as I do; do as I say." It is right that we should return to this subject in the new Parliament to consider that matter.

With the best will in the world, the House has finite resources. We must work within them or agree that they be expanded under the appropriate framework. Currently, all that we have agreed is that hon. Members should reasonably expect to have a secretary in the Palace of Westminster. It is interesting to note that only 600 hon. Members do so. However, we have not taken the matter any further. Therefore, we must set down the criteria against which future planning can be carried out.

While I have the ear of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, may I make a plea for progress on 1, Cannon Row? It was expected that it would be completed in the autumn of 1988, but the completion date is now stretching into the middle distance, which will create pressure and exacerbate the difficulties that we have been talking about tonight. In the meantime, I hope that we will exercise that self-denying ordinance.

6.34 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The last point at least of the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) will be unanimously agreed. Many strongly held views have been expressed today. The debate has been marred only by the obnoxious contribution by the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I disagree with the hon. Gentleman on many matters. However much I have disagreed with him, I have never before had occasion to describe a speech made by him as obnoxious. His contribution today was certainly in that category. It was out of tune with the seriousness of the debate. The time will come, I think, when even the hon. Gentleman will recognise that fact.

Your position is not in doubt, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that those of us who elected you to the Chair should not have done so if we now had any criticism of the security pass procedure. That is not the position at all. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that his comments were irrelevant. The debate centres on a citizen's right to some kind of redress against being refused a security pass and thus being denied the right to work on these premises.

It will not come as any surprise, at least to my hon. Friends, to hear me say that there is clearly a need for security at the Palace of Westminster. That is not in dispute. I have never protested, and I do not know of anyone who has, about the police requesting security passes—even hon. Members passes—from time to time. I should qualify that statement. The only person who has ever so questioned to my knowledge was Mr. Enoch Powell, who did not, I understand, wish to be asked for his pass. Perhaps he considered that he should be recognised, and that was that. It is quite appropriate that the police, on duty and carrying out their responsibilities, should try to make sure that those who come within the premises have a right to do so. That is not in any doubt.

Undoubtedly, any terrorist action that would be taken here would be considered a victory by the Provisional IRA. If it were able to explode a bomb anywhere within the Palace of Westminster, we can rest assured that it would not offer the kind of weasel apology that it made after last Sunday's atrocity. There is no doubt that we are faced with an onslaught of terrorism, and have been so faced for the past 17 years. The House is an important terrorist target. The need for security is in no doubt.

There is no doubt also about the need for a security service. There are aspects though about which I am far from happy. Even if a terrorist campaign were not being directed against our citizens and political democracy, we would still need a security service. I know of no democracy that does not have some such body. But, at the moment, we must query the political impartiality of the services. The matter does not relate only to Mr. Wright's book. Prior to that book, allegations were made by a former employee of MI5, Cathy Massiter. As I have asked previously on the Floor of the House, is it alleged that she lied when she made most serious allegations about the type of abuse that occurred?

Ms. Clare Short: What about Mrs. Haig?

Mr. Winnick: During an Adjournment debate, I mentioned that lady, who lives in Sutton Coldfield in the west midlands. That place is not, of course, in my constituency, but the matter related to an important issue of civil liberties.

The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), the Secretary of State for Employment, took up the matter and carried out his responsibilities as a constituency Member of Parliament. The reply that he received from the chief constable was along the lines that Mrs. Haig had not been investigated by the special branch. It was only Mrs. Haig's persistence that prompted the right hon. Gentleman again to write to the chief constable, and that brought out the fact that the police had lied. That factor caused us great concern. I raised it during the Select Committee inquiry and was responsible for writing a minority report of the Committee on the special branch.

We must recognise that many people in this country, and certainly in the House, simply do not accept that, at this moment, the security services are as impartial as they should be. Indeed, from time to time one cannot help asking whether any senior officials at all in MI5 or MI6 actually vote Labour.

Ms. Clare Short: Certainly not.

Mr. Winnick: The reply to that question is obvious, as my hon. Friend has said.

I recognise, as I have said, the need for effective security here and for a security service. I recognise also that, perhaps, there is some slight disagreement between my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and myself, that sometimes measures have to be taken. We must take such measures which protect not only ourselves but all those who work here. We have responsibility for everyone who works here. On occasions we may have to say that, for various security reasons, A, B or C may not be able to be employed here. That is the essence of the matter. It we must take such action, which we do not like but which is necessary in the climate in which we live, it is necessary for people to have some redress. It may be said that that is a reflection on Mr. Speaker. It is not a reflection on the occupant of the Chair. I do not know what sort of documentation Mr. Speaker has received. As I understand it, he has not seen all the documents. Perhaps there is no need for him to do so.

One thing is absolutely clear: if we leave the matter as it is and Mr. Speaker is given certain responsibilities, we shall bring about an invidious position. It is like questioning Mr. Speaker's impartiality. Moreover, if Mr. Speaker comes to a certain conclusion, it is difficult, except by way of a point of order or, in extreme cases, a motion of censure, to raise the matter on the Floor of the House. At the end of the day, it is far better for such matters to go to Select Committee. A Select Committee may come to a conclusion with which I disagree, but it is quite likely that there will be an opportunity for that Select Committee's report to be debated on the Floor of the House, and we may raise the subject at that time.

At the moment, we have the case of Mr. Bennett, whom I do not know from Adam. Like most people, I had never heard of the gentleman before all the publicity arose. He has been tarred and smeared. In effect, he has been told that he has no right to work here because he is a security risk. He may be a security risk; I do not know. How am I to judge? If we believe in democracy, the democratic process and the fact that every citizen in our country has a right to be heard, it is important that Mr. Bennett is heard. What right has Mr. Bennett to be heard at this stage?

That is why the reasoned amendment put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) should be accepted by the Leader of the House. If the amendment is accepted, to a large extent the problems with which we are now dealing can be overcome.

6.42 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I have listened with great interest to many contributions that have been made. Some contributions have strayed from the point of the debate. I take the House back to an interesting and carefully chosen analysis of events by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). He took us through the chronology of events. As I understand it, Mr. Bennett was originally convicted of a crime and was subsequently cleared when he appealed. Thereafter, a story appeared in the *News of the World*. That chronology is important.

Opposition Members seem to take the view that the *News of the World* story was leaked in some way by the security services. I declare an interest as a member of the National Union of Journalists. It is not beyond the wit of journalists to recognise a conviction in open court and then, indeed, to recognise that a conviction has been quashed on appeal. I do not believe for one moment that the *News of the World* story appeared as a consequence of a leak. One must be a subscriber to a conspiracy theory to believe that. I prefer to believe that journalists are capable of doing their own leg work. We are all agreed that we need checks on individuals. However, I was concerned at the admission by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that checks take place after a pass has been issued to the person applying. It would be far more sensible to apply the checks or vetting process before the pass was issued.

That brings me to another important but difficult problem. While it may be possible for the police to make inquiries relating to British subjects, I am a little worried about the kind of checks that they might be able to undertake on foreigners. I hope that that matter will be considered.

I am worried, too, about one difficult problem—all hon. Members agree that it is difficult—in relation to the disclosure of secret information and advice to the Speaker from whatever source. Clearly, the public disclosure of the sources of such information, whether to a Committee or to the House, would jeopardise those sources. Indeed, if it was believed that the sources were to be compromised, they would dry up. One of our key dilemmas relates specifically to the disclosure of sources. In an intervention earlier in the debate, I mentioned that lives could be put at risk, and I do not believe that to be an exaggeration.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Allason: I shall finish my speech in a moment.

The question of false allegations is very important. We are faced with a difficult dilemma in having to assess information from very secret sources. I urge the House to rely on Mr. Speaker's judgment in this matter rather than on numbers. The Speaker is trusted——

Ms. Short: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Allason: I will not give way, because I am about to finish. Mr. Speaker is trusted in many areas and this is one essential area where our trust should continue.

The motion, and indeed the amendment, deal with material risk to the House. I urge the House to err on the side of caution and on the side of safety, and I commend the motion to the House.

6.47 pm

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I shall be brief, because I do not want to curtail the wind-up speeches. We are all agreed that this is a serious matter which potentially diminishes our liberty and the liberty of the individuals whom we seek to employ. The argument of the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) is deeply flawed. It is perfectly possible to reveal what is alleged against an individual without revealing its source.

Mr. Allason: No.

Ms. Short: Of course it is. I think that you, Mr. Speaker, should be very cautious about accepting the power that is being handed to you. I find it deeply objectionable that an accused person should have no chance to answer the allegations against him. That is a breach of the fundamental principle of natural justice. It is absolutely unacceptable. You, Mr. Speaker, would bring

[Ms. Short]

your office into disrepute if you accepted the responsibility being offered to you. At the very least, you should require the right to share with an hon. Member the allegations against the person whom that hon. Member seeks to employ and to get the answers back before making your decision. If you do not do that, you may involve yourself in a possible injustice.

I am perhaps one of the few hon. Members who has been positively vetted. In the course of my positive vetting for the Civil Service, I had a special session with an officer of the special branch on the subject of my father and his attitudes. My father, who died last year, was an Irish Republican who believed that Ireland should never have been partitioned. He was committed to that belief throughout his life. However, he spent most of his life as a teacher in Birmingham. He was an absolute democrat, although he argued his case passionately. The special branch came close to failing to approve me as a member of the Civil Service because of my father's views about the situation in Ireland. My father was never engaged in any kind of violent or subversive action. Nevertheless, I was on the border line. In our present climate, if someone with identical views to my father sought employment with an hon. Member, his application would be stopped. That would be outrageous.

We are talking not only about civil liberties but about political freedom. Northern Ireland is a deep issue for the House. This week, of all weeks, we should know that. We have not found a solution. People are still dying. Britain has created a mess in Ireland and it is our duty to seek to solve the problem. If anyone who raises the subject of Ireland is regarded as politically illegitimate and if we are not allowed to employ people who are concerned with Ireland, we shall distort our democracy.

I once employed as a temporary research assistant a young man who comes from Iran. He approached me and told me that his sister had been tortured and killed in an Iranian prison. He sought the support of hon. Members from both sides of the House for a resolution to be sent to the United Nations calling for an end to the Iran-Iraq war. I got a temporary pass for him. He sought the signatures and left this place and nothing improper was alleged. I know that he was checked out because our ex-Deputy Chief Whip had words with me. An hon. Member might have sought to place an individual in the House who did, indeed, have nefarious purposes. That is why I cannot agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that hon. Members and only hon. Members should vet. We could be used by someone who wanted to cause trouble here. However, it is crucial that any vetting should be fair and that every individual should be given the chance to answer any allegations. That is why I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, whatever the outcome of the vote, not to involve yourself in a diminution of our democracy or in the restriction of the freedom of those who hold perfectly legitimate views that are considered unacceptable by the security services. You should not prevent such people from working for us, because if you do so, we shall all be diminished and our potential for solving the problems in Northern Ireland will be diminished.

6.53 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): The hon. Lady the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) will forgive me if I do not follow her down that path.

There are three issues to be considered. The first is the constitutional issue dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). The second is the philosophical issue and the question whether, as hon. Members, we have a right to employ whom we please on the premises of this House. I do not believe that we have that right. We must take into account the interests of all hon. Members and the interests of the staff. We should not support the proposition that we have that novel right.

There are two practical reasons why we should support the motion. First, on the question of security information, it is no use saying that one can give such information at all times because sometimes by giving information one reveals its source. Some information could have come from only one source. To give information in those circumstances would be to endanger our security officers. Secondly, we should consider not just the physical security of this building, mentioned by the hon. Members for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) but the security of hon. Members while they are outside the building. We cannot allow an associate of the IRA to go round parts of the building that are not open to the public and into hon. Members' offices where he could photograph their itineraries and find out where they are going outside the House. In all this, I am thinking especially of Northern Ireland hon. Members and of Robert Bradford who was assassinated only a few years ago. We cannot allow known supporters of the IRA to have the access to hon. Members' offices that a pass affords.

I am mindful of the time, but I shall finish with the challenge that I wanted to extend to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who I note is not here. It is interesting how Opposition Members talk about the rights of the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is here".] He may be here now, but he has not been here for the past three-quarters of an hour. We are talking about the rights of the House and hon. Members go off to talk to the press. Does the hon. Gentleman know whether Mr. Bennett has been a known associate of the IRA—because all the information we have is that he has?

Mr. Corbyn: Where is the information from?

Mr. Bennett: It is the information that the security services have. The hon. Gentleman should tell us what he knows about Mr. Bennett's background.

6.55 pm

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not detain the House long. We are about to reach a decision. We have had a constructive debate and I am glad that the House has been united in its condemnation of terrorism. I am glad that the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) is able to support our motion. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) for his typically graceful and telling intervention.

The case that we have presented to the House is that you, Mr. Speaker, have a personal responsibility for our security within these precincts. You have that responsibility by virtue of your office and you assumed it when you were elected to the Chair. I agree with my hon. Friend the

Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). If anybody wishes to look at "Erskine May" on this matter he should look at page 219. The entry follows from the decisions made in 1965.

I shall not attempt to improve on the case made out by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop). He argued with great clarity that having entrusted you, Mr. Speaker, with those responsibilities, among many others which are as difficult, the House should not seek to interfere with your judgment. That would weaken your authority and the whole House would be the loser thereby.

I note the difficulty that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) found in answering those who asked him what sort of person he would find to be unsuitable as a research assistant. I recognise that he, too, would like to run a House of Commons that is secure, but I am bound to say that many of his remarks were out of touch with reality.

I found much with which to agree in the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). However, he did not make the case for the substantial change in responsibility for our security that he is urging upon us. I am satisfied that our security is best entrusted to you, Mr. Speaker, and that it is best left to your discretion to seek advice as you choose whether from hon. Members on either side of the House or from those outside who can give you that information.

Opposition Members made a great deal of the publicity about Mr. Ronan Bennett. I made it clear in response to an intervention that I believe that those matters are better dealt with in private and that the publicity the case has received is to be regretted.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the Leader of the House now tell the House whether he will institute an investigation into how the information concerning Mr. Bennett's employment was given first to the *News of the World* and secondly to *The Sunday Times*?

Mr. Wakeham: That is the subject of the debate and it is not for me to institute an inquiry. I have neither the means nor the power to do so. I regret the publicity that was given. I also made it clear — I think that it was generally accepted in the House — that there is no difficulty with the continued employment by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) of his research assistant if he chooses. The issue is different. It is about free and unescorted access to the House and on that we have to accept your judgment, Mr. Speaker.

My hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) spoke to his amendment with skill and authority. As I have made clear, the Government are happy to support it and for the Services Committee to be asked to look at the number of research assistants. That issue has been of concern for some time and I appreciate my hon. Friend's reminder that the Services Committee should now turn to it again.

I am content to accept the manuscript amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd). I accept the logic of his argument that the Services Committee should spread its inquiry beyond research assistants to embrace Members' personal staff. I look forward to the Committee getting under way.

The issues before us are clear cut. I ask the House to endorse the steps taken in the interest of our security and to set in hand the work on the wider implications.

Amendment (a) proposed, to leave out from first "House", to end and add:

'rejects the recommendation in the Second Report of the Services Committee, Session 1984-85, on security, on the grounds that it would infringe the principles of Parliamentary democracy, under which electors must have the right to elect the Members whom they choose, and honourable Members must have an equal right to employ whoever they wish to assist them with their Parliamentary duties; knows of no powers that this House has, has ever had, or could legitimately, take or assume, to determine who may work for an honourable Member in the Palace of Westminster; believes that the withdrawal of the pass issued to Mr. Ronan Bennett has publicly, and unjustly, identified him as a potential threat to national security, without any evidence having been disclosed, or any hearing or trial, whereby he, personally, has suffered a serious injury; warns that, if the security services are permitted to vet any person, including staff, lobby correspondents, or honourable Members, and effectively veto them, fundamental civil and democratic liberties will be eroded to the point where those affected would become licensed by the Crown, its ministers and servants, thus reversing centuries of struggle by the people of the United Kingdom through this House to gain control of the Executive, and hold it accountable for its actions; and therefore demands the immediate restoration of the pass to Mr. Ronan Bennett, and the complete discontinuation of the present, and wholly unauthorised, practice of vetting those who work in, and for, this House and its Members'.—*[Mr. Benn.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 43, Noes 274.

Division No. 43] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Duffy, A. E. P.
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Galloway, George
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, James
Hoyle, Doug
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Patchett, Terry
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Wall, Pat
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Clay and
Mr. Chris Mullin.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon

Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. David Maclean.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put the Question on following related amendments pursuant to order of the House [6 November].*

Amendment (*b*) *proposed,* to leave out from first "House" to end and add

'recognising the dilemmas confronting Parliament in the face of the continuing threat of terrorism, is determined that terrorists shall not be allowed to intimidate people, nor undermine democracy, and therefore, firmly believing that security must be maintained, considers that decisions on the safety of the House must be left to the decisions of the House itself and not to any other authorities; is concerned that important aspects of the arrangements for security of the House and the people working in it have no clear authority from the House, put Mr. Speaker in an invidious position, leave judgments on the security of the House in the hands of a branch of Government and can undermine the civil liberties of an individual by providing no redress for any person accused of being a threat to the security of the House; therefore calls for all aspects of the safety of the House, and the rights and duties of Members in relation to it, to be considered by the Privileges Committee and the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services), in order to secure the maximum degree of physical safety of those working in the Palace of Westminster and others, compatible with the need to preserve the rights of honourable Members and free access to the House by the public, through procedures permitting evaluation by the House of information furnished by the Metropolitan Police; and declares that matters relating to the safety of this House must remain the exclusive responsibility of this House.'—*[Mr. Dobson.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 140, Noes 269.

Division No. 44] **[7.11 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Winnick and
Mr. Ken Eastham.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul

Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment (c) proposed, at end add
'and in particular to consider whether the numbers of research assistants with access to the precincts of the House should be reduced, bearing in mind the pressure on the capacity of the facilities of the House.'—*[Mr. Onslow.]*

Manuscript amendment to proposed amendment proposed, leave out "research assistants" and insert "Members' personal staff".—*[Mr. Colin Shepherd.]*

Question put, That the amendment to the proposed amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 251, Noes 107.

Division No. 45] **[7.24 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James

Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Colin Shepherd and
Mr. Robert Adley.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Bob Clay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put. That the amendment, as amended, be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 243, Noes, 114.

Division No. 46] **[7.35 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael

Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Cranley Onslow and
Mr. Jerry Wiggin.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken

Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Prescott, John
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 103.

Division No. 47] **[7.49 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin

Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James

Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*

Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony

Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David

Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dobson, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron

Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Prescott, John
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Wall, Pat
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House endorses the application of the recommendation contained in paragraph 23 of the Second Report of the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) in Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Paper No. 195); and invites the Select Committee to consider the wider implications for control over access to the precincts of the House and in particular to consider whether the numbers of Members' personal staff with access to the precincts of the House should be reduced, bearing in mind the pressure on the capacity of the facilities of the House.

Points of Order

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will announce his findings on the British Airways—BCal merger, following the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, to the press at 9.20 tomorrow morning, prior to an announcement being made in the House. Does that not show, Mr. Speaker, the contempt of the Government for the citadel of democracy?

As you will remember, Mr. Speaker, only recently we had to drag the Chancellor of the Exchequer kicking and screaming to the House. He was more prepared to make statements to the City than he was to the elected Chamber. I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to use your good offices to make sure that a statement is made to the House before it is made to the press.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker,——

Mr. Speaker: Does this relate to the same point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No, Mr. Speaker, it does not.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will deal with these matters one at a time. I have no knowledge of this issue, as I have not seen the press and I have been in the Chair all the afternoon. The House well knows my views on the matter. The House of Commons should always be told before anyone else.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the House is here. Perhaps he can tell us if and when the Secretary of State will come to the House to tell hon. Members the outcome of the inquiry, rather than announce it to the press. He is in the Chamber now, so he has the opportunity to say something.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know whether you have had an opportunity to see *The London Evening Standard* today, but there is an article that includes a picture of you, Mr. Speaker, with the caption "Lobby Divisions." The article says:

> "Order call for hidden persuaders."

I rise on a point of order because I am concerned about the comments made by the article in relation to our proceedings. The article continues:

> "The Speaker of the Commons, Bernard Weatherill, is considering a clampdown, I hear, on the activities of parliamentary lobbyists, whose shadowy techniques include lavish hospitality and carefully packaged PR campaigns designed to influence MPs. The most conspicuous example of excess was tonight's party by P and O which was due to take place in a luxury hotel near the Commons while a debate was going on over a Bill directly affecting the company."

You will know, of course Mr. Speaker, that we are about to debate the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill.

What worries me, Mr. Speaker, is that the article continues:

> "He has received plenty of complaints for example about the tactics used by British Airways and British Caledonian."—

and obviously there are many other examples—

> "The Speaker, though, could tackle the whole issue the other way round by insisting on a register in which Members of Parliament would have to own up to every freebie that they have had from virtually anyone, as members of Congress are supposed to do in America."

The journalist who wrote that story was clearly very diligent in his duties, but what he might have misunderstood is the fact that the Speaker does not have such powers. They do not rest in the Chair at all. Indeed, any changes in these areas would have to be brought about by a Select Committee of the House of Commons, whether it be the Services Committee or the Committee on Members' Interests. The problem is that, even there, powers to make recommendations on functions taking place outside the House are limited. Indeed, some might say that it was impossible for us to take action in these areas. Therefore, it is incumbent upon hon. Members to conduct themselves responsibly and ensure that they are not tempted in this way by the lavish facilities that have been laid on this evening.

On this occasion the event surfaced publicly because a journalist was able to identify this freebie and frighten off hon. Members. However, we do not know whether this is common practice at Westminster. There might be other Bills going through the House of Commons that are equally subject to this sort of lavish entertainment. When we do not know what is going on, we are unable to assess the impact of lavish entertainment on a Bill. On this occasion, P and O was found out, and because of that the entertainment has been cancelled.

I should be grateful, Mr. Speaker, if you would guide hon. Members so that we can ensure—I do intend to end this point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: I would not stop the hon. Member. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Member has not quite finished.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: All I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that when you read the article—I have read only a small part of it — and indeed articles in *The Independent* yesterday and in *The Sunday Times*, you might care to take a view on these matters and advise hon. Members that it is not correct for them to conduct themselves in such a way, and accept lavish entertainment, which clearly interferes with the process of legislation and the proceedings of the House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: Order. As the article referred to by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) refers to me, I should like the hon. Gentleman and indeed the whole House to know that I have not seen the article. Certainly no one at all from *The London Evening Standard* has been in touch with me. Anything that is said in the article is completely erroneous.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have just had a debate on the question of people getting into this building who have not been vetted, tested or verified in some way, organised by a committee which on occasions might report some of the details to you, Mr. Speaker. Therefore, I want to know whether these people can finish up in the Jubilee Room. Apparently, that is where they are now—it was to have been held in a hotel, according to the papers, but now they have taken over the Jubilee Room—and the plan is that they will invite Tory Members who support the Bill, during the course of the night, to help them stay the night so that they can get on with their corrupt dealings.

I want to know, Mr. Speaker, what steps you are taking in view of the debate that has gone on for three hours to find out who these people are. If it is right for research assistants and other personal staff, and all the rest, to be checked out by this committee that people know very little about, somebody should be hot-footing it down there to see who is running this show, which is encouraging Members of Parliament to do what they might not do if they were in a sober state.

There is another serious question that my hon. Friends might be dwelling on with regard to whether those who go to the Jubilee Room to be wined and dined and take part in the junketing organised by P and O should vote on any clauses and amendments to the Bill. One of your predecessors said during proceedings on the Lloyd's Bill that it would be wise for Members of Parliament with a direct interest in Lloyd's to consider whether they should vote. In this case P and O is wining and dining Tory Members, encouraging them to stay the night when otherwise they might not. None of the people who organised that party has been vetted and it is high time that the matter was looked into by yourself.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for hon. Members who may wish to take a drink in any room of the House, as long as they do not take it in the Chamber. I cannot be held responsible for what goes on in privately booked dining rooms, or, indeed, for what may go on outside the House.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Futher to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Clearly this matter should be thoroughly investigated. If there were clear evidence that a company or an individual was seeking to buy a Member's vote in the House, surely that would be a breach of privilege. If there are suggestions that the purpose of the party is to make sure that people are here to vote, that is getting close to buying hon. Members' votes. In such circumstances, should not the Chairman of Ways and Means be asked whether the following business should be withdrawn until the matter is properly cleared up?

Mr. Speaker: Since that is a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means, and since I have been in the Chair since half-past two, I shall let him deal with it.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

(By Order)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment —[23 July]—in page 2, to leave out lines 15 to 18.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

8.15 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Within your hearing, Mr. Speaker said that he would not respond to my point of order since it was a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means and he would leave you to deal with it. In case you were out of earshot, my point, which bears repeating, was that if it became known that a company or individual had offered money directly to a Member in order to persuade him, or to buy his vote, I am sure that that would be a breach of privilege which would be reported to the Privileges Committee. A Member who fell into such temptation would be seriously dealt with.

Since the purpose of the party — which has been called off from wherever it was due to be held outside the House, and in some senses this is worse, is now to be held inside the House — is to ensure that Members are in their place to vote for a Bill, that must be perilously close to being a breach of privilege. I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is within your power, to postpone tonight's business until the matter is properly disposed of.

Let me draw an analogy with what happens in local government. I know that Conservative Members are particularly strong on this point because they believe that the purposes of local government are being subverted by treats, the lavish spending of money, and so on. I can assure you, with my long experience, that if anything like this happened in local government, not only would I be severely chastised but I would land up going to prison for voting on issues in respect of which I had been given money from a private source and on which I had not declared an interest.

This is a matter of great seriousness and I raise it in no sense of levity. I ask you seriously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to postpone tonight's business until the matter is cleared up, either by direct reference to the Privileges Committee or by you making your own inquiries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I think that I can help the House by dealing with the additional point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. I clearly have nothing to add to what Mr. Speaker said a few moments ago, in the hearing of the House and of me, that functions that take place outside are not the concern of the Chair. The Chair has no power over those. The hon. Gentleman has now raised the additional point of whether a matter of privilege is involved. The hon. Gentleman and the House know that if they feel that a matter of privilege is involved, they should follow the procedure that is clearly laid down—to write to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I may be able to shed some more light on the subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will be as shocked as I was to hear that over the weekend I received an invitation to the shindig that we are discussing. It would be worthwhile to read that invitation to the House. It is in the name of 11 hon. Members, so it is definitely a matter for the Chair at the very least.

[Mr. Terry Lewis]

The invitation says:

"Last-minute reminder. Felixstowe Bill. Tomorrow night (Tuesday) this Bill will be carried—or die. Votes will take place from 7 pm onwards. Batting order. It is hoped that one closure motion (and vote) will be accepted by the Chair at approximately 8 pm"—

that is a discourtesy to the Chair at the very least. The invitation goes on:

"A second closure, with further votes, will be sought at approximately 9.30 pm"—

to be perfectly fair, "sought" is underlined—

"but this cannot be guaranteed. At 10 pm we need to carry a vote to suspend the rule. Thereafter votes on up to six more possible closures, each requiring the presence of not less than 100 Members may be expected until a late hour."

Now comes the part to which I and my hon. Friends object the most. This is what my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover would call the bribery bit. It says:

"Refreshments. From 10.30 pm you are most cordially invited to a late-night champagne supper party at the St. James's Court Hotel. Wives are most welcome too. There will be film shows from midnight onwards. Buses will be available to ferry Members to and from St. James's to the House. A further hospitality suite will be available in the Jubilee Room, off Westminster Hall, for colleagues who might prefer to wait there between some of the divisions. Your support in the lobbies until this Bill has been secured is most earnestly requested—and appreciated. Thank you."

That invitation bears the names of 11 Members. I shall not mention them on the Floor of the House, but I shall give you the document, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to be discourteous as they were, and I did not have time to tell them that I would be raising this matter in the House tonight. Opposition Members have standards and in these queries to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are trying to uphold the honour of the House. The matters that we have raised should be investigated by you and a ruling given.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall listen to those hon. Members who have been rising, but I want to remind the House that we have a lot of business ahead of us. Mr. Speaker has given a clear ruling in one regard and I have given, I hope, a clear ruling with regard to the procedure for an alleged breach of privilege. There really is nothing more that the Chair can add, but I shall listen to the two hon. Members who are rising and then I hope that we can get on with the debate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope, first of all, that you can confirm that the unofficial Whip has not been issued with any collusion with the Chair and that there is no suggestion that closures will be agreed at the times suggested by that unofficial Whip. Secondly, I want to raise questions about the hospitality.

Mr. Speaker suggested that what happened with regard to the wining and dining of hon. Members to encourage them to vote in a particular way was none of his concern. I realise that Mr. Speaker has no responsibility over those functions. However, he must uphold the dignity of the House. I suggest that the activities of P and O have brought the House into disrepute. I am delighted that P and O has cancelled the party across the road. There seems to be some doubt whether the hospitality will continue in the Jubilee Room. However, I received in the post today a letter from Hampshire county council which is promoting another private Bill. In that letter, the council invites hon. Members to participate in refreshments in the not-too-distant future.

It seems that there is a tendency for those promoting private Bills to adopt a new style. I am well aware that in the 18th and 19th centuries, when Canal Bills and Railway Bills were passing through the House, there was all manner of bribery and corruption. However, that seemed to have disappeared with regard to private Bills.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with another place we have set up a Joint Committee to look into private Bill procedures. I should have thought that it would be appropriate for that Committee to consider the whole question of wining and dining hon. Members in connection with the private Bill procedure and then make recommendations. That might make it illegal for P and O to behave in this fashion and it might provide some guidance for bodies such as Hampshire county council about appropriate behaviour for wining and dining hon. Members when those bodies are attempting to promote private Bills.

I am sure that you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in a sense this is a judicial process. If groups outside the House are to have any respect for private Bills and the right to petition against them, there should be some fairness in the way in which groups with plenty of money try to influence hon. Members in comparison with other groups such as the Ramblers Association and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds which have different points of view and are clearly not in a position to entertain or provide refreshments for hon. Members to encourage their interest in the Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I want first to deal with the two new points raised by the hon. Gentleman. First, he asked about closures. I assure him and the House that no pressure has been brought to bear on the Chair with regard to closures. Were any hon. Member to be so unwise as to attempt that, it would be wholly counter-productive.

With regard to the private Bill procedures, as the hon. Gentleman has said, a Joint Committee is considering such procedures and I advise him to put his comments to it and ask it to consider them.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I raised a point on 26 July, when you happened to be in the Chair, about a resolution passed in 1975 by the House, to the effect that an entry in the Register of Members' Interests would be sufficient to enable an hon. Member to be acquitted of the charge of not declaring a financial interest when voting.

The point that you made during the consideration of the Local Government Bill on that day was that that Bill was a public measure. Tonight, I want to refer to a private Bill—the Lloyd's Bill. I want to draw your attention to the fact that no register has been published yet. Indeed, a number of hon. Members were going to take part in the vote on the Lloyd's Bill, introduced in 1981, until the question of their membership of Lloyds was raised on the Floor of the House, very much as we are raising points of order today.

Mr. Speaker considered the matter and issued a suggestion. It was no more than a suggestion, but if it had been ignored I suggest that there would have been very serious consequences. He suggested that it would be prudent for members of Lloyd's not to take part in the vote. First, I urge you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to reiterate the suggestion that anyone with a financial involvement in the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company should not take part in the vote.

Secondly, in 1976-77, the House was wracked with revelations of scandal and corruption. As a result, the Salmon Commission reported on the standards of conduct in public life in 1977. It cost £250,000 and, to the eternal shame of the House, it has never been debated. Lord Salmon recommended that legislation to make it an offence to bribe an hon. Member should be introduced. It is not an offence at present. As it is not an offence and as a consequence of our experience in this House, it behoves the House to ensure that standards of conduct in public life are of the highest. Recommendations were made for local authorities and the authorities introduced the register of business interests and there are stringent declarations of interest before debates. Indeed, councillors are debarred from taking part in the vote if they have the slightest financial interest in the matter—for example, if they live in a council house.

My suggestion tonight is that the hospitality which would not be allowed in local authorities must be questioned. There is no doubt that if such hospitality happened in a town hall where measures were being discussed, no councillor participating in the hospitality would be allowed to vote. We cannot have double standards. I hope, therefore, that you will give your attention to those serious problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

These problems have arisen before. For example, International News Service ran riot in this place during the passage of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977. I raised points of order on the Floor of the House then, Mr. Speaker took them seriously and remedial measures were taken.

I believe that that behaviour is being repeated. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, want to see the standard of conduct in the House maintained at the highest level as an example to local authorities and other institutions. A grave warning should be issued to the people who have organised the hospitality and to those who take part in it, that it will avail them nothing. I trust that there will be a challenge to those who participate in the voting if they receive hospitality. It behoves us all, as Members of the House, whose traditions we want to maintain in some respects, to ensure that the standards of conduct are of the highest. I ask you, Sir, to issue those warnings at the earliest possible moment.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is on a related matter.

Since I raised my original point of order, my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) has raised the matter of his letter. I want to submit that that letter, in so far as it relates to hospitality, but does not quantify it, begs the question of the value of the hospitality that is granted. If the value of the hospitality was more than a sum which has not been designated, it might be construed as a pecuniary interest and be a subject of that part of "Erskine May", on page 413, relating to personal interests in votes on private Bills.

We have not quantified the measure of the pecuniary interest which derives from the availability of hospitality this evening. Perhaps one person would drink one bottle of lemonade and his pecuniary interest might be the princely sum of 20p. But it does not say that. The request to attend refers to bottles of champagne.

Champagne is an expensive drink. This is not a flippant point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If an hon. Member attended an engagement, having been invited so that he might influence the passage of a Bill, and there received — indeed, drank — four bottles of Champagne worth perhaps £30 or £40 a bottle, that hon. Member would have a pecuniary interest of £120 or £130. He might well acquire that pecuniary interest prior to the passage of the Bill.

"Erskine May" is very clear about this. On page 413, we read:

> "The votes of Members, who were subscribers to undertakings proposed to be sanctioned by a private bill, or who were otherwise interested in a private bill, have frequently been disallowed."

I wish to refer to specific examples when what was deemed a pecuniary interest was deemed sufficient to warrant the disallowance of a vote.

"Erskine May" tells us:

> "In 1800 the votes of three Members were disallowed, as having a direct interest in a bill for incorporating a company for the manufacture of flour, wheat and bread. On 20 May 1825 notice was taken that a Member, who had voted with the ayes on the report of the Leith Docks Bill, had a direct pecuniary interest in passing the bill: he was heard in his place and stated that on that account he had not voted in the committee on the bill, and that he had voted, in this instance, through inadvertence."

That is not an excuse that hon. Members may wish to use tonight. We know that they have been invited by, and are being attracted by, pecuniary advantage in the form of expensive hospitality. It would therefore not be with any sense of inadvertence that they would leave the Jubilee Room or the tavern in St. James's, or wherever it is, and come here with the specific intention of casting a vote in the Division. The excuse of inadvertence, as produced on the occasion of the Leith Docks Bill, is thus not relevant.

"Erskine May" continues:

> "His vote was ordered to be disallowed."

That was despite the Member's defence that his action had been inadvertent.

> "Motions to disallow the votes of shareholders in the company which was promoting the bill on which the division was taken have been negatived."

"Erskine May" tells us of another occasion:

> "On the second reading of the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway Bill, 15 May 1845, objection was taken to one of the tellers for the noes, as being a landholder whose property would be injured by the proposed line".

Some Conservative Members might distinguish between a pecuniary interest that derives from an unquantified value placed on hospitality, and one relating to a landowner whose property might be injured. But Parliament has not ruled on that. I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that tonight's debate provides you with an opportunity to rule.

My first request is that Parliament be suspended pending a ruling on whether this matter can be dealt with tonight, so that we know whether those who receive hospitality during the course of our proceedings before they attempt to vote should be refused the right to do so.

According to "Erskine May",

> "on the second reading of the London and North Western Railway Bill, 14 April 1896, objection was taken to the vote of a Member on the ground that he was a director of the company. In both cases the motion for disallowing the vote was withdrawn."

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

It is interesting to note that those matters were dealt with at the time.

I want to know why tonight there has been no ruling either from your very good self, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or from Mr. Speaker. Each of the instances that I have produced is a variation on the theme of the form that a pecuniary interest can take at the time when a hon. Member may seek to vote in the Division Lobbies.

On 15 July 1872——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have got the hon. Gentleman's point without his giving any more examples. The procedure on this matter is very long established. I recollect successive Speakers giving rulings on it. I have not the precise words, but the point is direct pecuniary interest, which applies not in the debate but in the eventual vote. The ruling given on the Lloyd's Bill was that if any hon. Member felt that he had a direct pecuniary interest, of which he would be the judge, he must decide whether he was in a position to vote. That is the position, and, as far as I can judge from what the hon. Gentleman has said, exactly the same procedure applies to this Bill. However, the question is hypothetical at present, because we have not reached a vote—and, if we go on like this, it will be some time before we do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I accept that hon. Members must make a decision on the matter. The point is that, when we debated these matters on a previous occasion, hon. Members looked to "Erskine May" for guidance, and on pages 413 and 414 they found such guidance, in the examples that I have given tonight.

I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is a new form of unquantified pecuniary interest. There is no precedent in "Erskine May" for us to take as a basis on which hon. Members can decide to vote tonight. It is brand new. It is a novelty. It is a phenomenon.

I have never known of a letter such as the one from which my right hon. Friend the Member for Worsley quoted being produced during proceedings on a Bill—and, I suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, neither have you. There is no record in the 1,200 pages of "Erskine May" of any such letter ever being sent to any Member of Parliament. I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should examine precedents. Perhaps, having heard more of them, you will seek to make a statement and advise the House.

On 15 July 1872——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must not have more cases rehearsed. There is nothing that I can add. The matter is entirely clear. I see nothing unprecedented in what the hon. Gentleman alleges. Certainly, when I was a Back Bencher, I received letters from all and sundry every day of the week. We are all hon. Members of the House, and it is up to each hon. Member to decide whether in the circumstances he is in a position to exercise a vote. The main definition that any hon. Member would consider is whether he has a direct pecuniary interest.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are not taking on board my argument. You are making a general reply to a complicated case. I am saying that "Erskine May" contains a series of precedents which require a ruling from the Chair on what constitutes a pecuniary interest. I have given only five; there are at least another four or five.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now engaged in a circular argument. I have made it clear to the hon. Gentleman and the House that it is for each individual hon. Member to make a judgment, and I am sure that every hon. Member will do that when, in the fullness of time, we come to a vote—if we do.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are wider ramifications to my hon. Friend's point. We are accustomed to the fact that various businesses make substantial contributions to Conservative party funds. *[Interruption.]* And trade unions contribute to the Labour party. They do so in the general belief, from different directions, that those parties help to sustain their point of view.

We are faced with a peculiar pecuniary problem. Before it was taken over by P and O, the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company made extraordinarily large contributions, for a company of its size, to Tory party funds. Since it was taken over by P and O, P and O has made substantial contributions to Tory party funds. When sums of this size are handed out by a company that is promoting a private Bill, questions relating to Members' interests have to be asked. Those aspects have not been covered, even by the extensive reading of "Erskine May" by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

The hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who is now the chairman of the Tory party, might be considered to have a pecuniary interest in the Bill, because he is the chairman of an organisation that receives substantial sums of money direct from the promoters of the Bill. Major issues of general significance that do not normally arise have been raised. It is not the habit of most promoters of private Bills to pour money into the pockets of any party that is represented in this House. As we are faced with most extraordinary circumstances, and as you are considering points that have been raised by my hon. Friends about "treating" — which, if accepted by a candidate at a general election, would be contrary to the law — this matter must be ruled on by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It is doubtful whether any member of the Tory party does not have a pecuniary interest in a Bill that is being promoted by P and O, since that company is one of the biggest contributors to Tory party funds. We need a clear ruling on that matter. In his usual innovative way, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said that we are in a green field situation. We need a ruling from the Chair, if only to help Conservative Members to sustain their position regarding the Salmon Commission report on standards of conduct in public life.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) referred to the fact that the Salmon Commission's recommendations were issued as a circular to local authorities. Anybody who fails to follow the provisions of the circular lays himself open to challenge before the court. On standards of conduct in public life, Salmon said that it is not a question of whether people believe that they are straight but whether any reasonable person, seeing them doing what they are doing and knowing of their relations with another body, believes that they are likely to be straight.

8.45 pm

Hon. Members are to be lushed up all night so that they will be here to vote. They have been given an open-ended financial inducement to be here to vote. P and O appears to have spent more time at board meetings deciding whether to make contributions to Tory party funds than thinking about the safety of its ships. We need a ruling on that matter before the House can allow consideration of the Bill to proceed. Because the objections are manifest and manifold, there should be an opportunity to debate them so that the position can be clarified.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This matter has arisen on many occasions, and I have made it clear more than once that it is for every hon. Member to decide whether or not he has a direct pecuniary interest in a private Bill. If he feels that he has a direct pecuniary interest, the advice from the Chair is that it would be wiser if he did not vote. It is for every hon. Member—I stress, every hon. Member—to come to that decision for himself. If any hon. Member is in doubt before a Division, he can take advice.

The hon. Gentleman has answered his other point for himself. He referred to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. If he feels that some area has not been effectively covered, it is a matter not for the Chair but for the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I suggest that the hon. Member should put that matter to the Committee and ask it to consider it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to think of any additional point that can be raised that has not been raised already.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I appeal to hon. Members who are rising not to repeat points on which I have already given a ruling. We have ahead of us what may well be long debates. It is my job in the Chair to protect the business of the House. We have had a long run on these points of order, and I hope that we are rapidly approaching the time when we can get on with the debates.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I had no intention of raising points of order or of speaking in the debate. The Wrekin is a long way from a port or harbour. However, a number of issues have been raised, the answers to which I do not know. My hon. Friends and I have not seen this document before. It gives rise to a number of questions.

It is already late. Most people outside this building consider that we are strange individuals, as we do not work night shifts, yet this debate has not yet begun. If the debate is to continue for some hours, stamina will be involved. We wonder whether we shall be able to keep going through the night. I must confess that I flag a little at about this time of night.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order for me? We are not discussing whether we shall sit throughout the night.

Mr. Grocott: My point of order is that any inducement to hon. Members that enables them to sustain themselves through the night would give one side of the House a considerable advantage over the other.

We do not know, because the document is not sufficiently clear, what hospitality is being provided. However, in the debates in this Chamber there is an element of contest. If one side is being given an unfair advantage in adversarial politics, it is akin to sportsmen taking steroids. Conservative Members will be enabled to sustain themselves through the night while hon. Members like me, who are not night time individuals and who find it difficult to keep awake throughout the night, will be put at a disadvantage.

A point of order that needs considering has been raised. Apart from the financial points, there is a separate point with regard to the sustenance that some people are receiving. One development of that concerns me, but I am unaware of any precedent for it. The document that I have has some of the characteristics of documents that we receive every week in that the statement "Votes will be taken from 7 pm onwards" is underlined three times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that point, so I will not repeat the ruling that I have given. The hon. Gentleman is beginning to waste the time of the House. I have dealt with the point that he raised and there is nothing further that I can add.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having ascertained precisely what is on this sheet of paper—my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) made this point when Mr. Speaker was in the Chair—it appears that this copy is on House of Commons notepaper. There are strict rules about that, so the matter will have to go before the appropriate Committee with a recommendation from the Chair. Many names are mentioned on the bottom of it and it would be as well for hon. Members, notwithstanding what was said before, to know precisely who is involved: the hon. Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart), for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale), for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes-James)—I was surprised by that—for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), and so on. The hon. Members for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) and for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) are also mentioned. This is a new departure. Members have now started using House of Commons notepaper to assist P and O. This is a point that the Services Committee will have to deal with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been helpful and has made a good point. If he feels that the House of Commons has been abused, he should take the advice he has just offered and take it up with the appropriate Committee.

Mr. Skinner: There is the point about the envelopes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can also take up that point with the appropriate Committee.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had a good run on points of order. We have dealt with all the points and

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

I have given a ruling on them. It is now becoming very repetitive and we must now get on with the debate. I call Mr. Snape.

Mr. Skinner: I have not finished. Somebody must go to the Jubilee Room with a breathalyser.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House has had a good run on this. Hon. Members have been able to get what they want to say on to the record, but this is now becoming an abuse of the time of the House and I am not prepared to listen to further points of order on which I have already ruled.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We asked Mr. Speaker earlier whether he had received any intimation from the Leader of the House that the Government intend to make a statement on the British Airways-British Caledonian merger. As the Minister for Public Transport is present, will we now be told whether there will be a statement to the House tonight or tomorrow before it is announced to the press? Mr. Speaker has endorsed the view that such matters should be announced to the House before they are announced to the press.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker dealt with that point of order earlier. The Leader of the House was in his place at the time. I cannot add anything to what Mr. Speaker has already said.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has had a good run and I have dealt with his point of order. We cannot deal with the same point of order over and over again. Does the hon. Gentleman have a different point of order?

Mr. Cryer: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have ruled tonight, following the ruling on the Lloyd's Bill that was introduced in 1981, that people must make their own judgment and they have received a warning from you similar to the one that was given on the Lloyd's Bill. However, there is an important difference, because the warning on the Lloyd's Bill was issued before the debate and the point of order was raised in anticipation of the debate. Tonight there is only a handful of hon. Members in the Chamber. Some hon. Members will vote—they are waiting outside—who have not heard your warning. The warning on the Lloyd's Bill was reported in *Hansard,* was circulated widely and was reported. Therefore, Members had a legitimate chance to say, "We have received this warning; therefore, we can make a judgment".

However, what about an hon. Member who has, for example, a banking interest that may be financing the extension that is sought in the Bill, or who is an adviser to McAlpine's, such as the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale), and may have an interest in its construction? No warning has been given to such hon. Members. In the Lloyd's Bill the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) sought guidance and the then hon. Member for Crosby, Sir Graham Page, accepted it. However, there has been no evidence that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) will warn his supporters as Sir Graham Page did in 1981. I do not know what sort of guidance you can give to ensure that the promoters warn all their supporters about this. In the Lloyd's Bill hon. Members with interests in Lloyd's, with one exception, prudently stayed out of the Lobby.

We make it clear that we shall be going through the voting list with a fine-toothed comb. When the register is produced, if people have a pecuniary interest, we shall raise the matter. Therefore, it is important that we have a response from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) in the decent traditions that were begun by the late Sir Graham Page. He said, "I accept guidance". He told the Lloyd's Bill supporters about the then Speaker's guidance. We have had no similar assurance. The hon. Gentleman owes it to the House and to yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to give an assurance.

9 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The warning that I have given on many occasions is not new. There really is no need for further warnings to be given to hon. Members. They know the procedures of the House; they are well established. If hon. Members are in any doubt, they know where to seek advice before a vote is taken. I call Mr. Peter Snape.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. McNamara: I wish to refer to procedure, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Earlier, when the letter was mentioned, you said that the hon. Member who raised the matter should write about it to Mr. Speaker, because that is the proper procedure to follow when a matter of privilege is raised. A problem arises in respect of the procedure which follows if an hon. Member writes to Mr. Speaker on a private Bill such as one of this nature, stating that it infringes the privileges of the House in a certain way.

If Mr. Speaker concludes that the promoters of a private Bill who take a hospitality room and produce a "whip" showing that hon. Members will be well catered for if they are knocking around and willing to vote for the Bill—that is, "Come with us, have a good night out with your wife at the flicks and have some free champagne"—commit a breach of privilege, the Bill may well have gone through all its stages in the House. I hope that that does not happen.

Is there a retrospective position, or do we just have to hope that our sovereign lady the Queen does not imply her assent to the Bill because the promoters have grossly interfered with the procedures of the House in seeking to influence hon. Members to act in a certain way in regard to a private Bill? What will happen if it is then ruled that that was a breach of privilege?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is dealing with a hypothetical matter. We have not yet come to a vote on the Bill. Some time ago, the House, in its wisdom, decided that matters of privilege should be dealt with in the way that I have described, that is, that the hon. Member who considers that there has been a prima facie breach of privilege should put the matter to Mr. Speaker. The matter will then be dealt with in the way in which the House has decided. Such procedures were decided by the House, and that is the right course for any hon. Member to pursue.

Mr. McNamara: I am sorry to pursue the point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I take precisely the point that you make. That would obviously arise if, for example, a newspaper article appears or a certain set of circumstances arise before a Bill is actually before the House. The point is that the document has come to light when the Bill is on the Order Paper and we have started our proceedings. As I understand the matter, unless you so rule, there is no way in which we can stop proceeding with the Bill until we have a ruling from Mr. Speaker after my hon. Friends write to him asking whether there has been a breach of privilege. Opposition Members are concerned about the matter. The Bill may be passed and Mr. Speaker may rule that there has been a prima facie breach of privilege to go to the Committee. The Committee may then say that there has been a gross interference with our procedures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can only repeat what I have said to the hon. Gentleman. The privilege procedures have been laid down by the House. I am bound by such procedures, as is any other hon. Member. I repeat that all this discussion is hypothetical. My advice, and that of many Speakers over the years, is that the matter arises only when votes take place. At that time, each hon. Member must decide whether he is in a position to vote. The matter is hypothetical at the moment.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As one of the new hon. Members, I am totally confused about what happens in the House compared with what happens in local government.

The situation is quite clear. As a member of the Wigan metropolitan borough council, I know that, however a letter of this type came, two things would happen. First, the hon. Member concerned would have to declare an interest and leave the meeting and, secondly, as the letter came from someone who was seeking a contract, the tender would immediately be removed from the tender list.

I want to come to the point relating to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have got the hon. Gentleman's point. The answer is very simple. The rules for local government are different from the rules of the House. The rules of the House are made by the House, which is sovereign in the matter. I have more than once described to the House the rules and regulations governing the matter.

Mr. McCartney: I understand what you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have a second point relating to the Fees Office on which I should like some advice. When I came to the House as a new hon. Member I spent a considerable time at the Fees Office where I sought advice on the use of travel warrants for spouses and for members of my family who wished to come to the House.

It is clear from the letter that we received this evening, written on House of Commons paper, that spouses have been offered hospitality and are therefore coming to the House, not to meet an hon. Member but to enjoy that hospitality. Therefore, hon. Members have used their position and their travel warrants, financed out of public funds, so that their spouses could come to the House not to meet them but to meet the promoters of a private Bill. That is completely contrary not only to the advice of the Fees Office but to the rules of the House. I wish to know whether the hon. Members named in the letter have used their warrants yesterday or today to enable their spouses to attend a function—whether a function that has been cancelled or one that is taking place elsewhere.

It is very important that we should know whether public money has been used to allow spouses to come to the House to enjoy the hospitality of the promoters of a private Bill. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) should give us an answer. Any other hon. Member——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have got the hon. Gentleman's point. The answer is that if he feels that there has been an abuse, he should refer it to the appropriate Committee so that it can be properly investigated. For the third time, I call Mr. Snape——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. All the points of order raised recently have been repetitions of, or very similar to, the points that I have dealt with already. It is my job to protect the business of the House. Points of order have now been going on for over an hour and it is very important that we should get on with the business before the House. I have done my utmost—as did Mr. Speaker before he left the Chair — to make it clear to hon. Members what the procedures are. There is nothing that I can add that would not be tedious repetition. So we really should get on with the debate.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I will take the hon. Gentleman's point of order if it is a different point of order.

Mr. Cook: I have listened to the whole sequence of points of order. You will know, Sir, that I have the utmost respect for the Chair and, indeed, for you personally. You see me in somewhat casual garb today. I am wearing the parliamentary crest of the Victorian State Parliament of Australia. I wear that crest with pride, just as I wear the Westminster crest with pride.

I am worried, Sir, by your response to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). You said quite properly that my hon. Friend's point was hypothetical. No one could disagree with that observation because clearly the point was hypothetical. That is the whole point. I should hate the Chair generally or you particularly to perhaps be subject to criticism afterwards for a ruling that may well be questioned by history, historians and by the House itself.

I put it to you with the deepest respect that it might be prudent to have perhaps a 10 or 15-minute adjournment so that people can consult on this matter. Clearly this is a one-off. It was discovered and declared to the House after the sitting had started. We have never been in this situation before. Let us not leave the matter as a hypothetical one. Let us pause for breath. Had we done that at 8.30 pm, the matter might be resolved now. Can we pause for 10 minutes to consult outside the Chamber? I appeal to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for an adjournment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman and the House know that the Chair never rules on hypothetical questions. The Chair rules when an incident occurs. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced hon. Member and has heard that from the Chair on many occasions. There is nothing I can add to the rulings I have given and I again

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

appeal to the House. It is my job to protect the business of the House. We have had a good run on points of order. Every hon. Member who has been rising on a point of order has been given an opportunity to put it. Hon. Members are now rising for a second and third time and that is unfair to other hon. Members who are anxious to get on with the debate. For the fourth time, I call Mr. Snape.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am taking no more points of order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am taking no more points of order on this matter. I have been patient and dealt with them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am on my feet. I have called at least once those hon. Gentlemen who have been rising and in one case I have called an hon. Gentleman twice. I do not think that there can be any additional points of order that have not been made.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is to do with the promoters' amendments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it to do with the amendments now under discussion? It is more convenient to take points of order on amendments when we reach them on the Order Paper.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is about what is on the Order Paper which says:

> "A copy of the proposed Amendment may be obtained by Members from the Vote Office or inspected in the Private Bill Office."

That is a reference to an amendment to be proposed by the promoters. My point of order has nothing to do with any matter that has been raised by me or my hon. Friends this evening.

You will know and understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is a procedure that has to be followed by promoters of a private Bill in order to secure the printing of that reference on our Order Paper. That procedure is laid out on page 1035 of "Erskine May" under the heading:

> "Rules as to amendments proposed to be moved on consideration ... of a Bill."

That section deals with private Bills. It says:

> "When the promoters intend to offer any clause, or to propose any amendment on the consideration of any private bill."

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): There are no amendments being moved.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am putting to you a perfectly sensible point of order, but the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) cannot contain herself for some reason. Would you perhaps deal with her in the way in which she suggested we should be dealt with?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have not yet put my point of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman has made his point quite clearly and I can rule on it. If he feels that I have not covered it adequately, I shall call him again. The main point here is that the hon. Gentleman is under a misapprehension. We are dealing not with amendments that have been tabled by the promoters, but with the amendments on the Order Paper, all of which are in the names of hon. Members. They would not be on the Order Paper if they were not in order. I hope that I have answered the hon. Gentleman's point to his satisfaction.

9.15 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, I understand that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but perhaps you could explain the reference in brackets to an amendment to be proposed by the promoters, which states:

> "A copy of the proposed Amendment may be obtained by Members from the Vote Office or inspected in the Private Bill Office."——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can deal with the hon. Gentleman's point. There should really be a line before the words

> "Private Business at Seven o'clock".

The amendments refer to the Dyfed Bill *[Lords]* which was dealt with at 2.30, and have nothing whatever to do with this Bill. It is not often that the hon. Gentleman gets himself into confusions on procedural matters, but that is the short answer.

For the fifth time of asking, I call Mr. Peter Snape.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a different point of order and relates to unemployment. It has nothing to do with other points of order.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman has a different point of order, I shall hear him, but I hope that he will be brief because he has already had many goes during the past hour.

Mr. Skinner: I think that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be as interested in this as I was. I remember when you were a Minister concerned with social services. You took a keen interest in unemployment benefit. At that time, nobody could lose unemployment benefit for a period of six weeks for leaving work voluntarily. That did not change during the period when you sat on the Front Bench. Today——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am flattered by what the hon. Gentleman has said. However, my past, when I was in a different incarnation, is now in the mists of history and should not be quoted.

Mr. Skinner: Since that time, there have been some changes. The last change increased the period to 13 weeks and people could lose unemployment benefit for 13 weeks if they left work voluntarily. That happened earlier this year. However, we have had a devastating announcement today in a written answer that the number of weeks will be increased to 26——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian and knows very well that the matter that he is now raising has nothing whatsoever to do with the Bill. However, I am sure that with his usual skill in parliamentary procedure he will find an appropriate time to raise that important matter. I call Mr. Peter Snape.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: All that I am trying to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there should be a statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Skinner: Hon. Members are wining and dining down there, but people on unemployment benefit——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have covered this course. The House has had a good run and I have been very patient. However, I repeat that it is the job of the Chair to protect the business of the House and there is much business before us. There is nothing that I can add. I have done my utmost to answer all the points of order that have been put to me. We must now get on with the debate. I call Mr. Peter Snape.

Mr. Snape: I fear that anything that I say will be an anti-climax. However——

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I realise that I have not called the hon. Gentleman. I hope that he will raise a different point of order and not repeat others.

Mr. Loyden: I do not envy your position tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think that you should consider the history of the Bill's passage through the House. You will be aware that hon. Members resigned from the Committee that examined the Bill because of their suspicions about the way in which the Bill was conducted. Indeed, a request was made to the Chairman of Ways and Means to consider the way in which the House proceeds with private Bills. There is no doubt that opposition has been growing in the House about what has been happening and that calls not only the House but the credibility of Parliament into disrepute and is sacrificing the long-term objectives of the port transport industry to short-term and doubtful considerations.

I do not for one moment impose upon you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the responsibility for making decisions about such things. However, it is evident from the strong feelings of hon. Members that, to say the least, question marks hang over the Bill and the way in which it has proceeded through the House.

There is time to stop and think about it. The only way in which that can be done is by the Chair imposing its will. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker is responsible and has to determine whether the credibility of the House outside is sustained. It could not be sustained by the way in which the Bill has proceeded. There has been a catalogue of interventions, suspicions, innuendos and charges against the Bill that should not go unheard by the occupant of the Chair.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I repeat what I said in answer to an earlier point of order. There is a Private Bill Procedure Committee considering private Bill procedure. The correct course is for hon. Members who are dissatisfied to give their views to that Committee. I call Mr. Snape.

Mr. Snape *rose*——

Mr. McCartney: On a new point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Snape: This is no life for a man of my age.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Snape: Am I giving way?

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order.

Mr. Snape: There are about 300 ports in this country. I am only glad that we are not debating the other 299 tonight. We would be here for a considerable time if we did.

Mr. Cryer: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Snape: I knew I was doing too well.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend has made a very good point at the start of his speech. Does he accept that the Bill will adversely affect 299 of the 300 ports, and provide material advantage only to Felixstowe, while its consequences will ripple through the United Kingdom and maybe further?

Mr. Snape: My hon. Friend has gazed with his usual perception at least two paragraphs into my speech. I intend to attempt to show the House that the Bill will have an enormous impact not only on British ports but on continental ports. I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) will concede that the proposed development of Felixstowe will have an enormous impact on British ports, both scheme and non-scheme. I hope to show the House that this development is therefore undesirable and that the two amendments that we discussed the last time the Bill was before us, in July, are essential.

Few hon. Members, whatever their views on the Bill, would doubt that British ports are in decline. There are 78 per cent. fewer registered dock workers than there were 20 years ago. Although those statistics may appeal to Conservative Members, they go some way to illustrate the scale of that decline. Under this Government, redundancies among registered dock workers have accelerated considerably. There are 12,000 fewer registered dock workers now than there were in 1979 when the Government took office.

Not only the scope and capacity of British ports and the number of workers have declined since 1979, but investment in the ports has also declined by nearly the same proportion, largely because of the Government's policy to leave the development of the ports to the market place with no assessment of either the needs or the transport requirements of the nation. This Bill, like others introduced by the Government, is designed not only to increase the potential of Felixstowe, a non-scheme port, but to break the power of those who work in the industry by ending the national dock labour scheme, which has protected the conditions of dock workers for more than 40 years.

It is the Government's right—I concede that at the outset—to introduce a Bill, if they so desire, to do just that. However, the Government would not fancy either the industrial confrontation that would result after the introduction of such a Bill or the row that it would cause among their own supporters in the management of the dock industry.

It cannot be denied that the fortunes of all Britain's ports, including Felixstowe, are closely tied to the patterns of foreign trade. All the ports have shared a similar fate to that of Britain's merchant shipping industry, especially over the past 20 years. However, that decline has accelerated dramatically in the past six years. The pattern

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of development at indivdual ports, especially ports such as Felixstowe, has been closely connected with the demands of the shipowners, the dock companies and the users of the ports.

The Government are adamant that the ports—all of them, including Felixstowe — should develop purely according to the demands of the market place. The Government have removed from the statute book their powers to control port development. The Government believe there was a good reason to remove those powers —they did so rather than make a decision as to whether to allow development to take place some time ago at another port, the Falmouth container depot.

The fact that we do not have any sort of ports policy is a matter of concern not only to my hon. Friends on the Labour Benches, but also to commentators about this industry, be they Labour supporters, Conservative supporters or Liberal supporters—I cannot say alliance supporters as it does not exist any more.

The haphazard development of ports in this country was illustrated by an article in the *Financial Times*, again not a particularly Labour-oriented newspaper, on 22 December 1986. Kevin Brown, the transport correspondent for that newspaper, wrote an article under the heading:

> "Haphazard development of ports criticised."

The article said:

> "The Government lacks the political will to reverse the haphazard development of British ports over the past 20 years, according to a report by the National Economic Development Office. The report, written by the civil engineering economic development committee, criticises the abandonment of the Maplin airport and seaport project drawn up in the 1960s, which, it says, caused delays in siting of London's third airport."

That report said:

> "During the years that have elapsed, port development has proceeded in a haphazard way and not entirely in a free enterprise environment."

I would have thought that the Conservative party, which professes its devotion to the idea of the free enterprise environment, would——

Mr. Skinner: Not now. If we are to have a serious debate, it is as well that we get things right. It is true that the Government were elected on the philosophy of allowing the market to rule. However, in this Bill it is pretty plain for anybody to see that there is massive Government intervention. In the earlier points of order we heard about other forms of intervention. We are now faced with a different ball game altogether, especially after the stock exchange crash.

My hon. Friend will recall that the Chancellor of the Exchequer came to the House and underwrote the underwriters. Now things are completely different. Indeed, we could be arguing now for the docks that are in the dock labour scheme to be underwritten as opposed to giving help, in this instance, to the Felixstowe scheme. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that, yes, for some years the monetarist argument prevailed, but now we can see it has fallen around the feet of the people who were trying to project that great, wonderful image.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his guidance. When it comes to Conservative party policy, I appreciate that he is an expert——

Mr. Skinner: I read the Conservative press.

9.30 pm

Mr. Snape: —because, as he says, he reads the Conservative press as well as the more Left-wing press. I was merely reading an article in the *Financial Times*. As my hon. Friend will know, mistakes are quite often made in such newspapers because, although they are occasionally guilty of impartiality, that does not happen often. The *Financial Times* is traditionally a supporter of the system that the Conservative party embraces so fervently.

The hon. Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) has just arrived. He is anxious to hurry me along. I have been waiting some considerable time to support the amendments, so I hope that he will contain his natural impatience and allow me to make the case for the amendments in my own time, because it is a substantial case. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover will accept that it is nonsense to say that ports can develop without any implications for Government. The proposed development will cause damage to the nearby port of Southampton and I have referred during previous debates to a contribution made by the hon. Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill). I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman, as indeed he acknowledges himself, is a fairly Right-wing member of the Conservative party. Conservative Members who would like to know what the Right wing of their party has to say about the impact of the amendments to the Bill would do well to look at the *Official Report* of 23 July 1987, as on that day I read into *Hansard* parts of a speech made by the hon. Gentleman, who, alas, is not with us this evening.

I will paraphrase what the hon. Member for Test said about the port of Southampton, of which he is understandably proud. He said that it was capable of accepting any additional traffic that would be generated by the increase in containerisation worldwide. I trust that the House will accept that I have the gist of his speech right when I say that he said that the developments envisaged under the Bill would have a severe effect on the port of Southampton and that, despite the best efforts of management and trade unionists at that port, its future prospects would be considerably and adversely affected by the uncontrolled growth of a port such as Felixstowe, which is outside the dock work regulation scheme—*[Interruption.]* I missed that sedentary interjection.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): I thought that the hon. Gentleman said earlier that he wanted more dockers, not fewer.

Mr. Snape: I did not proffer an opinion. I would like to see more dockers. That would be a sign that Britain's trade was improving. All we have at the moment are the honeyed words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and we cannot stuff them in containers and export them any more than they are imported through ports such as Felixstowe.

Mr. McNamara: Does my hon. Friend mean that he would like to see more registered dockers?

Mr. Snape: As a member of the National Union of Railwaymen, I take the view that the arrangements made at various ports are a matter between Government—the Government have a role to play, as I am sure the Minister of State will agree — the port employers and the employees, including, of course, the National Union of Railwaymen.

I do not want to debate chapter and verse of working conditions on the Floor of the House. I have always thought that such things are better done by experts. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is an expert, with the best will in the world I do not believe that these are the sort of matters in which Conservative Members should be dabbling. In the very nature of things, their knowledge of these issues is bound to be sketchy.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): How kind.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman feels that he is being patronised, which shows that he is fairly thin-skinned. I do not know how long he has been in the House — not long, I would have thought — so I hope that he can develop a tougher hide than he now has; otherwise, he will often be upset. I do not seek deliberately to offend him or any other hon. Member. I merely tried to point out in my usual non-controversial manner that the prospect of many Conservative hon. Members negotiating terms and conditions for dock workers or any other industrial group in British society is an unlikely one. If the hon. Gentleman has the experience to prove me wrong, I shall allow him to inform the House of his wide experience in these matters, and I shall apologise for even ruffling his feathers.

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. Gentleman believes that Conservative Members have not negotiated for trade unions, he is wrong. If he believes that we did not take part in negotiations for trade unions before we entered the House, he is equally wrong. If he thinks that my relatives were not trade unionists in the docks and other industries, he is also wrong. He thinks that his side of the House represents one sort of person in society and we represent another, and he is wrong about that, too.

Mr. Snape: Obviously, I am failing to make myself clear. I never thought for a moment that Conservative hon. Members did not have experience of negotiating trade union conditions from the trade union side. I am happy to concede that the world is full of people who, having started off in life, get a few bob in their pockets and move on to consider themselves——

Mr. Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I was more concerned about what experience the hon. Gentleman had of management, because managers negotiate over working conditions with trade unionists. Again, I was probably wrong. The hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying that he has a somewhat youthful appearance; perhaps it belies his vast experience in industry. I am prepared to accept that, despite the youthful appearance, for which I commend the hon. Gentleman, he might well have wide managerial experience and competence. He may have done the type of negotiating that I am discussing. If so, I hope that he will concede that he would be an exception on the Conservative Benches. Let us leave it at that, and I hope not to ruffle the hon. Gentleman's feathers again.

Mr. Skinner: I do not know why the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) does not intervene and explain what vast experience he has, because I have just been informed that he came here from the BBC. I reckon that he must know something about the Felixstowe dock scheme, so I hope that my hon. Friend will be fair to him and allow him to explain what he knows.

Mr. Snape: I shall not attempt an explanation in the way my hon. Friend has suggested. The hon. Member for Harrow, West must be doubly unique because, not only has he managerial experience in negotiating trade union conditions on behalf of the management, but he works in the public sector of industry—which is what the BBC is. I welcome this infusion of talent into the Tory ranks, and I must say, as non-controversially as possible, that it is long overdue. I hope the hon. Gentleman will bring his valuable experience to bear on his right hon. and hon. Friends to convince them that there are good things in the public sector, even if some of them become Conservative Members of Parliament in later life.

I hope I may be allowed to continue with my support for this group of amendments. Coping with the over-capacity in Britain's docks is what the amendments are about. I hope that the Conservative party, and even the hon. Member for Harrow, West, will accept that there is indeed great over-capacity in Britain's docks. If they are not prepared to do so, I shall have to start at square one on the Bill. I think that all of us with even a nodding acquaintance with this industry will accept that there is considerable over-capacity. I hope that the Conservative party will accept that our purpose in tabling the group of amendments is to illustrate not only that that over-capacity exists but that there is a practical way of tackling the problem.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept not only the over-capacity that has been developed but the potential of further over-capacity since substantial lands at Southampton have been reclaimed for the purpose——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We are on the dock labour scheme and I hope that we will stick to dock labour. Mr. Snape.

Mr. Snape: I was giving way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) cannot give way to an hon. Member who is speaking irrelevantly.

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Southampton dock area about which my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) was speaking is covered by the dock labour scheme. My hon. Friend was seeking to make the point that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I heard the hon. Gentleman. He was talking about the availability of land at Southampton. I hope that hon. Members will talk about the availability of labour in the docks and the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Snape: We will indeed. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will accept your strictures in the spirit in which they were made, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We can continue with the debate about the dock labour scheme and the impact that this great expansion at Felixstowe will have not only on individuals who work within that scheme but on the other non-scheme ports throughout the United Kingdom. As my hon. Friend the Member for — *[Interruption.]* — no, it was Keighley last time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer)——

Mr. Hanley: Incompetence.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman should hang on before he tempts me down the road of competence. I am certainly not competent to pose wearing such a vest as the hon. Gentleman did some years ago, so we had better not go down that road either.

The impact that the Bill will have not only on scheme ports but on ports outside the scheme ought to be acknowledged. Although Conservative Members demonstrate time after time that they have no great fondness for the dock labour scheme, I would have thought that they would realise the impact that the Bill will have on ports outside the scheme. They do not have to go far to see that impact. Down the east coast, and particularly in the south of England, there are non-scheme ports at Great Yarmouth, at Harwich, the former British Rail port now owned by Sealink at Kings Lynn and at Lowestoft. I hope the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, who is promoting the Bill on behalf of P and O, will acknowledge that the development proposed within the Bill will have a severe and probably adverse impact on surrounding ports.

I do not want to get involved in the controversy aired earlier about social functions within the precincts of the House or anywhere else. I am sorry that I did not get an invitation, because in that convivial atmosphere I could have explained the view that we would take. I understand that in that convivial atmosphere there might have been an attempt to arrive at a compromise on the Bill. [AN HON. MEMBER: "To withdraw it."] That would be one way of compromising; I am not sure that it would meet with the approval of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. It appears that the impact of the Bill on ports adjacent to Felixstowe will be fairly great. Speaking from memory, I think that all those ports are within constituencies held by Conservative Members, although there are not many hon. Members in the Chamber at present to defend the interests of those ports and deal with the adverse impact that the Bill will have on them. I assure those hon. Gentlemen that we shall do our duty and theirs too by pointing out the damage that will be caused unless these amendments are accepted.

9.45 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) says that most of the competing ports are in the constituencies of Conservative Members. My hon. Friend will be aware that the Transport and General Workers Union has approached its branches in all those ports. In every case, they oppose the Bill on the basis that their members would lose work, yet hon. Gentlemen seem to be indifferent to the loss of work that will arise in their own constituencies.

Mr. Snape: Indeed; it is surprising that, regardless of party affiliations, hon. Members jealously and inderstandably guard employment prospects within their constituencies. It is unusual, and a departure from the normal procedures of the House, that hon. Gentlemen choose not to take part in debates on a Bill such as this.

I should say in fairness to the hon. Member for Test that, although he is not here tonight and was not present when the Bill was debated previously, he has spoken in defence of the port of Southampton and the jobs that would be lost there if these amendments were not accepted.

It is important that we should look again at over-capacity. I must repeat that not only trade unions, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) referred, have set out the problems of over-capacity in stark terms, and the need to look carefully at development proposals at Felixstowe and elsewhere. In an article in the magazine *Transport*, published in February 1987, a Mr. N. H. Finney, director of the British Ports Association, pointed to the dangers of over-capacity. Indeed, his article is headed "Coping with Over-Capacity". He said that despite their seemingly good intentions—we could fall out with him there as he was talking about the Government — the Government have yet to develop a sound policy towards United Kingdom ports, particularly because they seem not to have made up their mind what they want their role to be in the next decade.

He went on:

> "There are three classes of "port citizen". Firstly, the non-dock labour scheme, private port—free to raise capital as it wishes and able to diversify without restraint. There is then the traditional trust or company dock labour scheme port — hemmed in by restrictions and unable to raise finance and diversify as it might always wish to. Finally, there is the ex-nationalised sector of the industry — now known as Associated British Ports and Sealink Harbours, collectively owning 25 ports. These are able to use considerable market strength and, in ABP's case, exploit its valuable land bank and use multi-port ownership to boost customer loyalty and develop efficiency."

The kernel of the problem is starkly outlined there by Mr. Finney. I do not know anything of Mr. Finney's political affiliations, but I would hazard a guess that he would not donate much to the election effort of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) or indeed towards mine. *[Interruption.]* I would send the hon. Member for Faversham a shilling or two if I thought for a moment that he was ever in any danger, but because of his great popularity, he does not need that sort of assistance.

The fact that a director of the BPA speaks in such stark terms of over-capacity will sound a note of caution to those hon. Gentlemen who consider the Bill to be the be-all and end-all of port development.

I referred earlier to a report produced by the civil engineering economic development committee of the National Economic Development Office, entitled

> "The Nation's Infrastructure—Sea and Estuarial Ports".

In somewhat sombre terms, the report said that ports in the United Kingdom are constituted in a number of different ways. They include the traditional public trust ports such as London, municipally owned ports such as Bristol, privately owned ports such as Felixstowe and all the British Rail ports now owned by Sea Containers, such as Harwich and Parkeston Quay. It went on to talk about the other important group being the recently privatised Associated British Ports, to which I have already referred.

However, I should say in passing that Mr. Finney, the director of the British Ports Association, includes in his 19 privatised Associated British Ports the ports of Southampton and Hull. Therefore, if one disagrees with what he said it could be argued that he was anxious only to protect Southampton and Hull. However, in fairness it should be recognised that, given the fairly close geographical location of those two ports to Felixstowe, he has a reasonable — or unreasonable — argument to put forward.

Time after time Ministers say that the Bill is essential in order to protect Britain's trade and that the delay that the Opposition have, for good reason, inflicted on the Bill is having a severe impact on British ports. They say that there is a danger of traffic being diverted from United Kingdom ports. *[Interruption.]* I am asked about the Channel tunnel. I shall come to that, although only in the context of the amendments. My hon. Friends must contain themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not think that any dock labour scheme labour is employed or likely to be employed on the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Snape: I would not dream for a moment of crossing swords with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the impact that the Channel tunnel may well have on Britain's ports industry is enormous. One reason why I support the project, although many of my hon. Friends do not, is that it might well bring great economic advantages to west coast ports that have been sadly run down over the past 20 years, particularly since we joined the EEC — unwisely, in my view. However, I shall not spend any time on that.

The impact on the national dock labour scheme and on ports policy generally of the Channel tunnel is likely to be enormous. I should have thought that, once the Channel tunnel was built, it would be in the interests of shippers of container traffic from North America to dock at Liverpool, instead of sailing round to Rotterdam with British containers.

Mr. McNamara *rose*——

Mr. Snape: Liverpool, as my hon. Friend will know, is already part of the electrified west coast main line. They could then proceed directly through the Channel tunnel to whatever was their ultimate destination.

Mr. McNamara: Would it not be logical to put such containers on the M62 and out through Hull to Rotterdam, Copenhagen and so on? When my hon. Friend considers the Channel tunnel and its effect on capacity and employment, should he not consider the deleterious effect that that is likely to have on the east coast ports, the dock labour schemes in those ports, the tradition of sound dock work and expanding ports on the east coast which my hon. Friend's scheme and the Bill will ruin?

Mr. Snape: It is not "my" scheme, as my hon. Friend erroneously described it. I acknowledge that I had the honour to lead for the Opposition in Committee and in Select Committee, but we are all equal as members of the Select Committee. I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that when he replies.

The scheme's impact on east coast ports and on the national dock labour scheme may be as my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North described. Just as our joining the EEC led to the decline of west coast ports because our markets were skewed from the Atlantic——

Mr. Skinner: A deal was done.

Mr. Snape: Of course it has not "done a deal" for anyone, to use my hon. Friend's earthy phrase. However, whatever our views on the Channel tunnel project, I hope that we can accept what has happened.

Within the context of the amendment, there are important differences in the way in which scheme and non-scheme ports are managed. Because of those important differences, there will be an obvious impact on employment prospects unless the amendment is accepted.

Almost all ports in the United Kingdom are managed by harbour authorities set up and operated under their own statutory powers. That applies as much to the privately owned and municipal ports as to public trust ports. Without lingering long on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, who referred to land in Southampton, it is fair to state that any new development outside a statutory harbour authority must be sanctioned by an Act of Parliament, or more rarely through planning permission. That is one of the reasons why we are here tonight and why we have debated this issue on many nights. *[Interruption]*

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you ask hon. Members below the Gangway to hush a little so that we can hear what my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has to say?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that hon. Members congregating below the Bar of the House will not conduct conversations in loud voices. That is very distracting and is interrupting business.

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased that you have taken up the issue of the chatter below the Gangway and beyond the Bar of the House. As you know, the Jubilee Room opened for refreshments at 9.30 pm. I know that you are not allowed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to say that Conservative Members come into the Chamber drunk. However, are you allowed to say that they are half-sober?

Mr. Snape: I would not pass a comment one way or another.

We are considering the differences between various scheme and non-scheme ports. Apart from the fact that the Secretary of State for Transport appoints members to the boards of most of the larger trust ports, British ports are for the most part independent of Government. I realise that that always appeals to the Conservative party. The Government abolished the statutory right to interfere in those matters fairly early on in the life of this Administration.

Before the Bill sees the light of day, I have an idea that the Government will regret that somewhat arbitrary abolition. It might well have come in handy for them to use a spot of arbitrary legislation with regard to ports, particularly to help out the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, who—I must give him credit—has not moved from his seat since the points of order, regardless of the supposed attractions of the Jubilee Room or the Royal St. James hotel. Although the hon. Gentleman was mentioned as one of the "Felixstowe Eleven", he has clearly put in a substitute. I do not know whether I would carry the hon. Gentleman with me if I said——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at this day's sitting, the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

The House divided: Ayes 249, Noes 70.

Divison No. 48] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian

Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*

Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*

Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman

Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle and
Mr. David Maclean.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dobson, Frank
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*

Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Murphy, Paul
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. George Howarth.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier it was reported that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the proposed British Airways-British Caledonian merger was not to be reported to the House but was to be announced at a press conference tomorrow morning by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. When Mr. Speaker was informed of that fact, he said, as he always does, that important announcements would best be made to the House. We have asked the Leader of the House whether there will be a Government statement or whether he will make a business statement tonight on the proposed merger. Have you been informed that the Leader of the House wishes to make such a statement?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): The Chair has not been told by any Minister that he wishes to make a statement to the House. As the hon. Gentleman said, Mr. Speaker dealt with a similar point of order earlier and ruled on it. I cannot add to that ruling.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker said that he thought it would be best if the Government made a statement or said that they intend to make a statement because such matters should be dealt with by statements to the House. There has been considerable passage of time since then and we want to know from the Leader of the House—who is now present and presumably knows the answer — whether there will be a statement tonight or tomorrow or whether the matter will be released to the newspapers by somebody whom even the Prime Minister deemed to be unfit to be the chairman of the Tory party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Speaker dealt with the matter earlier. I recall that he expressed the personal view that matters of this kind should be reported to the House first. Of course, neither he nor I, nor any other occupant of the Chair, has any power to direct Ministers on matters of this kind.

10.15 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is quite conceivable that the House of Commons could sit throughout tonight and into the early hours of tomorrow morning. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members have made my point. I put it to you, Sir, that the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian is of national interest and has been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. If the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the unelected noble Lord, is to——

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household): The hon. Gentleman has read that once already.

Mr. Stott: If the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) wants me to say it again, I shall do so.

If the Secretary of State is to make any comment about the matter, it should be made in the House of Commons, if it is sitting tonight or tomorrow morning. If the Leader of the House were not prepared to accept that a Minister of the Crown in this House should go to the Dispatch Box when the House is sitting and tell the House of Commons what the Government will do in respect of the referral of the British Airways and British Caledonian merger, it would be the greatest contempt of the House that he could show. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman reminds us, the Leader of the House is present. He is no doubt aware of the Opposition's view. Perhaps we should get on with the Bill. I call Mr. Peter Snape.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: A different sticky problem on the same issue.

I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have a responsibility, though not necessarily to comment on the issues that have been put to you; we understand the difficulty in which you are placed. There is another matter. This is not the first occasion on which Lord Young has decided to make announcements of this nature. It happened on a previous occasion when the takeover of Matthew Brown by Scottish and Newcastle was not announced to the House of Commons. Such announcements are not being made because the noble Lord Young intends to take responsibility for them, but he cannot make statements at the Dispatch Box in the House of Commons because he is unelected. That is why my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) raised the matter of his being an unelected Lord.

An important constitutional point is at issue. Recognising that a peer of the realm cannot make a statement at the Dispatch Box in the House of Commons but yet is unwilling to cede the right to a junior Minister to make that statement, is it right for him to be able to escape Parliament in that way? That is the issue. Surely the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Such matters are not for the Chair in this House. Doubtless the Leader of the House will have regard to what has been said and the force with which it was said. I call Mr. Peter Snape.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that while you were waiting to take your place in the Chair several points were made about pecuniary interests. We have had a vote on the 10 o'clock motion and from that a question arises about the Register of Members' Interests which, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not yet available. Some hon. Members are anxious to discover who voted tonight and to establish what their business interests are. The vote on the 10 o'clock motion was inextricably linked with the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill; those who wanted the Bill passed voted for the suspension of the 10 o'clock rule.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker on what will happen if the Bill is passed—having been given long and meticulous consideration — and a number of hon. Members prove to have had direct pecuniary interests. If there are enough of them, will their votes be cancelled, or will the Bill go through anyway?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asks me to rule on a purely hypothetical matter. His question will be more relevant if and when the situation arises. The question of pecuniary interests is irrelevant to votes on procedural matters. As I said to the hon. Gentleman yesterday when he raised a similar point, I am quite sure

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

that all right hon. and hon. Members will vote in accordance with the Standing Orders and practices of the House.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you have rightly said, you have not been notified whether there will be a statement about the British Caledonian-British Airways merger. You pointed out that it was not a matter for you. However, I put it to you that you have a responsibility to the House. We all remember that in July when the merger of the two companies was initially proposed, the Minister of Trade and Industry, who is Lord Young's counterpart in this House, came here to answer a private notice question about the merger and to tell us whether the matter would be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Were we talking simply about the fact that the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is to be published tomorrow — about the precise timing and location of the report's publication—that would not be a matter for you, Sir, or for the House, although all hon. Members object from time to time to information being made available to the press before it is made available to us. I understand that Lord Young has said that the report will be published and that a copy will be placed in the Library at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning; so far, so good.

However, much more pertinent is the fact that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is to give his decision on the recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—on whether the merger is to be allowed to proceed as it stands, or allowed to proceed with conditions. These are matters of very great importance and concern to all hon. Members. I should have thought that Conservative Members who have shown as much concern and interest in these matters as Opposition Members would have supported the proposition that the Minister for Trade and Industry should come to the House at the earliest possible opportunity to make a statement on the decision.

Parallel with that, although it may not be our concern, is the fact that the rights and privileges of their lordships are at stake. The other place is part of Parliament and I should have thought that their lordships would be extremely upset that Lord Young is not to make a statement to them. In the past, the custom and practice has been that parallel statements are made at the same time in this House and in the other place [HON. MEMBERS: "This is disgraceful".] I completely agree with hon. Members who are making comments from a sedentary position. It is quite disgraceful that neither Lord Young nor his counterpart proposes to make a statement to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is retreading ground that has been covered already. I cannot usefully add to what I have said to the House. We should get on.

Mr. Grocott: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One thing seems to be becoming a behaviour pattern for the Government Front Bench when it comes to informing the House. I should like to refer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the hon. Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Grocott: My point of order is that the standards we have come to expect as Back Benchers are being flouted by the Government—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is raising a point of order, it must be a matter on which the Chair can rule. If it is not a matter on which the Chair can rule, we should proceed with the debate.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is in relation to the letter dated 9 November on House of Commons notepaper and submitted on behalf of the sponsors of the private Bill. It is to do with the film show this evening. I remember that recently Labour Members were refused the opportunity to see the Zircon film and had to ask the permission of the House to show the film. It may well be that the film at issue tonight is not of a security nature and may be to do with summer holidays run by the sponsors P and O. However, have the hon. Members involved obtained permission for the show to take place?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must assume that the hon. Members have permission.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a new point of order on which I ask you to rule. It arises from the letter mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). Several points of order took place on this matter earlier. Towards the end of those points of order the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, (Sir E. Griffiths), visiting our part of the Chamber, presumably to see the sponsors of the Bill, said that he had come to find out what the letter was about because he had only just found out about it. Several hon. Members heard him say that.

I ask for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the lead signatory of a letter on House of Commons notepaper with the crest on it and possibly all the other signatories, or at least more than one of them, had no knowledge of the contents of the letter, a difficulty arises. The letter has been circulated to hon. Members, at the very least to influence them in their behaviour in some way, perhaps to persuade them to stay or to vote in a particular way. The intentions of the letter are clear. It may be that some hon. Members did not know whether to stay behind but looked at the letter and said, "If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is backing this"——

Mr. Grocott: I am going home.

Mr. Clay: They may have said that, which would have been extremely unfair to the sponsors of the Bill and would have meant that the letter had backfired, or they may have said, "He's a good chap so we will stay behind and support him." Either way——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not need to embellish and garnish his point of order in that fashion. My fellow Deputy Speaker dealt with that matter at some length at the commencement of our proceedings. None of the matters raised by the hon. Gentleman is a matter for the Chair and we should get on.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Some of the matters that are now being raised are dangerously close to being bogus points of order and seem to me to be intended to delay our proceedings. We really must get on.

Mr. Snape: I must say——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Snape: —that all these points of order are ruining the flow of my speech and it may take me some time to return to the main point of my argument.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If I did not make it sufficiently clear I will do so now. I do not think it appropriate for hon. Members to continue to raise points of order at this time.

10.30 pm

Mr. Snape: Before the 10 o'clock Division I was illustrating the difficulties which the Bill will cause to ports throughout the United Kingdom, and it is important to realise the amount of work that is taking place at various ports and the way in which that will add greatly to the overcapacity about which I spoke earlier.

On the east coast, for example, we must not consider the developments at Felixstowe in isolation. After all, at Hull a new passenger terminal has just been completed for use by North Sea Ferries. Close by, at Grimsby and Immingham, two other ABP ports, there is a graph of rising traffic. At Goole, also not far away, ABP is investing £1 million in container handling equipment. At Grimsby, a new facility operated by Humber Terminals was opened only last year. Close by are the ports of Teesside and Hartlepool. Further north, at Seaham, the port authority is investing £1·3 million on increasing its warehousing capacity. In Sunderland it is planned to develop a new ro-ro berth to serve the recently opened Nissan plant. Various schemes are afoot in the current financial year to improve the port of Tyne.

It should not be thought that the impact of the scheme that we are discussing will be felt simply on the east coast of England. If it gets the go-ahead unamended, problems will be caused, for example, to Scottish ports.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): It might be wise for my hon. Friend, before leaving the east coast, to consider the effect of what is proposed on the port of Norwich, which, though it has modest traffic at present, has great scope for expansion, and many people hope that that expansion will come about.

Mr. Snape: I agree with my hon. Friend. Norwich will certainly be affected. The rules of order prevent me from referring to all 300 ports in the United Kingdom, but if any of my hon. Friends wish to intervene to point out the difficulties that will be caused to their constituencies, I shall be delighted to give way to them.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): My hon. Friend referred in passing to the likely effect on Scottish ports. I am sure that all 50 Scottish Labour Members would be interested to hear how these proposals will affect their areas. Will my hon. Friend elaborate on that?

Mr. Snape: I know that my hon. Friends are anxious to be helpful at this stage in the debate. For example, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) has a question about Scunthorpe and Humberside.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): My hon. Friend may care to consider the effect of what is proposed in the Bill on the ports on the Humber estuary, including Goole, Immingham and Hull, plus many wharves along the Trent and the Humber bank. These ports and wharves, by any standard, have adequate capacity to deal with the trade on the east coast and to and from Europe. It makes one wonder about the argument for expansion at Felixstowe and ask where the trade will come from. Although I can understand that there may be an argument for the people of Felixstowe to attract the trade, they must accept that that trade is finite and will be taken away from other ports, which will cause unemployment and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I advise the hon. Gentleman and the House that the group of amendments before us deal with the dock labour scheme and whether Felixstowe should be excluded from the national dock labour scheme. I hope that hon. Members will direct their remarks to that matter.

Mr. Snape: May I point out that, in these amendments, we are considering the impact that the proposed scheme will have on ports covered by the national dock labour scheme. I wish it were possible to include Felixstowe in that scheme, although the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) might not agree and indeed, the promoters of the Bill would not be over-enthusiastic.

Mr. McNamara: With due respect to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) drew attention to specific ports that will be affected by the proposed scheme, namely Hull, Immingham, Goole and Grimsby on the Humber estuary and to the effect on those fly-by-nights on the wharves who are not members of the dock registered scheme although many of them would now like to be members.

Mr. Snape: I am grateful, even if you are not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that guidance from my hon. Friend. The fact is that the impact of the scheme under discussion would be felt throughout the 300 or so ports within the United Kingdom. For many years the Labour party has criticised the lack of a national ports policy. That lack is amply illustrated by the likely impact of the proposed scheme if the amendments are not accepted.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): In south Yorkshire we have ambitions to see the development of Sheffield and the south Yorkshire navigation proceeding at a more acceptable pace to allow our docks to be developed. We have Rother port and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Nowhere in south Yorkshire is within the scope of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Hardy: We wish our inland navigation, and the trade that it carries, to be developed to the point where we could apply to be within the scheme. The problem is—I should like my hon. Friend to comment on it—that the development——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Not on this group of amendments.

Mr. Snape: My hon. Friend should try on the next group of amendments.

The confusion that has understandably arisen on this group of amendments is the direct result of the Government's failure to accept the need for any sort of a national ports policy. If the amendments are rejected, chaos will arise at other ports inside and outside the scheme.

[Mr. Snape]

We are considering the Bill in the context of all the ports competing against one another, and in our view that competition dramatically illustrates the lack of a national ports policy—a policy which has been advocated by the Labour party since the mid-1960s.

I hope that my hon. Friends will accept that I was undertaking a fairly careful summary tour of the United Kingdom and talking about the impact of the project on ports such as Aberdeen, which has a £31 million investment programme for the next decade. We must also consider the Forth ports. For example, Leith has recently installed a £1 million transit shed. At Belfast a number of projects are under development.

The great problem is that the overcapacity to which I have referred is, in any case, being increased by all the projects that are taking place around the country. But that overcapacity will be made dramatically worse by the Bill.

The purpose of our amendments is to reduce the impact of the project on other United Kingdom ports. The scheme will not marginally increase capacity at Felixstowe. In the past 20 years or so Felixstowe has risen from a virtual greenfield site to the successful port that it is today. It is through containers, which is the sort of traffic that other ports are competing for, that its capacity has increased dramatically in recent years. I make no specific complaint about that, but I hope that even Conservative Members who passionately support the Bill will concede that unless we have the opportunity to restrict growth in ports such as Felixstowe the overcapacity that all hon. Members accept exists, particularly on the east coast and in the south-east, will worsen.

Mr. Loyden: My hon. Friend will be aware that there is presently some control of the development of ports and that those controls complement his arguments about an organised regulated port transport industry. Does my hon. Friend agree that amendments to Bills in the past have virtually given licence to port developers to do what they will, where they will and when they will, and have destabilised the Government's ports policy? Does he also agree that, as an island nation, it is absolutely necessary for us in the long term to have an effective policy? The short-term considerations of developers are placing in jeopardy the whole future of the ports transport industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that we can get back to the application of the dock labour scheme to Felixstowe.

Mr. Snape: My hon. Friend amply illustrated the dangers of uncontrolled expansion for the dock work labour scheme. The infrastructure that grew up around Liverpool was as a result of the expansion of that port in the latter part of the last century and, until the change in traffic patterns to which I referred earlier, particularly containerisation, the infrastructure of the port of Liverpool continued to grow. The problem with the Felixstowe project is that there is no mention of any infrastructure. P and O will not pay the infrastructure costs; it will be the taxpayer. We tabled the amendments because, as my hon. Friend said, the unrestricted growth of ports means that infrastructure costs fall on the taxpayer, even though that growth is damaging Britain's overall capacity. That is because there is a far greater capacity than any projections have envisaged over the next decade.

Mr. Grocott: Does my hon. Friend have any idea what the infrastructure costs will be? Hon. Members who are new to the arguments in the Bill would find it helpful in deciding how to vote if we had some indication of those costs.

Mr. Snape: I do not know the costs, but one can easily envisage how those costs will come about. If the amendments are rejected, the development will go ahead, even more containers will pass through the port, and the local authorities, as well as the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and his colleagues from the area, will say that the infrastructure cannot cope with the increased traffic. The construction of a new railway line into the port of Felixstowe is a direct result of this expansion.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): The amendments will stop that.

10.45 pm

Mr. Snape: It is unusual for an ex-railwayman to stand at the Dispatch Box and speak in favour of an amendment that will stop railway development. However, despite my concern — some might even say passion — for railway development, I repeat the necessity for a national policy for railways as well as airports, because putting branch lines in one area does not make for an overall national industrial policy. However, I have been led astray by the reference to the new railway development at Felixstowe.

Mr. David Marshall: My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) made a perfectly valid point about the port of Liverpool. My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) referred to Aberdeen. I should like to draw his attention to Clyde ports——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that I had suggested that the hon. Member for Garston had not made a valid point. The amendments with which we are dealing are about the application of the national dock labour scheme to Felixstowe. They have nothing to do with the Clyde, or Liverpool or anywhere else.

Mr. Snape: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amendments are about the impact of the development on the dock labour scheme nationwide. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) was quite right about the scheme ports in Scotland. Unless the amendments are accepted, there will be an impact as far afield as Scotland.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): No doubt without wishing to cause any offence, my hon. Friend stopped before he touched on the ports on the north side of the River Forth in my constituency. There is a great deal of concern amongst the smaller ports — particularly those to the south of Fife that exist on a marginal basis — about the effects that will ensue from the changes.

Will my hon. Friend, now or later, comment on the problems that might affect ports such as Kirkcaldy, and Burnt Island, which is mainly tied to imports of aluminium oxide that is used in the factory in the area?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) were persuaded to go along those lines he might be ruled out of order by the Chair.

Mr. Snape: I understand my hon. Friend's concern to bring forward constituency matters. I have to confess that the problems of Kirkcaldy and Burnt Island were not uppermost in my mind when I helped to table the amendments.

I realise that I may have tried your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during my short remarks, but this is a complex matter and group of amendments. It is, as I hope the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds agrees, a fundamental group of amendments.

I referred earlier to the NEDO report on "The Nation's Infrastructure Sea And Estuarial Ports". I want to repeat some of its recommendations. It, too, was concerned about the impact of uncontrolled development on existing scheme ports. A considerable amount of the report is devoted to the impact of the fixed link on Britain's ports. Having caused a little controversy by referring in passing to the project earlier, I am anxious to return the House to its normally placid and even tenor at this time of the night. In the chapter headed:

> "The future for UK ports"

the report said

> "Ports will need to continue to adapt to meet changing needs. They are a service industry and suffer from uneven demands. A certain amount of over-capacity is therefore inevitable and even desirable. It is also accepted that world shipping is at present in a very depressed state and one of the few growth areas is passenger car traffic to the continent."

Paragraph 9.2 it said:

> "At the moment a certain amount of rationalisation of dock areas rather than port closures is going on, particularly by the newly privatised ABP company."

Again I have to point out that we are talking about an increase in capacity, a new development, when at the same time ABP is following a process of rationalisation which all of us know full well is the in jargon word for unemployment and redundancies among those who work in ABP ports. Is that what the promoters of the Bill intended? I am sure it is not, but that is what is inadvertently occurring.

In paragraph 9.2 the report also said:

> "In other cases improved or new facilities are being constructed to cater for known future shipper needs."

I will paraphrase this part. It talks about new berths at Dover to accommodate the larger ferries which Townsend Thoresen, now part of P and O, will shortly be introducing. Hon. Members will be aware that Dover, too, is outside the scheme. Since the acquisition of Townsend Thoresen by P and O it would appear that here are two non-scheme ports, both expanding, with inevitable damage to other ports where workers are organised directly within the dock labour scheme. In our view that is another strong argument for supporting the amendments.

Paragraph 9.2 also says:

> "Sealink Harbours Limited have a programme for updating some of their ports, many of which they acquired in a rather dilapidated condition"—

the cynics could interject immediately that they fixed them up cheaply—

> "whilst some port operators take a view that world shipping trade will again increase and are at present taking advantage of relatively cheap construction costs."

Again I press for support for the amendments. In the successful port of Felixstowe we are dealing in isolation with something that will have an enormous impact on other ports.

Mr. McNamara: Can my hon. Friend tell the House whether the promoters of the Bill have considered the capacity of the Eurotunnel and the effect that will have on Felixstowe? Secondly, what effect will P and O's association with the Zeebrugge disaster and the terrible reputation it has gained over that episode have on the construction of ships? Should one not be looking for shorter——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. None of these matters seems to me to have anything to do with whether Felixstowe should be excluded from the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Snape: Whatever our views on the fixed link, to which my hon. Friend referred, it will have an enormous impact on British ports policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just made it clear that in the view of the Chair these matters have nothing to do with the amendments under consideration. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will have regard to my ruling.

Mr. Snape: Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I in no way challenge your ruling. If you stop for a moment, I think that you will agree that a good argument can be made in the context of the amendments on changes in deep sea container shipping patterns, some of which will be caused by Eurotunnel, and on ports that fall directly within the national dock labour scheme as well as Felixstowe and this development. But I shall not follow that line, because I know that at this time of the night we can all burn on fairly short fuses.

I have referred to some of the expansion schemes which would have an impact on this project. The news in other ports, including Greenock—another scheme port—is not good. One could argue that Greenock in Scotland will soon not be affected by the dock labour scheme because that port will close. Earlier this year, the *Financial Times* ran a report headed, "Scotland to lose container port as Greenock closes". That is an example of the diminution of the market in Scotland, yet there is expansion in the south of England.

Mr. David Marshall: That was the very point that I was going to make earlier. Dockers on the Clyde are losing their jobs because of Felixstowe's expansion. This exacerbates the north-south divide and creates two nations. The Bill will worsen the situation.

Mr. Snape: My hon. Friend has put his finger on the crux of the problem. But if I started to debate the two nations problem and the north-south divide, I fear that even your well-renowned patience would be strained, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend has made the point amply, and perhaps we should leave it at that.

The criticism that is always levelled at the Labour party is that we knock down what the Conservatives put up but do not put forward any alternatives.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): What about the policy review?

Mr. Snape: I like to kid myself that, if I am still doing this job, I might be involved in that. I make it up as I go along. I can always be outvoted at some time — *[Interruption.]* I am glad that my hon. Friends endorse this somewhat unorthodox approach to policy review.

The Labour party has tried for some 20 years to bring about the type of national policy which it wants. Such a

[Mr. Snape]

policy would be embraced if the Bill's promotors were wise enough to accept the amendments. As long ago as the early 1960s the Rochdale committee—I hazard a guess that that was a heavyweight bunch — chronicled the difficulties then being caused to Britain's port structure by the unco-ordinated approach that typified the, in some ways, nonsensical competition between ports, some of them on opposite sides of the same estuary.

Much play has been made of the Government's attitude to these matters. I have a copy of a speech by the former Secretary of State for Transport to the British Ports Association and the National Association of Port Employers on 16 April 1986. To be fair to him — I always like to be fair to Conservative Ministers, but I do not often get the opportunity — he also spoke of the difficulties. The transcript shows that he started his speech by saying:

> "Thanks for lunch and for the toast and the courteous speeches both Sir Frederic and Mr. Cooper made."

I am not sure whether it was Sir Frederic Bennett and Mr. Tommy Cooper who were involved in that lunch — *[Interruption.]* There is plenty more where that came from if hon. Members would like me to go through the speech of the former Secretary of State in detail.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should do that only if it relates to the national dock labour scheme and to Felixstowe.

11 pm

Mr. Snape: I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would not think for a moment that if it did not, I would even draw the attention of the House to the subject. I would not dream of doing such a thing.

In his speech the Secretary of State talked about the problems facing the port industry then. Paraphrasing his comments, he referred to the lack of co-ordination within the port industry and said that that meant that British ports were at a competitive disadvantage against European ports. Again, there is more harmony about this matter than perhaps the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would acknowledge. There are areas of agreement across the Chamber and we should not forget them.

Before the last general election, the Labour party produced a document proposing a proper harmonisation of the ports business in this country through the creation of a national ports authority. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would agree with me, but I suggest that the creation of that authority would have enabled the owner of the port of Felixstowe—P and O — to put its suggestions for expansion to a national ports authority where it could have been dealt with in the context of its impact on other ports on the east coast and throughout the country.

I hope that Conservative Members will feel that the case for supporting the amendment has been made. I hope that the Minister will readily acknowledge and concede that that case has been made. I do not know whether I have succeeded in convincing you, Madam Deputy Speaker, or the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, but I hope at least that I have succeeded in convincing the Minister that the argument for a national ports authority is unchallengeable and that that argument is accepted by all our competitors or partners—call them what we will —in the EEC who look with some amusement as well as bemusement at the lack of such a policy in the United Kingdom. I commend the amendment to the House on the ground that, by voting for it, the House will be accepting the need for such a policy within the United Kingdom.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I intervene briefly because the Bill is sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths).

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) drew attention to the impact of the expansion of Felixstowe on other ports. If Felixstowe wins business from other ports, that is because exporters find Felixstowe better for their business. That better value means more competitive exports, more business for our manufacturing industry and more jobs among our manufacturers. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East made it clear that the Labour party advocates a national ports policy which would restrict growth at Felixstowe. The effect of that would be to distort the pattern of transport through our ports and prevent manufacturers from utilising the most economic, cost-effective and appropriate port for their trade.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does not the Minister understand that we find it very difficult to accept that he can be objective about such matters when the company that we are discussing pays money to the Tory party? How can the Minister convince people in the country that he is being objective when the Conservatives are on the take as a party?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that my arguments will not be influenced by the point that he has just made. Moreover, my point is valid, whether it relates to Felixstowe or to any other port. I am saying that the Labour party's policies would distort the pattern of trade from what is most economic to what is less economic. The expense of that is in job losses in manufacturing industry, which is not able to utilise the most cost-effective way of moving its goods.

The main purpose of the amendments is to apply the dock labour scheme to the port of Felixstowe. I advise the House to reject them. Felixstowe is a non-scheme port. If the scheme is ever to apply to Felixstowe, it should be done openly by recognised procedure, and not introduced in a partial, back-door way. It would be absurd for most of a port to be outside the scheme, and a small part inside it. It would be equally absurd to classify this part of the site in the scheme port of Ipswich, which is 10 miles up the Orwell.

For those reasons, I recommend that the House reject the amendments.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 206, Noes 65.

Division No. 49] **[11.06 pm**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim

Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*

Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David

Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Roger Moate.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dixon, Don
Duffy, A. E. P.
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*

Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 62, Noes 202.

Division No. 50] **[11.20 pm**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dixon, Don

Duffy, A. E. P.
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David

Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Vaz, Keith
Wareing, Robert N.

Tellers for the Ayes:
Dr. Lewis Moonie and
Mr. Ron Davies.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Roger Moate.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer you to "Erskine May" and ask you a question on the functions of the Committee and the House on private Bills. I hope you will bear with me while I make what I hope will be a detailed and erudite argument. I refer you to the first paragraph on page 893, which relates to the process by which Parliament passes public general Bills. I have no contention on that. The second paragraph states:

> "In passing private bills Parliament still exercises its legislative functions, but its proceedings partake also of a judicial character. The persons who are applying"——

Mr. Michael Fallon: Get to the point.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman should listen, so he would understand the point I am getting to. On occasion, the House does not treat you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the Chair with the respect you deserve. It says:

> "The persons who are applying for powers or benefits appear as suitors for the Bill, while those who apprehend injury are admitted as adverse parties in the suit."

That refers to the procedures in Committee. An important characteristic which differentiates private Bill Committees from public Bill Committees is that hon. Members who serve on private Bill Committees sit in a quasi-judicial character.

Some hon. Members will understand my point, because about 12 months ago we had many debates on the nature of the work of Committees and the role of Members. The Chairman of Ways and Means asserted that the role of a member of a Standing Committee on a private Bill was to act, not on behalf of a particular interest, but in a quasi-judicial capacity.

I raise two matters. First, I have a copy of the letter distributed tonight——

Mr. Fallon: Oh, no.

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman should listen to this. One of the members who served on the Committee, the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed), is also one of the signatories to the letter. The hon. Member for Bristol, East is not acting in a quasi-judicial way, but has tried to induce his colleagues to vote on the Bill in a particular way.

Secondly, I raise a serious and heinous matter, which I tried to draw to the attention of the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), but I could not find him. The guide of hon. Members says that one of his interests is home entertaining, so perhaps he is entertaining this evening on behalf of some outside organisation. The hon. Member for Crosby acted as the Chairman of the Committee which considered the Bill, so, if anything, his responsibilities were even more quasi-judicial and impartial than those of other Committee members.

When I served on that Committee, I had a completely open mind about the facts that came before me. On every occasion, I tried to balance the evidence objectively. I examined it impartially and coolly. I tried to adduce facts from rhetoric, so that I could examine the details objectively to see whether the Bill was in the best interests of Britain. Since that was my responsibility, during our long sittings, I reminded myself that I had to handle the information objectively and in the best interests of the country. Anyone who serves in that quasi-judicial capacity has a similar responsibility, not just in Committee, but when the private Bill comes to the Floor of the House.

I would like you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to rule on the behaviour of the hon. Member for Bristol, East, and especially on the behaviour of the hon. Member for Crosby, who was Chairman of that Committee. They should have acted in a quasi-judicial capacity but, by signing this letter, they are inviting hon. Members to support the Bill. They have moved from being impartial to being proponents of the Bill. That transgresses the rules of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): The hon. Gentleman was courteous enough to tell me that he would raise this point of order. It is a very good try, but it has no relevance to the Chair. The House cannot go back to what went on in Committee. It is not a point of order with which the Chair should deal.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that the Chairman of a Standing Committee does not vote on the remaining stages of a Bill? You will be aware from your experience as the Chairman of many Standing Committees that it is almost a privilege of Chairmen that they do not vote on the remaining stages of Bills. It is odd that Chairmen of Standing Committees do not vote on Government business, whereas the Chairman of a Committee which considered a private Bill not only votes, but uses his name to persuade other hon. Members to vote in favour of the Bill.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. We believe that the Committee proceedings on the Bill were not conducted fairly—that the Bill was not given a proper hearing—insofar as, in the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), the Committee of Selection selected someone who had a preconceived view as to what the conclusion of the Committee should be. The Bill should be withdrawn because it is clear that the proceedings in Committee were improper. It was a loaded Committee with a partial Chairman.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I will deal with those two points of order. Standing Committee Chairmen dealing with public Bills do not vote on later stages. But this is a private Bill being dealt with on the Floor of the House and it is up to any hon. Member to vote as he or she wishes. I will not ask the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) to withdraw his criticism, but I hope that he will reconsider the remarks he made. If he has a criticism to make of anybody, he should table a substantive motion. Let us now get on.

11.45 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): On a point or order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The group of amendments which the House will next discuss concern the position of Fagbury flats and the environmental consequences, and my hon. Friends and I will wish to raise the importance of food chains in the ecological system and the way in which, if a food chain is disturbed, populations rapidly decline.

Would it be in order, Madam Deputy Speaker — given that about 20 per cent. of Tory Members are no longer in their places, it having been announced that the food chain in the Jubilee Room has been cancelled—to raise such issues on those amendments?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I note that hon. Members are retaining their sense of humour, but we must now move on.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I listened to my hon. Friends refer to the conduct of the Chairman of the Committee I recalled a suggestion given by the then Deputy Speaker—I do not know whether you were in the House at the time, Madam Deputy Speaker — in 1981 on a measure dealing with Lloyd's. Most Tory Members involved abided by his advice. He said they should think carefully before taking part in a Division on what was a private Bill. Most of them heeded his remarks and did not take part in the voting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) pointed out that on this occasion the Chairman of the Committee advised his hon. Friends not merely to vote on the issue but to play an even more active role. It now becomes a question of what should be done with that Chairman, who ignored the advice of a previous Deputy Speaker on a similar type of Bill.

I remind you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there have been occasions when retrospective action has been taken against hon. Members who have acted in a way contrary to rulings given by the Chair. I am not for a moment suggesting that such action should be taken in this case, but in view of what has occurred, I suggest that an explanation should be sought from the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). Accordingly, a personal

[Mr. Skinner]

statement should be made by him, and I feel that it would not be wise to proceed with the Bill until that statement has been made.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, I am not prepared to suspend proceedings on the Bill. No ruling has been broken and it is up to individual hon. Members, particularly on private Bills, to vote as they wish. They can accept or ignore guidance from the Chair, and if any hon. Member wishes to pursue this matter further a substantive motion should be tabled. What has been raised is not a matter for the Chair, and I think hon. Members know that. I hope that they will not pursue the matter further and that we can now proceed with the next group of amendments.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You have made it clear that hon. Members are entitled to follow their conscience in this matter and accept their own guidance. Can you give us some help as to whether it is in order for hon. Members who have obviously been entertained by those people outside the House who have a vested interest——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We have been down that path many times tonight. It is not a question for the Chair.

Mr. Davies *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I believe that the hon. Gentleman has finished his point of order.

Clause 2

INTERPRETATION

Mr. Hardy: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 4, line 9, leave out 'or any land reclaimed.'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 8 in clause 6, page 5, line 33, leave out

'enclosing an area of 95 hectares'.

No. 9, in page 5, line 39, leave out from 'and' to end of line 41 and insert

'contained within the limits shown on the deposited plans and described as "Limits of deviation work".'.

No. 12, in page 6, line 1, leave out from beginning to end of line 5.

No. 13, in page 6, line 2, after 'above', insert

'and subject to the consent in writing of the Secretary of State for the Environment.'.

Mr. Hardy: I immediately declare an interest. As the House may be aware, I am a member of the council for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. I have a substantial interest, but it is not financial.

Amendment No. 2 seeks to alter clause 2 by leaving out the words "or any land reclaimed". The aim of the amendment is to remove the activity of creating reclaimed land from the work—*[Interruption.]* One would have imagined that Conservative Members had already had the opportunity to indulge themselves this evening. The aim of the amendment—I am sorry to repeat myself, but I am prepared to do so frequently to assist those Conservative Members who wish to listen to the argument——

Mr. Grocott: To give added credibility to my hon. Friend's remarks, will he confirm that no hospitality suite has been provided by the RSPB in the House?

Mr. Hardy: If there was one, some of us would have strong objections because we value the donations that we receive from scores of thousands of members of the society and it would mean that that money was ill used.

The aim of the amendment is to remove the activity of creating reclaimed land from the work definition in clause 2. At the same time, the amendment will remove reclaimed land from the "power to make work" in clause 6. Therefore, the amendment is substantial and goes right to the heart of the argument relating to the wild bird interest — the subject of so much controversy in the deliberations on the Bill.

I do not wish to detain the House for long on this amendment.

Mr. Ron Davies: Why not?

Mr. Hardy: I will explain in due course.

Those of my hon. Friends who are interested in ornithology will be aware that there are quite a number of species of wild bird in the locality—*[Interruption.]* I am trying to be helpful to Conservative Members and it is very sad that they are not paying attention. I should have thought that they would be delighted with what I am about to say.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend has mentioned the various species involved. Can he tell us whether the bartailed godwit is one of the species involved?

Mr. Hardy: It is not one of the species to which I will pay attention. Whether that bird will be mentioned in a subsequent amendment remains to be seen.

Mr. Davies: Is the turnstone one of the species involved?

Mr. Hardy: No doubt the turnstone will be considered during our considerations. However, as I do not wish to be accused of contributing in a contracted debate, I have decided to concentrate my remarks on the Brent goose and the widgeon.

Mr. Davies: I must confess that I have difficulty in distinguishing the Brent goose from the Canada goose. How does my hon. Friend distinguish those birds in the field?

Mr. Hardy: All will be revealed.

Mr. Terry Lewis: The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) said about my hon. Friend that he knew only about tits. Will my hon. Friend name all the birds that will be affected?

Mr. Hardy: If my hon. Friend is patient, by the time we reach the end of the debate he will have learned a great deal about the various species of bird found in the Felixstowe area.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am not a paid-up member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, but I have an intense interest in the birds' welfare. I hope that my hon. Friend will dwell in detail on the feeding grounds of birds for the benefit of hon. Members such as myself who do not have his knowledge. Any information that my hon. Friend can give will be very welcome.

Mr. Hardy: During that intervention I heard one of my hon. Friends say from a sedentary position that the hon.

Member for Tatton had gone. I imagine that those Conservative Members remaining share the lust for knowledge of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham, (Dr. Marek).

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I am anxious that my hon. Friend should make clear that the tits that have an interest in Felixstowe are the one-winged variety and are not right-winged tits.

Mr. Hardy: Given the remarks that have been made from a sedentary position by Conservative Members and the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), who has a profound interest in those matters, I think that is relevant. I had always understood that the hon. Member for Tatton was interested in opencast mining, an interest that some Labour Members do not enthuse about to the same extent. I will restrict my remarks on the amendments to the Brent goose and the widgeon because I do not want to prolong my contribution. I can illustrate the effects of the amendments by reference to only those two species. On other amendments I will speak about other species of birds, and hon. Members with an interest in ornithology will have an opportunity to contribute. I offer the assurance that, to help the House and to avoid causing indigestion to Conservative Members by going too far on the amendments, I will not deal with the whole range of species.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On the point about Members' digestion, will my hon. Friend, when describing and identifying those birds, on each occasion tell us whether they are edible.

Mr. Hardy: When my hon. Friend rose to intervene I did not think what he was saying was relevant. However, I recall now that when, some years ago, we were debating the Wildlife and Countryside Bill, I had to make a necessarily lengthy speech about another species of bird — the goldeneye. Unfortunately, my speech was enormously lengthened by the intervention of an hon. Member—I am relieved to see that he is not with us this evening—who confessed to having eaten the bird. So, perhaps, while I am debating the birds that are important in the context of Felixstowe, some hon. Members may feel moved to confess that they have eaten these species. If they do, I am sure that we can forgive them if they confess in a contrite manner. The fact remains that the goldeneye is an attractive bird, and I suspect that some Conservative Members may have eaten it at some time.

12 midnight

We are not proposing that the birds should be considered this evening for culinary reasons. We are here because we want them and their habitat to be retained.

Mr. Ron Davies: Before my hon. Friend develops the theme of the culinary properties of the goldeneye, perhaps he will now answer the question that I asked him before: how would he distinguish between Brent and Canada geese at a glance in the field?

Mr. Hardy: To satisfy temporarily my hon. Friend's curiosity, I may say that the principal difference between the birds is one of size. However, I shall reveal more as we proceed. Before I discuss the Brent goose and the widgeon, I want to make some introductory remarks about the amendment.

The Bill aims at expanding the port of Felixstowe in a north-westerly direction up the Orwell estuary. That will involve dock construction and quay faces supported by heavy equipment such as cranes, fixed installations, towers and elevated lighting. Such construction will mean destroying critical inter-tidal areas comprising mud flats and salt marsh. As has been said earlier in the debate, there are some quaint names in the area, and the flats are known as the Fagbury flats.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend has come to an interesting point. I believe that the flats are famous for old oyster beds. Oyster are not now in common supply—they are sometimes polluted and rather suspect for consumption. Are the oyster beds first-class oyster beds, producing edible oysters to the advantage of the country?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Wentworth will deal in great detail with all those things.

Mr. Hardy: I shall try to deal with these matters in detail without detaining the House unduly. I am getting more exercise than I care for.

Mr. Ron Davies: In view of the problem that we have had on the Gower of oyster fishermen shooting oyster catchers, will my hon. Friend tell us whether a viable population of oyster catchers is associated with the oyster beds? If so, will the Bill prejudice the environment that is so necessary to their continued existence?

Mr. Hardy: So as not to detain the House unduly, I suggested that I would concentrate in this batch of amendments on the Brent goose and the widgeon. On a later batch of amendments one can properly consider the oyster catcher.

Mr. Skinner: It is not just a question of the birds. My hon. Friend is old enough to recall that, before Colchester became a league team, it got to the third round proper of the FA cup. When those responsible were asked why the team had made such magnificent progress, they said that they were feeding their team on the oysters off Fagbury flats. My hon. Friend may not want to deal with it now when he is talking about the widgeon, but when we get to that set of amendments he may want to dwell upon the fact that the Minister for Sport, for example, could do with a few oysters, along with his spinach. So it is a very important point, not just from the aspect of the birds.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right.

Mr. Skinner: I was speaking about paragraph 2, by the way.

Mr. Hardy: We have to make sure in the hours that follow that we do not cast too many pearls before swine. That is not on any paragraph. I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The food that can be extracted from Fagbury flats might be more relevant to a subsequent amendment, probably No. 42.

Fagbury flats are vital. In a debate in the last Parliament I spoke about the relevance of this area to Britain's standing in international conservation. As chairman of the Council of Europe environment committee, I obviously have a considerable interest in Britain's standing in that respect. It is regrettable that after the Government have accepted that the area should be registered within the Ramsar convention as an important international wildlife resource to be safeguarded other

[Mr. Hardy]

than at times of dire national need, they can so easily and lightheartedly allow this Ramsar site to be ruined despite the existence of vast alternatives for dock provision.

At a meeting this morning I noticed in a document which clearly had originated in the Department of the Environment a reference to the Minister of State being the important guest speaker at a reception to announce that Langstone and Chichester harbours were to be areas of special protection under the EC birds directive and would be recognised as internationally important wetlands under the Ramsar convention. There the Government were informing the world about that at the very time that all Conservative Members are united in seeking to remove from Ramsar protection a site of even more importance.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I assure my hon. Friend that his expertise on ornithology is well recognised in the House? Certainly my hon. Friends and I respect him for the wisdom and the care that he brings to these matters. Will he confirm that the site under discussion has already been indentified under the Ramsar convention as a site deserving special protection? Will my hon. Friend also say that it has been confirmed as a site deserving special protection under the EEC birds directive?

Mr. Hardy: I believe that, had the Bill not emerged, the area would be registered by now as an area of special protection under the EEC birds directive. The EEC would recognise that the ornithological and conservation interest in this site was such as to make it more than suitable for inclusion in the treaty.

Mr. Skinner: Reference to the Common Market—or the EEC, as my hon. Friend calls it — may be made from time to time in the debate. I am anxious to help my hon. Friend in everything he does to try to prevent the Bill from being used to extend the Felixstowe port, but he will begin to upset one or two of us if he keeps talking about the Common Market as though it were wonderful.

I do not for a moment think that the Common Market would have done anything to preserve this area. I know that my hon. Friend has views about this, but I hope that he will not upset some of us with this Common Market job. It has cost us £8 billion to be a member of this club. It could not do enough, even within the next 100 years, to pay East Anglian taxpayers back the money that they have poured in to the Common Market. Do not glorify the Common Market. My hon. Friend voted with me against it on 28 October 1971—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Member's deep interest in the Common Market, but we are debating amendments that do not relate to it.

Mr. Skinner: I just want to finish this point because it is——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), who has the Floor, has taken the hon. Member's intervention on board.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will appreciate that I gave greater emphasis to the Ramsar convention, which has nothing to do with the Common Market, than to the EEC birds directive.

Mr. Ron Davies: I hope that when my hon. Friend replies to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) he will make it clear that the Ramsar convention has nothing to do with the Common Market.

Mr. Skinner: That is all right.

Mr. Davies: I am gratified to note that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover understands that the Ramsar convention is an international convention. Ramsar is a small town in Iran, not an acronym. It was the site of the original international conference that ratified the treaty extending the protection of birds. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) makes it clear to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that the EEC, through the birds directive, has shown itself to be far more progressive than the Government. Whenever we——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that interventions are getting far too long and that the House is forgetting who has the Floor.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) is stretching credulity. The suggestion that the EEC is more progressive than the Government is an accurate observation — but everything is more progressive than the Government.

Mr. Ron Davies: I was not suggesting for one moment that the EEC is more progressive on all matters. The EEC has taken initiatives on bird, environment and habitat protection, yet every time the Government have rejected EEC developments.

Mr. Hardy: There is some justice in my hon. Friend's point. If the EEC wished to improve nature conservation in Britain and Europe, I should be delighted. The only time that I get annoyed is when my committee and the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe take a forward step that is reported—if it is reported at all in the British press — as a decision from the EEC rather than from a body that I regard as rather more estimable.

12.15 am

Mr. Fatchett: I do not want to divert the argument any further about the merits of the Common Market although some interesting points have been made. Is not the real point that my hon. Friend should be making that we have an area of outstanding natural beauty which is very important for the ecological reasons that my hon. Friend has outlined, but the Government are trying to maintain the pretence in these procedures that they have no views on the matter? Our criticism is not whether the EEC is better than the Government or vice versa, but why the Government have no view on the matter. They should have a view and the truth is that they maintain the pretence, but they have a view which they hide behind a public corporation.

Mr. Hardy: That is relevant. However, worse than that, almost everything that has been said so far in connection with the amendment has been relevant to the responsibilities of the Department of the Environment. I can see that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is now sitting on the Government Front Bench. He was a Minister in the DOE 10 years ago. However, I do not see anyone there who bears any responsibility for environment matters now, and that is a disgrace. We are discussing the destruction of a Ramsar site and an EEC candidate site, yet not one Environment Minister is present.

Mr. Ron Davies: I had to table certain questions to the Department of the Environment last week and I know that my hon. Friend will be very interested to learn that the golden plover is a protected species under the EEC birds directive, but under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is allowed as a quarry species. Will my hon. Friend tell us whether the golden plover is likely to lose any habitat or breeding habitat? If that is the case, as a natural consequence of the presumed passage of the Bill, should we attempt to put pressure on the Government to remove the golden plover from the schedule of quarry species in the 1981 Act?

Mr. Hardy: That was a relevant intervention. If the Government were really serious and believed that the national interest had to be served by the destruction of the site, one would imagine them telling the conservation bodies that recognise that they are engaged in dreadful destruction and want to make up for that by providing enhanced protection for those species which may be affected by the destruction. The golden plover may figure there, but as far as I am aware, it is not one of the significant species.

Mr. Skinner: I do not know whether the golden plover is actually the ringed plover——

Mr. Hardy: No.

Mr. Skinner: We live and we learn. From my information, to which I had intended to refer later but which I will mention now, according to the document sent to Opposition Members—and we did not have to go to the Jubilee Room to get it—223 ringed plover are in danger. If my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) is going to raise distractions about golden plovers, the result is that we will have to stay up all night. Some of us have come here to try to talk reason.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is suggesting for one moment that my constructive interventions on the relevance of the germane speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth was in any way intended to delay the——

Madame Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order.

Mr. Hardy: Clearly the Committee is not eager to be as disciplined in its selection of birds to match amendments as I would have thought originally. To clarify the matter and assist the Committee, I can state that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) is more of an expert in ornithology than I.

I said at the beginning of my remarks that I would deal with the Brent goose and the widgeon on these amendments, to avoid tedious repetition. We may well talk about the ringed plover and the oyster catcher on the next amendment, as well as the dunlin, redshank and turnstone, which are also particularly important species in this regard.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, who is a distinguished ornithologist in his own right——

Mr. Grocott: And twitcher.

Mr. Hardy: The popular name for them is twitcher, as my hon. Friend points out.

Two years ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe saw for himself a rare visitor to Britain which had wandered across the Atlantic, and which is still the subject of serious debate in ornithological circles. My hon. Friend may wish to identify the species concerned, because it will not be mentioned again.

Mr. Morley: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is this an intervention?

Mr. Morley: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I should like to clarify some of the points that have been raised about the golden plover. That species is certainly affected — not only the Eurasian variety, but the lesser golden plover, both the North American and the Siberian races. I understand that the British Ornithologists Union intends shortly to separate the lesser golden plover into those two species, the North American and the Asian. That is of considerable importance. As for the Brent goose——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is making a speech. If he wishes to catch my eye at some stage, I shall be perfectly willing to allow him to do so, but an intervention should be a question or a pertinent comment.

Mr. Hardy: I am most grateful for the information given by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ron Davies: It is common practice among those interested in ornithology not only to use the common names, such as golden plover, or Siberian golden plover, but—to differentiate precisely between the species—to use the Latin names. It is a matter of scientific precision. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) could consult our hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), so that we could be accurate about the species that we are discussing.

This is relevant, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the House is under an obligation, not only under EC regulations—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is desperately concerned about this——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's point has been taken. I repeat that interventions should be either questions or pertinent comments.

Mr. Hardy: You are absolutely right, Madam Deputy Speaker. I suggest that my hon. Friends intervene rather less frequently. I had assumed that I would have sat down by now, but I have a good deal left to say. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly made a relevant point. If this debate is read internationally—it may be, because there is international interest in conservation—it is right that, to assist identification, I should tell the House that the Latin name of the Brent goose is Branta bernicula and that the Latin name of the widgeon is Anas penelope.

Mr. Skinner: Opposition Members are now talking in Latin. Only last week Tory Members of Parliament said that they wanted Latin to be part of the core curriculum. I am fighting against a national curriculum. I want to know about the 223 ringed plovers, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is only bothered about the 1,500 Brent geese and the 1,800 widgeon. The

[Mr. Skinner]

minorities are being left out of the discussion. The Opposition have fought for years for minority interests, so my hon. Friend should stop speaking in Latin. It is linked to the Common Market.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend knows that Latin was spoken before the treaty of Rome was drafted, and Latin will no doubt be spoken when the treaty of Rome is no more than a memory.

I have assisted my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly by giving him the Latin names for the Brent goose and the widgeon. We should ensure that those who deal with conservation matters use scientific names for those birds. I hope to assist him further by providing the scientific identification of other birds.

The Brent goose and the widgeon are two very important birds. I shall deal later with the oyster catcher and the ringed plover.

Dr. Marek: Does my hon. Friend realise that this group of amendments is crucial? They cover all the birds that are to be found on these marshes. He said earlier that he would deal in detail with the oyster catcher. I do not want to rush my hon. Friend, but I hope that he will refer in detail to the oyster catcher and the ringed plover after he has dealt with the Brent goose and the widgeon.

Mr. Hardy *rose*——

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend (Mr. Hardy) please refer to the importance of the area that lies between the low and the high tide marks? If that area is not covered by sea water, the invertebrates and the oyster catchers will suffer—as will the entire bird population that depends upon the intertidal area. The bartailed godwit will disappear, as will the golden plover and the oyster catcher.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am quite sure that, if he is given the opportunity, the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will make that quite clear.

Mr. Hardy: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Damage will be caused to the habitat if this amendment is not accepted. Conservative Members have remained silent so far, but many of them will wish to refer to the species that have already been mentioned and also to others that will be mentioned later.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend is being too kind to Conservative Members. He said that Conservative Members have remained silent so far, but my hon. Friend will recall that, when he referred to the importance of international conservation, Conservative Members laughed. The only conclusion to be drawn from that is that they are not interested in any of these birds.

Mr. Hardy: Perhaps I am being too generous; my hon. Friend is probably right—it is a matter for regret.

12.30 am

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Speaking as a layman, are these oysters the type that produce pearls? If they are, surely by getting rid of them we are depriving the Tories of a huge economic advantage in the production of pearls in the oyster bed?

Mr. Hardy: The problem with oysters in British waters is that the rapacity of the people who own them is such that they do not allow the oyster to live long enough to produce a pearl of any substantial worth.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: As to oysters, will my hon. Friend take into account the fact that at one time the oyster was a significant ingredient in the traditional Lancashire hot-pot? However, the oyster beds were destroyed by the greed and rapacity of the owners, which is why it is so fundamentally important for the heritage of the nation, in a matter of such special scientific interest, that we preserve them.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend's intervention allows me to illustrate the imperfections of Government, in that not long ago large number of oyster catcher birds were shot in an authorised cull, which today the authorities would agree was unwise and unnecessary. I think that the authorities regret the destruction of the oyster catchers.

Mr. Fatchett: With regard to my previous intervention about the reaction of Tory Members, there may be some economic advantage in the shooting of the oyster catchers. Will my hon. Friend say whether any of these birds are quarry species under the definition of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981? That is a germane fact, so I hope that my hon. Friend will cover it in his speech.

Mr. Hardy: We will deal with that in due course, but of the quarry species the widgeon is probably the most common.

Mr. Ron Davies: I remind my hon. Friend that it is not only the widgeon that is in jeopardy. The golden plover, which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is very worried about, is a quarry species under the 1981 Act. Licences are granted for the taking from the wild of peregrine falcons, sparrowhawks, merlins and golden plovers to use them as birds of falconry. Some Tory Members take delight in taking birds of prey from the wild and then training them for their own malicious and bloodthirsty purposes. We must ensure that the golden plover is protected.

Mr. Hardy: We seem to be devoting a considerable amount of attention to the golden plover. It did not figure in the count that has already been referred to, although I tend to agree with my hon. Friend's analysis.

If Tory Members have any interest in conservation, they cannot complain about the detailed attention that is being given by my hon. Friends to the amendment. They should consider my case, which I shall now advance in case I forget to do so later. When it considered the Bill, the Committee received a great deal of information.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *indicated assent.*

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds signified his assent to that proposition. He will accept that the Nature Conservancy Council did not give evidence to the Committee. The NCC possesses the most information about wildlife and nature matters on these islands. The Nature Conservancy Council should not have been prevented by the Department of the Environment from appearing before the Committee as a petitioner. Once again, I regret that no Minister from the Department is present. Change proceeds slowly in Parliament. When an hon. Member makes a serious point, Ministers from the Department should be required to be here. Where are they? Have they gone away?

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): Perhaps they have gone shooting.

Mr. Hardy: As my hon. Friend says, perhaps they have gone shooting. Perhaps they have gone elsewhere, looking for champagne.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am sure that I do not need to remind my hon. Friend that, under the wildlife and countryside legislation, the taking of most quarry species between the hours of midnight and dawn is outlawed.

Mr. Hardy: Of course. My hon. Friend is right. I do not suggest that, at this time, Ministers from the Department of the Environment are taking any species, whether or not they be quarry species.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend must allow me to reply to one intervention before he offers another. Let us proceed in an orderly manner.

I do not in any way suggest that Ministers are breaking the law or that they are doing anything else that may be lawful but which may not be proper at this time. The fact remains that they are not here. One of the Ministers from the Department should be here.

Mr. Skinner: We should consider for a moment or two —not for too long because it would upset you Madam Deputy Speaker—where the other seven Ministers of the Department are. Some of them are gunmen. I want to know whether they plan to go out tomorrow and shoot the 223 ringed plover about which my hon. Friend will not speak. He will not even give us the Latin name for the ringed plover. Why does he not talk about them and the 576 turnstone? What are they? Never mind whether Tory Ministers will shoot the birds tomorrow—they probably will. We should concern ourselves with the small number of birds. If we lose some of the 1,800 widgeon there will still be some widgeon. If the 223 ringed plover go, there will be no ringed plover left. It is time that my hon. Friend talked about the small groups of birds that are in danger.

Mr. Hardy: First, I did not say that I would refuse to speak about the ringed plover—everything in its place. I suggested that, if my hon. Friend exercised a little patience and a little restraint, we shall deal with it. I tell him that Charadrius hiaticula is the latin name of the ringed plover. He asked about the turnstone. Its latin name is Arenaria interpres. I hope that I have enlightened my hon. Friend.

I indirectly referred to the ringed plover when I made the point that, together with the estuary of the River Stour, the Orwell site has been proposed for listing under the Ramsar convention and as a special area under the EEC directive.

A large part of the River Orwell, including the mudflats and the adjacent salt marsh, has already been notified as a site of special scientific interest under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) may have enlightened my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), but he has not enlightened me. I would like to be able to form a balanced judgment of the amendment. Apparently, there are only 223 ringed plovers on the marshes, whereas there are 1,800 widgeon. Does my hon. Friend know how many widgeon and how many golden ringed plovers there are in the United Kingdom as a whole and can he tell us the relative merits of each bird and how rare it is?

Mr. Hardy: I shall have to curtail my speech to assist my hon. Friend. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hardy: No, I shall not give way for a few minutes. It is essential that we should proceed with the process of enlightenment so that my hon. Friends can understand the nature of the birds under serious threat.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover suggested that the ringed plover would die. My point is that all these representatives of species will die if the Bill goes through as drafted.

Mr. Davies: There is an important distinction to be drawn between the ringed plover and the golden plover. My hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) referred to the golden ringed plover, but in fact we are talking about two separate species, the ringed plover and the golden plover. We were told earlier that the golden plover receives special protection under the EC birds directive. At the same time, it is a quarry species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Let me put some simple questions to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). Will he tell us the Latin names so that we may be quite clear which species we are discussing and give us a ready field identification of the two species? Will he also tell us whether the ringed plover is a quarry species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act? If it is not, what steps would he propose to extend to the golden plover the protection afforded to the ringed plover?

Mr. Hardy: I subscribe to the view that the Department of the Environment should respond readily to the advice of the Nature Conservancy Council. I believe that the NCC should act quickly——

Mr. Skinner: Is that a quango?

Mr. Hardy: It is a reputable body that deserves considerable respect.

Mr. Skinner: Is it a quango?

Mr. Hardy: It is going that way, but it serves a necessary purpose. My hon. Friend will appreciate that I would much rather decisions were based on the advice of the Nature Conservancy Council than on Ministers getting out of bed the wrong side. Ministers deserve to get out of bed the wrong side tomorrow; they will no doubt be looking round to find out why their colleagues from the Department of the Environment were not here today. As it is, they are having to listen and are being enlightened, albeit reluctantly.

To assist my hon. Friends I should now discuss the two species of Branta bernicula, the Brent goose. My hon. Friends will recall that there were 1,500 at the relevant count and that only the widgeon and the dunlin were more numerous when the count took place. The Brent goose is one of the black geese——

Mr. Ron Davies: Are they edible?

Mr. Hardy: I do not think that my hon. Friend would like them; he might find widgeon rather more palatable. I do not suggest that any of the species should be eaten, although they might as well be eaten if the site is destroyed, because they will have nowhere else to go. I can imagine Conservative Members saying, "Well, they may as well grace our dinner tables as fly about looking vainly for somewhere to live."

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) talked about minority groups in the bird population. Is it not the case that there are two sub-species of Brent goose—Branta bernicula, the dark-bellied race which comes from northern Europe and Branta hrota, the pale-bellied race which comes from Greenland? Is it not also the case that there have been sightings in the area of the black-bellied Branta, which is a North American sub-species?

12.45 am

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right. We shall now continue to educate the House.

The Brent goose, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly will confirm, is the smallest of the wild geese. It is no larger than the drake mallard. It is about 23 in long and, if I have to use the decimal measures, it is about 58 or 59 cm on average. The smallest of the geese has a totally black head. The one to which I am referring is the smallest of the wholly black-necked geese. It has a black neck and upper breast, with a white patch on each side of the neck, back and rump. The wings are a dark grey-brown and the tail feathers are white. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly must allow me to complete this section of my speech. He should listen.

The underparts are slate grey in the dark-breasted geese, and they breed in Arctic Europe. That bird probably starts from the Taimyr peninsular in the north of Asia and flies all those hundreds of miles back to its home on the Orwell. If the Government have their way it will fly away to the Taimyr peninsula, then it will fly all those hundreds of miles back, and when it arrives where will its habitat have gone?

Mr. Skinner: I know where it will land. Those birds will finish up on a P and O liner breakfast table. It took me two hours to sus that out. There is money to be had, and it will start with the ringed plover. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) should deal with that matter. He says that there are different varieties of Brent geese. I accept that, but how many different varieties of ringed plover are there? If we are concerned about saving birds and preventing them from landing on the breakfast table of the P and O liner, we should concentrate on the small number of ringed plovers. Too much effort is being put into saving widgeon and Brent geese; it is time my hon. Friend turned his attention to the small groups, especially when the Liberal and Social Democratic party Members have not turned up to look after the minorities. They do not care about the ringed plovers. We have to represent them in the House.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend's concern does him a great deal of credit. I have known my hon. Friend for many years and I have never before seen him demonstrate innocence and naivety in the House. My hon Friend suspects that P and O will be serving ringed plover to its customers. I do not think that it will. That is not because of any compassion or commitment to conservation but because the ringed plover is much smaller than the Brent goose, which is a small goose. A Brent goose is 23 in long, but the ringed plover is about 7 in long. There is a lot more meat on a Brent goose than on a ringed plover.

Therefore, when Conservative Members and their friends see an opportunity to remove all those species and decide that, because they have no home to go to, they may as well eat them, they will first be looking for the weightier birds that will be more nourishing and satisfying. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover would like the taste of the ringed plover. I have never tasted one, but no doubt some Conservative Members have.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Given the interest of our hon. and mutual Friend, the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) in the ringed plover, would my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) care to speculate on whether his interest may be due to its characteristics? It is described as a bird having disrupted head and breast markings, rather like my hon. Friend, the Member for Bolsover. It is different because it is generally inconspicuous, but it becomes conspicuous when it calls or darts to catch prey, rather like my hon. Friend. Will my hon. Friend let us give him the bad news? While he is worried about the 223 ringed plovers, that figure referred only to the bad winter of 1984-85. Over 500 were counted at high tide between 1982-85, so the problem is more serious than the House has been led to believe.

Mr. Hardy: The point made by my hon. Friend is relevant. We are talking about one count for the season 1984-85. The number varies, although many species tend to be stable.

Mr. Skinner: That is why they travel south.

Mr. Hardy: Some travel south; otherwise, they may finish up on a supper table. My hon. Friends may be enlightened and intrigued if I complete the description of the Brent goose. I have mentioned the colour and said that they breed in Arctic Europe, although the paler grey breeds in Spitzbergen and Greenland. Wherever they breed in the northern areas——

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hardy: I will in a moment, but I want to finish the description. My hon. Friend referred to the absence from the debate of the minority parties. It is a pity, because they may have liked to hear, and perhaps copy, the distinctive sound the Brent goose makes. Its croaking noise, as far as it can be expressed in the English language, is a croaking 'Gruk, gruk, gruk'.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, some consideration ought to be paid to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), one of the key promoters of the Bill, who not only has his back to the Chair, but also is discussing ways and means of drawing the debate to a halt. I can hear him talking about when the closure will be moved. What right have Conservative hon. Members to talk about the closure?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is outside the normal speaking area of the Chamber. There is no point of order.

Dr. Marek: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been in the House for five years and have never seen Conservative Members lying flat on the bench with their feet on the seat, fast asleep. Is that in order?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The position any hon. Member wishes to take on the Benches has nothing to do with the Chair, but I expect hon. Members in any quarter of the House to show respect and decorum while in the Chamber.

Mr. Hardy: Perhaps it would be helpful to the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) if a Brent goose were to waddle through the chamber, put his beak to the hon. Member's ear and go 'Gruk, gruk, gruk'. We do not seem to have had any effect on the hon. Gentleman, but I hope that his recumbent position allows him comfortably to accept the arguments I am advancing.

I hope that I have said enough about the Brent goose to illustrates it attractive appearance——

Mr. Morley: Before my hon. Friend finishes with the Brent goose, will he confirm that it has a specialised diet of eel grass and weeds——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The diet of these fowl or fish has nothing to do with the amendment. I was about to ask the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) to speak more directly to the amendment.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm that this group of amendments relates specifically to reclaiming an area of marshes? If the land is reclaimed, the food which it provides for the birds will no longer be available. It should be in order for us to describe the problems that will be generated by the reclamation of the land for the birds which feed in the area.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We have had a very wide debate on this group of amendments. I have been very tolerant. It has been an interesting and illuminating debate, but the House must be brought back to the amendments on the amendment paper I ask the hon. Member for Wentworth to relate his speech more directly to the amendments.

Mr. Hardy: I shall do so, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I appeal to my hon. Friends to be careful when making their interesting interventions not to persuade me to say anything irrelevant. I shall now speak only to the amendment and will not be distracted. I ask my hon. Friends to think before they intervene.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hardy: I hope that my hon. Friend has thought about it.

Mr. Davies: Every intervention in my hon. Friend's speech so far has been carefully thought out. Not only that, but if they had been out of order, I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would have ruled them out of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Indeed I would.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend has mentioned Brent geese. We are anxious to know the extent to which the feeding habits of Brent geese would be destroyed if the Bill was passed. My hon. Friend said that there are two sub-species of Brent geese——

Mr. Morley: Three.

Mr. Davies: That is a matter of ornithological dispute between me and my hon. Friend. I believe that there are two recognisable sub-species——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is this an intervention or a speech? If it is an intervention, will the hon. Gentleman make his point so that it can be properly answered?

Mr. Davies: It is an intervention. I understand that there are two recognisable European sub-species of Brent geese, and I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would say which sub-species he means. There is a general westward shift of the European population during the winter; perhaps my hon. Friend will say which sub-species will be affected by the Bill.

Mr. Hardy: I am talking about the darker — the black-bellied — Brent goose. I hope that that enlightens my hon. Friend.

The amendment relates to the inter-tidal mud flats and salt marshes where those species of bird obtain their food. It will be impossible entirely to overlook their sources of food. I do not wish to press the point too much, but I may have to mention it when considering the other amendments in the group. We have accepted that amendment No. 2 is the most significant, as it involves an attempt to protect the mud flats, but amendments Nos. 8 and 9 are also worth mentioning. They would help to limit the environmental damage that would occur if the docks were extended and the mud flat and salt marsh were destroyed. They would change the approach being taken to the construction of the docks and at the same time would enable the company to go ahead. Because of that, I regard them as second best, and I hope that those who speak on behalf of the promoters will accept that the amendments enable some gesture to be made towards conservation.

I am

Being proposed is the construction of a concrete island linked to the existing docks at Trinity terminal. The only attractive aspect of that is the alliterative quality of the title. Thus, dock movements could take place in the south-east of the development, and the north-west of this concrete peninsula would be left open so that much of the mud flat and salt marsh area would remain. This would provide for some of the birds an opportunity to survive — until no doubt the pollution which one associates with such developments kill them all off.

Conservative Members may feel that the company should be given carte blanche to destroy the area wholesale. We shall see when those who speak for the promoters comment on these amendments, which offer something of a halfway house.

Mr. Skinner: Would my hon. Friend explain which side of the quay is involved?

Mr. Hardy: The amendments refer to the construction of a quay frontage along the line intended by the company. My hon. Friend may care to consult the sketch map of the area. They would not allow the whole Fagbury flats to be reclaimed and would therefore apply to the seaward side of the concrete frontage.

Amendment No. 12 is consequential, so that if Nos. 8 and 9 are agreed to, No. 12 would also have to be accepted.

The RSPB has described these amendments as an imaginative suggestion which would reduce the need to enclose and reclaim areas of mud flat and salt marsh and would reduce to some extent the amount of damage that would be caused to the valuable wildlife habitat of the estuary. It will be interesting to learn whether those who support the Bill are prepared to accept these compromise amendments.

Mr. Skinner: One can never be sure how one change in the coastline in one particular area has relevance to a change that takes place in another part because of different tides and so on. I remember that when we were discussing

[Mr. Skinner]

the Eastbourne Harbour Act 1980, which entailed changes to the entire coastline of that area, we had the same arguments about whether those changes would affect the birds and the marine life.

I know that my hon. Friend has great insight regarding wildlife and I wonder whether he has made any observations about what has happened to wildlife as a result of the Eastbourne marina development and the changes that have taken place at Brighton. If we can stop this Bill perhaps a visit could be arranged to Eastbourne to discuss with the RSPB, Greenpeace, the conservationists and so on the effects of those changes. That would be of some relevance to the area under consideration in this Bill.

Mr. Hardy: I am aware that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, have cautioned us about our approach to the amendments, but I believe that my hon. Friend is right to refer to the chain effect that can occur. Dramatic and substantial developments in one area can have equally dramatic effects elsewhere.

A little while ago I prepared a report for the Council of Europe about the release of poison into the Rhine in Switzerland by the Sandoz plant at Basle. Some days later in the Netherlands people were not allowed to take water from the Rhine for drinking for a period of four days. We must recognise the effects that a change in one area can have on another. It is another argument in support of the amendments.

If hon. Members care to refresh their memories they will notice that amendment No. 13 states:

> "and subject to the consent in writing of the Secretary of State for the Environment."

It is yet another reason why a Minister from the Department of the Environment should be here. There is a specific reference to the ministerial responsibilities that that Department should exercise. All kinds of people are cluttering up the Treasury Bench this evening, but not one Minister from the Department of the Environment is present.

I am pleased to see the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine). He made such a convincing argument last night. I hope that he is paying attention to this Bill because he will discover that the arguments in support of our case are just as telling. The Secretary of State or one of his minions from the Department of the Environment should be here because we are seeking to assist them.

Mr. Skinner: Earlier I mentioned that perhaps Ministers were getting some shuteye, ready to shoot the birds on Fagbury flats. I would not wish to withdraw that comment, but I have reflected upon the fact that the Committee on the Local Government Bill is upstairs now. I do not think that it would be a bad idea if we could make sure that somebody was alerted in that Committee so that one of the Ministers for the Environment could come down here to listen to the debate and hear my hon. Friend's lucid arguments. If that request can be made through the Chair that is all well and good. One of the people on the Treasury Front Bench should go upstairs to see one of the Environment Ministers so that they can come down to the Chamber to participate fully in this debate.

Mr. Hardy: The Government have an almost obscene majority. They will have a majority in that Committee of at least three. Indeed, several of those members will have spent their time in the Corridor drinking tea instead of attending to the duties of the Committee. They would be better off coming down here. A Department of the Environment Minister should be present while we consider amendment No. 13 because it refers specifically to the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for the Environment. I shall explain why. Conservative Members may then be so moved that one of them, or a Government Whip, will fetch a Minister to listen to my remarks.

The amendment is very straightforward and is not as convoluted as some that we consider. Its central intention is the protection of the environment. It proposes that the Secretary of State will have to consent before dock construction and related development can occur.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has stressed the point that a Minister from the Department of the Environment should be present. On reflection, is that such a great idea? We have an ex-Secretary of State for the Environment in the Chamber. This is just a suggestion, but I wonder whether my hon. Friend would be satisfied if the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) stood in. We know that he is trying to make a come-back to the Front Bench. It is not for Labour Members to get excited about who follows Thatcher, but there is just half a chance that, if he can get by the Mace without picking it up, he will be prepared to listen to the debate and shed some light on Fagbury flats.

Mr. Hardy: If the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) moved a little he would be standing at the Bar of the House. Some hon. Members have occasionally taken the view that the right hon. Gentleman deserved to be brought before the Bar of the House. I hope that I am not breaching parliamentary convention. When the right hon. Gentleman was Secretary of State, he took a rather more helpful view about conservation than the present incumbent. That is not saying a lot, but on balance we accept that his decisions on the green belt and other conservations issues were more acceptable than the decisions of the present Secretary of State.

We take the view—and I think that it is a reasonable one—that the Secretary of State should ensure that all necessary steps are taken to protect wildlife. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Henley accepts that the Secretary of State is the guardian of the environment. Given that, we are entitled to ask not merely that a Minister should be present, but that the Secretary of State accepts the responsibilities conferred on him by the amendments.

On 15 July last year the House legislated to provide that, before primary works could take place, the consent of the Secretary of State for Transport had to be obtained. If the Secretary of State for Transport has to consent, why should not the Secretary of State for the Environment have to consent before we wipe out a site of national importance? I should have thought that the weight of responsibility was heavier in respect of the environment than of transport. The works under that legislation were defined as land reclaimed for dock construction and the Secretary of State had to be satisfied that that work would commence within a year and that there was no alternative land available. I hope that when, in due course, I conclude my remarks, he will speak on behalf of the Bill's sponsors and give us the assurances that we seek.

I hope that hon. Members recognise the importance of the amendments, which would make the Secretary of State for the Environment responsible for ensuring that the environmental interest was protected at all times. They would also mean that the development could not proceed unless the Secretary of State was satisfied about that. In certain practical matters, for example, his influence could be crucial. He could ensure that the development took place at an appropriate time to minimise the harm to the bird population. He could also ensure that the whole approach was acceptable to conservation interests. Doing that would preserve some aspects of the SSSI approach, to which the Government have not paid sufficient attention.

1.15 am

Dr. Moonie: Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of the Secretary of State for the Environment, I want to dwell on an important point of public health, which is my particular interest. It concerns possible changes to the tidal flows, which, in turn, affect sewage outfalls. It is well known that semi-treated sewage, which we deposit so often in this country, is contaminated with bacteria of the salmonella group that are known to affect birds of the species to which my hon. Friend has referred. The natural diet of the birds includes grasses and weeds that are not usually contaminated, assuming that outfalls are far enough out to sea and not disturbed by changes in the hydrodynamic flow in the estuary concerned; but if changes occur to the outfalls because of works of the type that we are discussing, they will not necessarily be free of such contamination.

Mr. Hardy: I would not dream of disagreeing with my hon. Friend, who, in his short time in the House, has already demonstrated his profound knowledge of matters of great concern.

Mr. Skinner: Just like Dr. Finlay.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is a real doctor, not a fictitious television personality.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) has a wonderful smooth voice and bedside manner. I should like to hear more of what he has to say. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) should lightly dismiss what my hon. Friend has to say. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth knows all about Brent geese and widgeon, but he does not care too much about ringed plover. If we have learned one thing this evening, it is that my hon. Friend does not care a great deal about 223 ringed plover. His heart lies with the Brent geese. I want my hon. Friend to pay some attention to what my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy said.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is too long, and he knows that to be the case. Will he now come to the point?

Mr. Skinner: If the sewage flow is changed, there will be a stink on Fagbury flats. That is not only a matter for the birds.

Mr. Hardy: The natural habitat of the British Isles is contracting. We should not seek to destroy the flora and fauna further by these obnoxious and unpleasant smells or because of the misdirection of the sewerage system which could carry salmonella to the disadvantage of both human and animal species.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is right because he brings us back to the importance of the habitat. I said at the beginning of my remarks that I would illustrate the arguments on this batch of amendments with the widgeon and the Brent goose. We shall refer on subsequent amendments to that delightful bird, the ringed plover, which has commanded the attention of my hon. Friend.

The second species with which we should illustrate this group of amendments is the widgeon. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover seems to be complaining about my reference to the widgeon. If he would listen to the description of this bird, Mareca penelope, he would recognise why it should be protected and secured in this locality as well as in others. At rest the drake is distinctive. My hon. Friends will recognise that, as with most duck species, the drake is much more handsome and striking than the female. It has got a chestnut head, a buff crown, a grey underpart and a white line on the wing. In flight that white line is a very identifiable feature. It is not a large duck. It is slightly smaller than the mallard. It has a more peaked forehead, a pointed tail and what is described as green speckling. It makes a characteristic noise, a distinct call, whee hoo, which might even have woken those hon. Gentlemen who have slept during my remarks.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Give us a sample.

Mr. Hardy: I will not sing in the House because I think that it is against Standing Orders. Having quoted Latin during my speech, I would not wish to be then accused of breaking the customs and practices of Parliament by indulging in melodic offering. I merely say that the whee hoo call of the drake widgeon is a distinctive noise.

The widgeon flies very fast for a duck, often in small flocks. Some other points have to be considered by the House. It is a gregarious duck, like Conservative Members.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend consider for a moment the qualities of the widgeon which, while giving it a certain attraction, are also a disadvantage because those very qualities of fast flight and the ability to rise rapidly from waterside vegetation make it an attractive bird for shooting? Is it a matter of regret——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is again repeating himself.

Mr. Hardy: I think I understand the drift of my hon. Friend's concern. It is illustrated by the facts which are available to us and which are relevant to the debate. Recent study of the widgeon has shown that its numbers have grown in areas where full protection is afforded but have fallen markedly in areas where protection is not enjoyed, where Conservative Members go out to destroy them, whether at the proper time of the year or not. Since the widgeon is being persecuted by these people, the House has an obligation to ensure that it, like the Brent goose and the ringed plover, receives proper consideration. For that reason, our amendments are couched in terms that require the Secretary of State to be involved and works to be so curtailed as to contribute to the retention of the area's natural historical value.

Mr. Skinner: This is an interesting point. My hon. Friend says that some of these birds can weather environmental changes better than others. I suppose that that is true. My hon. Friend says that the ringed plover, of which there are now only 223, could weather the environmental changes just as well as the Brent goose and the widgeon. Would the population of ringed plovers be sustained if there were a massive change caused by the invasion of Fagbury flats, the salt marshes, and so on, taking away worms, crustaceans and other food? Will my hon. Friend, who is knowledgeable about these matters, explain which, among the Brent goose, the widgeon, the oyster catcher, the ringed plover, the dunlin, the red shank——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has been down this path many times tonight. That has been made clear to us over the past hour or two.

Mr. Hardy: I may relieve my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover if I tell him that the count of 223 ringed plovers in that locality on one day was not the total population of ringed plovers in the British Isles. If it were, my hon. Friend might have been right in his suggestion that there is a similarity between the little ringed plover and the alliance parties.

The latest estimate I have seen on the mid-winter population of the ringed plover in the British Isles is between 10,000 and 15,000. That is obviously much higher than the strength of the alliance parties, certainly in terms of their membership in the House. But it is not so high a figure as could be lightly dismissed or assumed to be safe by Conservative Members.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I have been listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman. I am concerned about where all those birds will go, but I do know where all the parrots have gone!

Mr. Hardy: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman mentioned parrots. Only a short time ago, I saw photographs of dead parrots being transported by people who believe that market forces should prevail. Parrots are taken from the wild and destroyed on an enormous scale by people——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member, who has not been led astray much, will not blot his copybook at this stage.

Mr. Hardy: I accept the admonition that you offer, Madam Deputy Speaker. If we want to avoid the slaughter of the parrots, we must exercise a degree of caution. It is a degree of caution that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) has not shared, or he would have intervened much earlier and expressed a more genuine commitment.

Mr. Frank Cook: It may well be that my hon. Friend should concern himself with the fact that some Conservative Members are as sick as parrots—certainly, some of them are looking rather goosed. My hon. Friend may have misled my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and given him the wrong analysis in trying to allay his fears about the difference between the plover and the Brent goose. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) made the plea that the plover was in less danger than the Brent goose because the Brent goose had more meat on its body and therefore was more likely to be exterminated by the gunmen on the Government Benches. Clearly, my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth has forgotten that the upper classes have taken a decided liking in past centuries to delicacies including lark's tongue and such morsels.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is not relating his remarks to the amendment on the Order Paper.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) should be a little more circumspect in his interventions. I made no reference to larks' tongues. No doubt if larks' tongues came between a Tory and his profit, the lark's tongue would be very swiftly sacrificed. However, we are not talking about larks' tongues because they are not particularly relevant to the amendment.

1.30 am

Mr. Cook: They are tasty morsels.

Mr. Hardy: Indeed they may be tasty morsels. I am reminded of a story which perhaps I had better not tell because I might be out of order if I did and I do not wish to incur the wrath of Madam Deputy Speaker.

Suffice it to say that I hope that I said enough in the early part of my speech about Brent geese. In the latter part of my speech, I referred to the attractive drake widgeon and I suggested that it flies swiftly in small flocks. The fact that it flies swiftly may be part of the peril that it faces. Some of those Conservative Members who still shoot may well feel that the widgeon is a challenging target, as it is better to shoot a bird that flies fast than one that flies slowly. They can then boast about their marksmanship although I suggest that they would be better employed shooting at clay pigeons if the changes in firearms legislation do not prevent them from being sufficiently responsible to own, possess or have access to a firearm. They may argue that they should possess firearms to destroy humanely those birds whose habitat is likely to be destroyed.

I hope that some Conservative Members will recognise that the Brent geese that I described in the early part of my speech deserve to survive in this part of East Anglia and other parts of Britain where it lives and represents a substantial proportion of the international population.

Earlier I referred to my main concern to speak this evening as a member of the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds because of the importance of international conservation and the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Frank Cook: No financial support there.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend should understand that as far as I know, no hon. Member receives any financial remuneration from membership of conservation bodies and I would be very angry if any conservation body started to pay Conservative Members, as I know that no Opposition Members receive anything and nor should they.

Mr. Cook: Not even a glass of champagne.

Mr. Hardy: No, I do not think I have ever received a glass of champagne from a conservation body and I would not wish such a body to buy me one. That is to be reserved for the commercial organisations which more readily attract some Conservative Members than others. I am obliged that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has taken a more responsible approach than some of his hon. Friends and has sat intently throughout the debate. I am conscious of the fact that he will be saying a few words later.

I hope that the comments from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will bring reassurance that profit will not dominate the entire consideration and acknowledge that the amendment deserves to be considered and accepted. I trust that that acceptance can be made clear to the House before very long and that the amendment will ensure that the widgeon, Brent geese and other species that will be mentioned in subsequent consideration of other amendments will continue to survive in those areas.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will recognise that the eel grass, algae, grasses of the mud flats and saltings of the area are important. If they are destroyed Britain will not simply lose an important and essential area of international habitat, but the Government will be seen to be guilty of a rather odious level of hypocrisy in having recognised that the matter is of international significance and that the area should be protected at all costs—except at times of dire national need. If they accept that—and they accepted it when they signified their assent to the Ramsar convention—we are entitled to demand that Conservative Members and their supporters either act with consistency, or offer a profound apology, not only to those in Britain who are interested in conservation, but to the international bodies that they will have gravely and rather odiously misled.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am sure that the House is obliged to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) for having taken us on a fascinating bird-watching excursion. I first became acquainted with Brent geese when I was responsible for a much more difficult piece of legislation relating to the ill-fated Maplin airport. At that time, we took considerable steps to estabilish whether it was possible to provide a new habitat for the geese in the Wash. So, like the hon. Gentleman, I have studied these matters with some interest.

When I was first asked to support this Bill in the House, I said — and I repeat it now — that, as a former Environment Minister, I could not back it unless I was satisfied that the environmental and ecological benefits that might flow from it would outweigh the environmental disbenefits that would undoubtedly arise. Consequently, once the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds became interested, I was very pleased that the Bill's promoters financed the most intensive survey of bird life in the area that has ever taken place. I was glad to hear the hon. Member for Wentworth quoting some of the figures that arose from a survey that was promoted by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company.

The survey demonstrated that, of the 30 species of bird that occupy the area, three might be disturbed. I take that seriously, as do many hon. Members on both sides of the House, and the promoters have taken a number of steps to meet the reasonable objections made by the RSPB. First, some 176 acres of what is now arable land will bo turned into wetlands for the benefit of the bird population: the promoters have entered into that commitment. I am afraid that it will involve one of the tenant farmers losing some of his land, but it is an agreement on which Trinity college—which is just as concerned about bird life and ecology as any hon. Member in the House—insisted. Secondly, lagoons will be provided for the birds; and, thirdly, there will be a large extension of trees. It seems to me that the promoters have gone a long way to deal with the point that the hon. Member for Wentworth has been pressing on us for some time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman referred to undertakings given by P and O. May I remind him that P and O gave undertakings to passengers on the Zeebrugge ferry? Those undertakings were empty, so why should we believe the present undertakings?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I do not propose to enter into that despicable argument. The undertakings were entered into by the board of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, and accepted by the Committee that considered the Bill, long before P and O had anything to do with it. The effect of these amendments was considered by the House in great detail on 15 July 1986.

Mr. Fatchett: As a member of the Committee, I heard the evidence that was given by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Is the RSPB happy with the company's commitment?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The RSPB said:

> "it would be possible to create a worthwhile reserve on these . . . marshes that would probably attract birds in nationally significant numbers."

The RSPB would like the promoters to go further, but at least it has said that.

Mr. Fatchett: So the answer is no.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: These amendments would make it impossible to reclaim any land. Consequently, they would wreck the Bill. Therefore, I cannot advise the House to accept them. However, I am able to offer one concession to the hon. Member for Wentworth. I hope that he will take it seriously and that in doing so I shall be able to attract his attention and that of the House.

Amendment No. 13 provides an important protection—that there shall be no reclamation unless the consent in writing of the Secretary of State for the Environment is obtained. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, that would be a very great protection. I am glad to be able to tell the House that the promoters are content to accept amendment No. 13, and I recommend it to the House.

Mr. John Garrett: My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) dealt in detail with these amendments. I intend to refer specifically to amendment No. 2, thereby enabling the debate to be set in its broad environmental and ecological context.

Amendment No. 2 focuses on the environmental arguments against the Bill. It seeks to remove reclamation from its provisions. The argument must be set in its regional context. Environmental protection for East Anglia is essential——

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend says that our hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) dealt with the broad details of this debate, but does not my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) accept that the debate was specific, in that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth dealt with the consequences for a number of species of birds if these proposals are accepted? The amendment's purpose is wide-ranging, but the debate has focused on a number of consequences for various species of bird.

Mr. Garrett: That is true, but I construed the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth as being primarily concerned with two species.

Mr. Hardy: Only as examples.

Mr. Garrett: Yes. Other species will be dealt with later in the debate.

Environmental protection and the risk of destruction have to be set in their regional context, given the level of environmental destruction in East Anglia. Environmental protection is essential for East Anglia, and environmental destruction must be resisted by all possible means.

Mr. Ron Davies: I understand my hon. Friend's concern to set the debate in its regional context, but does he not accept that this area is important to birds that come to it in winter from Antarctica, the northern parts of Russia, Scandinavia, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a repetition of an argument that was put forward some time ago.

Mr. Ron Davies *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is repeating himself. I am sure that the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) will deal with the point.

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend's intervention was most illuminating, and perhaps he will develop it further on later amendments. This area is of international importance because of its value as wintering grounds for a variety of birds.

The destruction of sites of scientific interest and major areas of wildlife habitat is a substantial issue in East Anglia. I speak as a member of Friends of the Earth, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Norfolk Naturalists' Trust. I am a keen bird watcher in the improver class; I am not in the super-twitcher class of my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who has great knowledge of the specific species that live in the area.

Several authoritative surveys have shown how threatened the wildlife habitats and landscapes of East Anglia are.

1.45 am

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) as a twitcher. The importance of this area is not in regard to the unique bird but the wide variety of regular birds. The importance of the area is a habitat for a large number of wintering birds and is important not only for twitchers but for people who are concerned about the environment generally.

Mr. Garrett: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right, but my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) developed at some length the larger populations of birdlife that inhabit the area. I referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe as a twitcher, which for ornithologists is not a pejorative term but one of admiration. I hope that he will refer to the specimen species that occur in this area.

Dr. Marek: I recognise an expert when I see one, so will my hon. Friend throw some light on the statements by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who talked about the importance of the golden plover as opposed to the Brent goose or the widgeon? I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) got to the bottom of this issue in his speech as to whether the site is of importance to the former or latter or for both categories of birds.

Mr. Garrett: I thought that the site was more important for the former, but the latter appears to have substantial representation. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe, who knows not only the population of these birds but most of the individuals by name, will enlighten us in his speech.

Mr. Frank Cook: My hon. Friend is pointing out to the House—half of which is listening and half of which is not—the great importance of the scientific nature of these flats in East Anglia. They have achieved far greater national and international significance by virtue of the fact that the similar flats in the Tees estuary have been reduced from an area of 6,500 hectares to less than 400 hectares. The East Anglian flats are of more significance and importance than ever before.

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend is right. The level of destruction of wetlands in East Anglia is remarkable and is a matter that I hope to refer to later.

I was saying that several authoritative surveys have shown how threatened the wildlife habitat landscapes of East Anglia are today. Today only fragments remain of hedgerow, heath, natural woodlands and wetlands. Throughout the region, agricultural and commercial development has led to a massive loss of hedgerows, the ploughing of heathland and the destruction of wetlands. What we have left are mere fragments. For example, we must think of the enormous area covered by the brecklands in the last century. They are now reduced to little more than a Ministry of Defence danger area in the centre of Norfolk.

What we have left must be protected. One of the main objectives of the Bill is to destroy a wildlife habitat of the greatest international importance. In addition, the land has been and still is being soaked in nitrates, pesticides and herbicides, with unknown consequences. Goodness knows what disease and illness we shall visit on future generations as a result of the reckless use of herbicides and pesticides throughout East Anglia. Commercial development of the kind proposed will add to the problem. Statutory authorities have nowhere near the necessary resources to limit, control or reduce destruction. I shall give the House one or two local examples of the level of destruction that is going on in the region at this moment.

Mr. Ron Davies: While my hon. Friend considers the relevance of that point, will he bear in mind the analogy between the nitrate pollution of the East Anglian water supply with what happened throughout Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, when the widespread use of organic pesticides caused the virtual destruction of the sparrowhawk? The creation of infertility in the sparrowhawk led to the near obliteration of the species. Will my hon. Friend recognise that there is a real danger that the problems that existed with the sparrowhawk during those two decades are now likely to be replicated in the region that will be affected by the Bill?

Mr. Garrett: I agree with my hon. Friend. I shall refer to that matter in a short time.

The Anglian water authority area, within which the area that we are discussing is located, has a higher incidence of pesticides in waterways than any other water authority in the country, according to the House of Commons Agriculture Committee second special report, session 1986-87, volume 1, entitled "The Effects of Pesticides on Human Health". I shall refer to paragraph 153.

Mr. Skinner: In some ways, my hon. Friend is bound to make a valuable contribution to the debate.

Mr. Davies: It is excellent.

Mr. Skinner: Not only that, but he represents an area in East Anglia. He has just spent a few years outside the House. Who knows, he could have been on Fagbury flats. I want my hon. Friend to tell us, based upon his knowledge of the broads, what effect the change in the broads has had on wildlife and how it could be used as a guide to what will happen if the Fagbury flats region is developed. Is there a parallel or analogy?

Mr. Garrett: There is a direct analogy between the gross pollution of the broads and the pollution which will be visited upon the area if the development is allowed to proceed.

As I was saying, the Anglian water authority area has an exceptionally high level of pesticides. After all, the Agriculture Committee is not noted for making remarks hostile to agriculture. Paragraph 153 of its report states:

> "The Anglia Water Authority provided evidence of contamination of both surface water and ground water. The principal pesticides detected in surface water were mecoprop, atrazine, simazin, dimechoate and lindane, which were each found regularly at the great majority of monitoring sites. Dimechoate, mecoprop and atrazine were also found at 10 per cent. of ground water monitoring sites".

The report continued:

> "We are particularly worried about contamination of ground water because exposure levels will be persistent and prolonged even if they are low."

Mr. Ron Davies: Does my hon. Friend accept that these worrying circumstances are being reported to the House for the first time? I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will share my concern about the effects of lindane on bats, which have led the Nature Conservancy Council to take action to ensure that lindane is not used in areas inhabited by bats. Does my hon. Friend accept that there is danger not only to the ecosystem and to bird life but to some species of mammal not hitherto identified as being at risk?

Mr. Skinner: Who will speak up for the bats? That is the question.

Mr. Garrett: Bats are, indeed, affected by lindane, which is a wood treatment. I am not especially concerned about the bat population in the area. I suppose that I should be but given the absence of buildings in the area I reckon that there are relatively few bats.

The Select Committee on Agriculture report continued:

> "Although pesticides tend to degrade at different rates in the environment, the evidence available to us indicated that degradation in ground water is often very slow."

The development will have permanent effects with incalculable long-term consequences——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As I understand the Bill, the company proposes that Trimley marshes should be used for bird resettlement. Does my hon. Friend know Trimley marshes, and has the area been polluted in any way over the years?

Mr. Garrett: I know Trimley marshes only from the air —from a Brent goose's point of view—so I do not know to what extent they have been polluted. However, given the amount of agricultural run-off in the area there must be a high level of nitrates, for example.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If that is so, I wonder to what extent the company has investigated the matter. The company seems to believe that it will be adequate to give Trimley marshes over as a habitat for birds but it may be handing over land which has been insufficiently surveyed and which might cause them long-term damage.

Mr. Garrett: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) referred to an exhaustive survey of the flats. I am not sure whether a study has been made of the ecological condition of the Trimley marshes area, which is supposed to be turned into a bird reserve in place of Fagbury flats. Perhaps he will tell us whether the survey dealt with the ecological condition of the marshes.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No, it did not.

Mr. Garrett: The answer to my hon. Friend's question is that we do not know the ecological or environmental condition of the area that is proposed as a substitute for that which is to be destroyed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is quite a revelation. The company has proposed an alternative to appease the lobbies that wish to protect birds but it has not carried out work to establish whether damage would be done to the birds if the marshes became their new habitat. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who seems so well attuned to the promoters' aims, would do well to find that out for us so that we can assess the matter during the debate, because it may well be relevant to other amendments.

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend is right. We can refer to this matter in later amendments. Perhaps we can then probe the promoters of the Bill to try to establish the ecological and environmental quality of Trimley marshes, which is offered as a substitute for that which is to be destroyed. I hope that we can examine that at greater length.

2 am

The report to which I have referred discusses the wholesale destruction through the use of pesticides of the area proposed in the Bill for development. It says:

> "Pesticides may enter water supplies from a number of sources. These include careless overspraying of water courses, drains or standing water; run off from sprayed or treated areas; careless disposal of 'empty' containers, washing down of contaminated equipment, spills, and leaching from soil in treated areas. On occasion pesticides, particularly pyrethroids, are deliberately added to water supplies 'to control animal infestation in the distribution system.'"

Mr. Ron Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is nothing wrong with the addition of pyrethroids because they are naturally occurring pesticides? The problems stem from the organic chlorides, which are artificially made and are destructive when they get into the food chain.

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend may be right, but, as far as I can tell, the Committee was taking a dim view of the practice in the section I quoted.

Mr. Skinner: Which of the birds will be affected the most? Will it be the little ringed plover, which is smaller than the ringed plover—I see that we have a different Deputy Speaker in the Chair and that it is now a different

[Mr. Skinner]

ball game—or the Kentish plover? My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) has obviously seen those birds on Trimley marshes or on Fagbury flats.

It is no use trying to talk above people's heads and use long names for pesticides and so on. We should get down to the nitty gritty. What sort of chain reaction will occur to those little birds? That is the question. Are we going to allow the tyrants to do as they like in that area, upset the ecological chain and destroy the little ringed plovers, never mind the ringed plover, Kentish plover, Brent geese and the widgeon? Why do we not turn our attention to those little birds?

Mr. Garrett: My hon. Friend is right. My assumption is that the degree to which a bird would be affected by the pesticides would depend on body weight. Therefore, the little ringed plover would suffer the most from ingestion of pesticides.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) did not say a word about the little ringed plover in one hour and 45 minutes. He concentrated on widgeons and large geese. However, when the ecological chain begins to break down the first victims of the Bill introduced by the Tory despots will be the little ringed plover.

Mr. Garrett: I am afraid that my hon. Friend is right. I find emotion taking over at this stage and I feel that I can hardly reply coherently.

There is an example of the interest and concern shown by the Government for the whole problem of pollution, particularly of sites of scientific interest. Paragraph 159 of the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture concluded:

> "The DoE's proposals on monitoring did not seem to us to amount to a coherent national policy. Witnesses from the Department expressed confidence that water authorities would voluntarily conduct appropriate monitoring if they were asked to do so and the letter of guidance, sent out in August 1986, gave advice on only 40 pesticides."

Dr. Moonie: There is no need for my hon. Friend to make an assumption about the relationship between body mass and the effects of organic pesticides; it is a well-documented fact.

Mr. Ron Davies: Declare an interest.

Dr. Moonie: I willingly declare an interest. This is one of the most interesting debates I have had the good fortune to take part in, and I look forward to it lasting as long as possible. I have learned an enormous amount, and I am certain that I will learn more when my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) speaks. The effects of organic pesticides are related to body mass. That is a fact, not an assumption. Therefore, one must ask whether any smaller birds in the area might also be affected.

Mr. Garrett: No doubt there are some smaller birds in the area, but I shall leave my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) to discuss the rarer small birds who are affected. I understand that on future amendments my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) will discuss the condition of a couple of species per amendment, so that in the end birds both large and small are likely to be covered by him.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) has raised intriguing questions. He is correct in explaining that not only Brent Geese will be affected, but the Kentish plover and the little ringed plover. My hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) explained that birds of a much smaller body mass will be affected. Birds such as the tree pipit and the skylark, which exist on the shore line in large numbers, are not particularly important and certainly would not be covered under the terms of the Ramsar convention, nor would they be protected by the EEC directive.

They are important to the ecology of the eastern coast of England. I know that my Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is concerned about smaller birds. Perhaps he could discuss the importance of the area as an important breeding ground and wintering ground for skylarks.

Mr. Garrett: I was about to come to coastal ecology, but before I do I refer to sources of destruction of the wildlife habitat in East Anglia. Nitrate levels in water courses throughout East Anglia are at or near the EEC limits and often exceed them. There are often examples of nitrate pollution above the EEC levels. The discharge of household and industrial effluent has led to a concentration of phosphate and heavy metals in water courses which has severely damaged fish and bird populations. Then there is the gross sewage pollution of the coast and beaches. Some observations have been made by the Coastal Anti-Pollution League of East Anglia, Which informs me that the fish population has suffered noticeably.

Mr. Skinner: I wonder how migrant birds will be affected, because a considerable number come from Africa and elsewhere. There is a well-known bird in Africa, a migrant to Britain's shores, the thatcher bird. We are concerned about all birds. To what extent does my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) know of the existence of the thatcher bird on the Trimley marshes or the Fagbury flats? Has he ever been there, or does he get as far as Grantham and stop?

Mr. Garrett: There is no evidence of such a lethal predator being found in the area which we are discussing.

Dr. Moonie: Before we leave the effects of pollution on waterways, which we are rightly discussing in some depth, may I ask my hon. Friend about the type of pollutants that are found? He mentioned nitrates, organic pesticides and heavy metals. It is interesting that each group has a different method of action. Nitrates are not intrinsically damaging when they are concentrated; they cause most damage when they are converted to nitrosamines. Their action is local, especially in the gastro-intestinal system——

Mr. Morley: Of birds?

Dr. Moonie: Yes, of birds. I am not an expert on birds——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Briefly, please.

Dr. Moonie: I will be as brief as possible, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Organic pesticides are interesting, because they deposit at different rates in different tissues. Not only lean body mass, but the amount of fat on a bird is important, because organic pesticides are much more readily absorbed into fatty tissues then they are into muscle.

Heavy metals are deposited especially in bones. There are many different aspects, and it might be interesing to clarify——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be brief. I am beginning to have doubts about which hon. Member has the Floor.

Mr. Garrett: So am I, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend's intervention was most interesting, because he speaks from a medical viewpoint, whereas I am talking from an environmental and ecological viewpoint. He has demonstrated the sort of damage that can be done to birds, especially the little ringed plover, by the ingestion of residues from pesticides and heavy metals into their bone structure, their circulatory systems and their digestion systems. To that extent, his intervention was helpful.

The Coastal Anti-Pollution League study shows that that area of the coast has suffered especially from raw sewage being pumped into the sea. It states:

> "Over the past few years the fish population has noticeably suffered, and the Pink Shrimp (actually a small prawn) (Pandalus Montequii) have disappeared from the area, due to a wipe out by sewage sludge of their prime food requirement the Ross Worm. Upon the shrimp depend the higher life forms, and the annual Cod have been absent this past year in the area. Sea Trout, another fishing dependency, is also reported to be low in numbers."

The residues from many lethal chemicals are working up the chain, first wiping out the shrimp—which is a small prawn — then the fish and ultimately the fish-eating birds.

Mr. Ron Davies: Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of heavy metals and residues in animal matter, will he say whether he has any local knowledge of the lead poisoning that has been caused among wildfowl as a result of ingesting shot fired by wildfowlers and left in the natural environment? If we are worried, as we should be, about the damage caused to the ecology by the inadvertent deposition of heavy metals, we must give some consideration to the problems of lead shot and the deliberate pollution of the environment.

Mr. Garrett: As usual, my hon. Friend makes an interesting point. I am not familiar with the effects of the ingestion of lead shot, but swans have suffered greatly from the ingestion of lead fishing weights, and I have no doubt that other birds have suffered from lead shot.

Dr. Moonie: The ingestion of lead shot might slow down the flight of the widgeon and that might have an effect on its survival.

2.15 am

Mr. Garrett: I am sure my hon. Friend is right; the widgeon and other birds would be much less agile and able to escape predators if full of lead shot.

I was discussing the disappearance of fish species and pointing out how their numbers have been greatly reduced. All the species I named are dependent on clear and clean water and are to be found only in ideal tidal conditions which minimise pollution. In addition, hepatitis — a sewage-related infection—is a considerable worry along that coast for sea bathers.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): My hon. Friend will be aware that just before the election the Environment Select Committee published a report on river and estuary pollution, and that dealt with many of the points he has been making. As the Government have not responded to that report and there has been no opportunity to debate it in the House, would it not be right for the promoters of the Bill, in the interests of parliamentary debate of these issues, to withdraw the Bill at this stage to enable the Government to respond to that report?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In responding to that point, I hope that the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) will bear in mind that it would not be in order to broaden the debate; we are dealing with a specific amendment to a specific Bill.

Mr. Garrett: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, although my hon. Friend made a useful intervention, I will not respond to it.

Britain has some of the worst polluted beaches in the world and is responsible for over 90 per cent. of the sewage present in the North sea, due to direct dumping of untreated sewage and the practice of dumping extracted sewage sludge at sea. When asked by the EEC to list its bathing beaches, Britain came up, after a survey, with a mere 27, compared with 3,000 each in France and Italy, with shorter coastlines, and with 47 in Luxembourg, which has no coastline.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garrett: I will not give way. I am discussing many of the dangers to the East Anglian environment which make it important for us to protect and not destroy the area.

In addition to sewage sludge on beaches, the accidental discharge of farm slurry and waste into rivers is a frequent problem. Our rivers, meres and broads, have become thick with algae and are lifeless. I know a site of scientific interest in south Norfolk which adjoins a field where the farmer finds it more profitable to dump slaughterhouse waste than to grow corn. He may also be dumping medical waste, with the result that, because the waste is insufficiently ploughed in, there is a pollution of that site of scientific interest. Many, if not most, of such sites in East Anglia are under constant threat and require close vigilance for their preservation.

The Government continually resist international attempts to limit the pollution of our wildlife habitats. A most important habitat is threatened by this Bill. We know that the Government have permitted safety levels for three notorious pesticides deilorin, aldrin, endrin to be relaxed by six times the recommended limit, allowing existing levels of pollution to continue. In most of Europe and the United States that would be illegal. It is against that wider, regional background that we oppose the environmental destruction that is implicit in the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth has said, the proposed new docks in the Orwell estuary, known as Fagbury flats, is a major international site for wildlife. It is part of an area of outstanding natural beauty and a site of special scientific interest under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Under the Ramsar convention, it is a proposed site of a wetland of international importance. Indeed, it is a specially protected area under the EEC directive 79/409 for the conservation of wild birds.

The central point that has been argued over and over again on this group of amendments is that the Orwell

[Mr. Garrett]

estuary is an internationally important area for over-wintering wildfowl and shore birds. In fact, the number of wading birds exceeds 10,000 in mid winter. The mud flats fulfil a vital function in providing habitat for those birds.

If the development goes ahead, there will be a substantial visual impact from the equipment such as towers, cranes and elevated lights. There will also be noise disturbance. The Suffolk county council planning department, in its report on the development, said that the dock extension cannot be effectively screened and that nothing can be done to reduce the loss of the inter-tidal features. It also said it was in direct conflict with national objectives for areas of outstanding natural beauty.

Abundant facts have been put forward by the conservation authorities to show that the status of the area is too important to be lost by the proposed development. Expert evidence has been made available by the RSPB, the British Trust for Ornithology and the Nature Conservancy Council.

If the area is reclaimed by the company, many birds will die because there the food resources — the worms and the crustaceans — are finite. If the birds try to find feeding areas elsewhere, they will be already occupied by other birds. Therefore, either they will be unable to find space and will die or they will displace other birds that will, in turn, die.

The area proposed to be destroyed by the development is irreplaceable. It has already been said on many occasions that the proposed development is a most important site in an area that is under constant threat from pollution, development and commercial activity.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has my hon. Friend noted the reference to the problems of noise that will arise in the event of the development of the dock adjacent to the marshes—I made that point earlier about the switch of bird habitat from the flats to Trimley marshes. To what extent will the noise affect the bird life? Will there be a net loss?

Mr. Garrett: I am sure that many birds will be disturbed by the noise of construction and the operation of the proposed development. I have no doubt that we shall lose some important species.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to support the amendment that is crucial to maintain the ecological balance in the immediate area and the region.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have had a lengthy debate that has been extremely revealing of hon. Members' knowledge of widgeons, ring plovers, geese and even parrots.

On 15 July 1986 my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Transport the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) expressed the Government's view on the amendments under discussion and said that they should be rejected. Amendment No. 12 would undermine the whole purpose of the Bill and threaten the company's ability to carry out the works. Many of the anxieties expressed during the debate would be met if amendment No. 13 was incorporated in the Bill. Accordingly, I invite the House to accept amendment No. 13 but to reject amendment Nos. 2, 8, 9 and 12.

SIR ELDON GRIFFITHS *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 142, Noes 37.

Division No. 51] **[2.25 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy

Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John

Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.

Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie

McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Morley, Elliott
Murphy, Paul
Quin, Ms Joyce
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter L. Pike and
Dr. Lewis Moonie.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 32, Noes 140.

Division No. 52] **[2.38 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*

Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Morley, Elliott
Quin, Ms Joyce
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Pike and
Dr. Lewis Moonie.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael

Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*

Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew

Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 3

LIMITS OF DOCK

Amendment proposed: No. 3, in page 4, line 37, at end insert

'and provided that the framework of the Dock Workers Employment Scheme is in no way impaired consequent on the removal of any area from the jurisdiction of the Ipswich Port Authority.'.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:——

The House divided: Ayes 33, Noes 139.

Division No. 53] **[2.51 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dalyell, Tam
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*

Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morris, Rt Hon A *(W'shawe)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Peter L. Pike.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 6

POWER TO MAKE WORK

3 am

Amendment proposed: No. 8, in page 5, line 33, leave out

'enclosing an area of 95 hectares'. — *[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 32, Noes 139.

Division No. 54] **[3.3 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Pike, Peter
Quin, Ms Joyce
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald
Strang, Gavin

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian McCartney and
Mrs. Maria Fyfe.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger

Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 13, in page 6, line 2, after 'above', insert

'and subject to the consent in writing of the Secretary of State for the Environment.'.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:-

The House divided: Ayes 157, Noes 2.

Division No. 55] **[3.15 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Battle, John
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Clay, Bob
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gill, Christopher
Golding, Mrs Llin
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Ingram, Adam
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCartney, Ian
MacGregor, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steinberg, Gerald
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mrs. Maria Fyfe.

NOES

Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Fatchett and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause 7

RESTRICTION ON DEPOSIT OF MATERIAL

Mr. Morley: I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 6, line 13, leave out 'one' and insert 'three'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 16, in page 6, line 26, after 'engineering', insert 'and environmental.'.

No. 17, in page 6, leave out lines 27 to 36.

Mr. Morley: I shall give the House a brief synopsis of each amendment. Amendment No. 15 deals with the notice that must be given to the two councils in the area —the county council and the district council. The Bill proposes a period of one month, but the amendment would change that to three months to bring it in line with the notice that must be given to the Nature Conservancy Council if sites of special scientific interest are disturbed.

Amendment No. 16 would include environmental factors, and seeks to insert the words "and environmental" after the word "engineering". In any construction, the ecological importance—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you ask the hon. Members who are standing at the Bar of the House, causing a great disturbance, to leave the Chamber so that my hon. Friend can speak to the amendments with a modicum of dignity?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I ask hon. Members who are not listening to the debate not to carry on conversations at the Bar of the House.

Mr. Morley: Amendment No. 16 seeks to include environmental considerations when decisions are made about construction.

Amendment No. 17 seeks to delete an ambiguous part of the clause dealing with the way in which the shore line will be left by the spoil and infill. The Bill talks about a "smooth shore line". I am not sure what that means. It could be loophole which would allow the company to deposit any sort of infill that it wished.

3.30 am

For the benefit of hon. Members who were not present for the earlier part of the debate, I will explain what we are talking about. Basically, we are discussing the expansion of the port of Felixstowe and the construction of new docks on the Orwell estuary. This will have the side effect of destroying a whole part of an area of inter-tidal land which comprises mud flats, salt marsh and old oyster beds. This area is known as Fagbury flats and is recognised as being of critical importance in environmental and conservation terms.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) talked about Maplin sands and Brent geese. I recall it being concluded that it was not possible to relocate the Brent geese environmentally to the Wash. That was one reason why an airport at Maplin was rejected.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend speaks of the difficulty of moving wild birds from one habitat to another. Why is it so difficult environmentally to move them? What is the main problem?

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend's intervention enables me to explain the position more fully, and to comment on another point made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. The company has claimed that it will offer an area known as Trimley marshes in compensation for the inter-tidal zone which will be destroyed. The area of Trimley marshes is arable land.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that the area is of such importance, not only nationally but internationally, that it has been designated a site deserving of special protection under the Ramsar convention?

Mr. Morley: Not only is my hon. Friend correct to say that under the Ramsar convention it is a wetland of international importance, but it is a designated site of special scientific interest. It is also part of an area of outstanding natural beauty, a point that has not been mentioned in the debate.

As for the difficulty involved in relocating wildlife, this is an area of inter-tidal zone. It contains a large proportion of such food sources for birds as invertebrates, worms, cockles and mussels.

Dr. Marek: Why has this been designated a Ramsar convention site? I ask that in connection with amendment No. 16 and the mention of engineering and environmental works of which notice must or must not be given. I examined the map which is in the possession of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and found it difficult to envisage that the Trimley marshes contained so much arable land. What percentage of the marshes is at present arable land?

Mr. Morley: The recommendation has been made by the Ramsar convention because it is an area that has been identified by environmental organisations in this country, along with many sites in the United Kingdom, as one of international importance as it supports not only a large proportion of wintering waders and wintering wildfowl, but it is also an important stop-over site for migrating birds.

To remove such a site as part of the dock development would cause an imbalance in the total ecological chain that is important to the wintering cycle of European and other continental species. It is also important as a stop-over site for native species.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I press my hon. Friend on this important point. I have a map, that some of my hon. Friends have been able to see, showing the area of sandbank and the adjacent area of Trimley marshes. We cannot understand why it is impracticable for birds to move from their habitat on the silted areas to the Trimley marshes. What is the environmental difference that would prevent that movement? If we could prove that that move was insuperable much of the case of the promoters would fall. I might say, for the interest of the House, that my hon. Friend is a world authority on these matters.

Mr. Fatchett: At least.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am told that, even last Sunday, he was out ringing and labelling birds. He obviously knows about these matters and I am sure that the House would like to hear his views on this switch.

Mr. Morley: A little knowledge does not make one a world authority.

The important fact about the marshes to the north is that, for some period of time, the salt element has been leached out because of freshwater rainfall and therefore it does not have the same make-up as the salt marshes. It does not support the same number of invertebrate species. However, left as it is, it does provide a valuable habitat that is ideal for breeding birds such as redshanks and lapwing.

Mr. Ron Davies: Is that advantage offset, to some extent, by the fact that, as it is within the area covered by the North Atlantic drift, it is ice-free and therefore, despite the problem with the saline content, there will be a large migration of population from the nordic and palaeartic areas for feeding?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This discussion is beginning to have the familiar ring of an earlier debate. I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that the clause is headed:

"Restriction on deposit of material"

The main amendment deals with the time limit and whether it should be one month or three months. The hon. Gentleman must stick to that amendment and the two that are grouped with it.

Mr. Morley: I bow to your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Amendment 16 is clear regarding the importance of the word environmental. I am seeking to explain the environmental consequences for the area and the consequences of the engineering construction.

The infill, during construction, will also have environmental consequences. When that infill starts it will destroy a site of special scientific interest and will alter the environmental make-up of the area. We have no idea where that infill will come from. It may be contaminated.

Even in the short term such infilling will cause an environmental imbalance, as it will muddy the water. Indeed the site may well require dredging by heavy earth-moving machinery. There have been instances in estuaries such as the Orwell when, over a period, an accumulation of heavy metals in the mud occurs. If that mud is disturbed the long-term accumulation of heavy metals can be suspended in the inter-tidal zone and that heavy metal may then be left on the mud flats with disastrous environmental consequences, such as those experienced in the Mersey.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman will recall that the House has just passed an amendment whereby none of the works for reclamation can commence without the consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment. Because of his statutory duties my right hon. Friend must take into account the factors with which the hon. Gentleman is rightly concerned.

Mr. Morley: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's comments. It is a serious matter and I hope that the Secretary of State will take account of it.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend should not place too much faith in the judgment of the Secretary of State. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) should not say that it is my amendment. It is a free vote. Labour Members are not being whipped. We are not being lined up outside with our glasses of champagne and being asked to vote. The House was split on the last vote because of a genuine difference of opinion. The Secretary of State for Wales is sponsoring a motion that similarly will result in the destruction of a site of special scientific interest in Cardiff bay. Therefore, my hon. Friend should not have too much faith in either the Secretary of State for the Environment or the Secretary of State for Wales ensuring an adequate level of environmental protection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Incidental reference to that is in order, but we cannot return to a debate on an amendment that has already been dealt with.

Mr. Hardy: I suggest to my hon. Friend that, if the Secretary of State for the Environment considered the matter fairly and reasonably, he would perhaps come to the conclusion that he could not expect any responsible local authority satisfactorily to respond to the one-month notice in the Bill, and that he may well agree that three months is a more reasonable period.

Mr. Morley: We are talking about a major civil engineering project and about large numbers of heavy vehicles moving through narrow roads and passing inhabited areas. Local councils would need as much notice as possible to prepare their traffic management schemes, to ensure that the movement of vehicles is properly controlled and to be satisfied as to the areas where the construction was to take place and the first deposits were to be made. Extending the notice from one month to three months is reasonable, and I find it difficult to believe that any hon. Member would oppose that.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Is the timing of the activities significant? One has to consider the nesting time of different species of birds. Could my hon. Friend enlighten us?

Mr. Morley: It is not only the nesting season that is important in the marshes to the north of the site, but the migration periods. It has already been mentioned that birds are attracted to our country because the mud flats do not freeze during the winter. Large numbers of wildfowl migrate to the site in winter. Construction during winter would disturb the wildfowl, the Brent geese and the waders. Winter is a time when most species need to feed to increase their body weight so that they can survive the harsh times.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend has just convinced me. However, while he claims that his amendment is moderate, by the very nature of his argument, should not the notice be longer than three months to take account of the mating and nesting patterns of birds? Does my hon. Friend agree with the points I have made, or does he think that he is misleading the House and cheating in some way?

3.45 am

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend has raised a pertinent point. As I have already said, the three-month period was designed to bring the Bill into line with the notification that must be given now for any sort of disturbance of a site of scientific interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. We are discussing a major site of special scientific interest. That is why there has been so much environmental opposition to such a disturbance.

Mr. McCartney: I shall give my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) a rest.

I am intrigued by the arguments about the special ecological problems of the area and the importance of maintaining an ecological balance. I am, however, rather surprised that no one—neither the Bill's sponsors nor those who have moved amendments to it—has spoken about the EEC directive on environmental impact studies. This is an area that falls within the scope of that directive, which has been accepted by the Department of the Environment.

Why did not the sponsors of the Bill voluntarily get together with the county council at the outset of planning procedures, to set out in detail, through such an impact study, the project's effects on the ecology and manpower resources? Have the sponsors made any effort to link up with the county council in such a study?

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend has made a pertinent point. As far as we know, there has been no such link-up with the county council. It is because of our concern that the Bill does not seem to take the environmental implications seriously that we want to amend and strengthen it. The harbour board has not seriously considered the many arguments that have been put to it by numerous bodies about the effects of its proposals.

Mr. McCartney: Is my hon. Friend suggesting that the Bill is being used as a way of getting round the planning procedures and thus putting aside the whole concept of the EEC directive? That cuts out any possibility of the county

[Mr. McCartney]

council influencing an impact analysis study or approaching the potential developers of the site with a view to producing such a study jointly. So the Bill is a real attempt to get round any attempt to use the planning regulations — they are supported by the Secretary of State for the Environment—to obtain an in-depth study of the objections to the measure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resist the temptation to broaden the debate into a debate on planning procedures. He must stick to the three amendments.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not the Bill relevant to planning procedures because it supersedes all existing procedures laid down in planning and local government legislation? The whole purpose of this legislation is to give the Bill's private promoters the chance to proceed on matters for which they would otherwise have to obtain planning permission.

Mr. Fatchett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I be helpful to you? Amendment No. 16 refers specifically to environmental questions. I had the opportunity of serving on a planning committee. Anyone who has had experience of planning procedures in local government will realise that environmental factors are crucial to the decisions of planning committees. I say with respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think that discussion about planning procedures and the time scales involved is relevant to the amendment.

You may have been in the Chair at the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have no doubt that if you were not, you read the proceedings on the Bill, which many feel may become a best-seller like novels by the former vice-chairman of the Conservative party. If you read the proceedings you will see that there was at one stage a long debate about whether the private Bill mechanism was the most appropriate for the company. Some of us argued that it should have gone through the planning procedures. It did not do that because it knew that it could buy influence on the Conservative Benches to get the private Bill through. Amendment Number 16 has been accepted for debate by you and your colleagues, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Therefore, I would have thought that we could talk about planning procedures. Some of us wish in one sense that we could not, because we wish that the private company had gone through the planning procedures rather than buy influence in the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Both hon. Gentlemen have answered their own points. They have confirmed my fear that the debate might be broadened into one on whether this is a correct method by which to proceed or whether it should be done through planning procedures. All that I am saying is that to have a broad debate on whether this Bill, or planning procedure, is the right way to proceed would be out of order on these amendments.

Mr. Ron Davies: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend was judicious in his choice of words, But he said twice that hon. Gentlemen on the Conservative Benches had been bought. He referred specifically to private promoters buying influence. I should be grateful if you would rule that that is an appropriate form of words for my hon. Friend to use. He is anxious to avoid an early bath, but if you can rule that it is in order for my hon. Friend to accuse hon. Gentlemen on the Conservative Benches of having been bought, it would help us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did not hear any words to that effect.

Mr. Morley: Amendment No. 16 is very important.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I do not know a great deal about salt marshes or ornithology, but I know that local authorities are under great pressure. I am deeply concerned about whether Suffolk county council and Suffolk Coastal district council will have to go to any expense because of the Bill. I am not sure about the political persuasion of those councils. I am not even sure whether they have been rate-capped. Can anyone state whether the company will pay compensation to those councils for work that they will have to carry out under the Bill?

Mr. Morley: That is a good point and comes back to the reason why the time should be extended from one month to three months.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Members of the county council and of Suffolk Coastal district council have negotiated with the promoters and have reached complete agreement with them.

Mr. Morley: Why has that not been said before?

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): There is usually an explanatory and financial memorandum attached to Bills that spells out the financial implications of the legislation for local authorities. It is absent in this case. Will the procedures involved in the investigation of deposits of material mean any expense for the local authorities? I beg to differ from my hon. Friend. The company may not have to reimburse the local authority. Instead, the local authority may have to supplement its resources to pay that money, which means that the money comes from the ratepayers. Why does not the local authority receive sufficient funding to cover the work?

Mr. Morley: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds says that there has been agreement between the two councils and the dock and railway board. I wonder whether those councils are reconsidering their position in the light of what happened to councils affected by the recent hurricane in the south of England. Without doubt, they will incur expense because they will have to do such things as clean away the mud on the roads, repair demaged vehicles and inspect damage. That expenditure may lead the councils to incur grant penalty. The Secretary of State for the Environment said that the councils should have had the necessary money in their reserves. What kind of support is that for local councils?

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend has touched on an important point — the role of local authorities with respect to finance. One hon. Member said from a sedentary position that there would be no increased costs for local authorities.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No extra costs.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman, from a sedentary position, is saying something slightly different. What extra costs will fall upon the county and district councils to do those things mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for

Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), such as clearing the roads of excess mud? Councils will also face demand for a change in the road system, because of increased traffic, and there will be ancillary costs. We have not had responses to those fundamental points. My hon. Friend has touched on a rich vein. It is important to press the Government on these points.

Mr. Morley: I know of no major civil engineering project that has not resulted in the local authorities incurring extra costs. I know from my experience as a local councillor that in undertaking major engineering projects we have to deal with broken pavements, wires and cables that have been torn down and lamp posts that have been knocked over. Although that damage, which is incidental in any major project, is the responsibility of the private company or contractors concerned, those of us in local government know very well how long it takes to go through the insurance claims, and in the meantime more costs are being incurred.

Mr. Fatchett: I should like to offer my hon. Friend a piece of information which may be relevant to his argument. I had the pleasure of visiting Suffolk only a few days after the storm damage occurred. I talked to a number of local people who had suffered extensive damage to their property. I read in the local newspaper that the local county council was worried about the damage and the cost ot the council. It is no good the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) saying that there was an agreement with the county council. The fact is that that agreement predated the storm damage. We all now know that there are county councils in the south of England that will find themselves in extreme difficulty because of the storm damage. It is irrelevant for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds to say that there has been an agreement. He is taking the House for a ride. That agreement has been overtaken. Does my hon. Friend agree with me?

Mr. Morley: I absolutely agree with that statement for the reasons I have already put forward. Any reasonable local council would want to consult its local people about the possible effects. Local councils may want to consult any villages that lie along the route for lorries and local conservation organisations. They may want to consult local rambler associations whose rights of way may be affected during the construction period. It is in no way unreasonable that reasonable local authorities should be given that timespan.

4 am

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend dealt first with the capital consequences of the legislation. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) was very coy and avoided mentioning revenue consequences and particularly manpower costs. Local authorities will incur substantial expenditure in that area and there is no possibility of private enterprise coming in to make that revenue good. The type of manpower costs that I am referring to involve environmental health officers, planning officers, engineers and traffic management units. Those manpower costs represent real costs to the local authority and the Bill does not address such costs.

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend has raised some good points. He has clearly stated the difficulties in which local councils may find themselves over the time scale and it is not true to say that no costs will fall upon local authorities. Revenue costs are very important in connection with total capital and without doubt some council departments will be tied up with supervision, the consequences of construction work and with queries from local people who may want to make complaints.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend may be able to assist us and invite the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) to provide the relevant information. My hon. Friend has relatively recent distinguished experience of local government. Indeed, his experience is much more recent than most other hon. Members who had had similar experience of serving in local government before entering this House. From his recent experience, and as he represented a local authority on the eastern side of the country, can he tell us whether any local authority on the eastern side of England today has the spare capacity of highly qualified servants to fulfil the obligations immediately, or at one month's notice, that hon. Members on both sides of the House would expect such an authority to undertake? Does he believe that any local authority, given all the constraints placed on local authorities by the Government in recent years has any capacity to fulfil the demands at the remarkably short notice envisaged in the Bill?

Mr. Morley: Even Ministers are aware that the screws have been tightened so hard on local authorities that, frankly, I do not believe that there is spare capacity among local authorities' work forces to deal with the three-month notice, let alone the one-month notice.

Mr. Battle: I believe that decisions are often taken in favour of the private sector that assume that ratepayers can foot the bill and that the local authority will pay the price. Have there been any assessments or costings, in the light of the Bill, of the impact on local authorities and ratepayers, so as to build such assessments into the budgets when they are drawn up? If that work has not been carried out, the Bill is imposing a burden on local authorities that is greater than the authorities can bear.

Mr. Morley: I am sure that costings have been done, but I am not sure just how recently or whether they have been amended in the light of the changing circumstances of local authorities and the changing costs and inflation rates. Any costings carried out in the past will no longer be relevant to the present circumstances, particularly in view of the comments made by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the way in which he is quite ruthlessly prepared to deal with local authorities which find that they have extra expenditure above the normal outlay. They can expect no help, support or sympathy and they face very severe consequences.

Mr. Ron Davies: I do not wish to usurp your authority, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, I wonder whether the terms of the amendment stray slightly wide of the words on the Order Paper. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred earlier to the difficulties of migrant birds—hence the amendment calling for a three-month moratorium. Will he cast his mind back to the protective provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and consider for a moment the protection that it bestows on nesting birds, and the effect that the Bill would have on the nesting period? As I understand the terms of the 1981 Act, they would prevent

[Mr. Ron Davies]

most of the operations envisaged in the Bill from taking place, certainly between about February and June or July. I feel that that is highly relevant to the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions are developing into speeches. Interventions must be brief.

Mr. Morley: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) for guiding me back to the straight and narrow. I do not wish to digress from the points that we are discussing.

Under Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act, certain breeding birds are protected by law. Schedule 1 birds are the rarer species, but birds such as the ruff——

Mr. Martlew: Will my hon. Friend please explain what schedule 1 is?

Mr. Morley: Certainly. Schedule 1 is a list of rare British breeding birds. They include such species as the barn owl, which is becoming very scarce, and other scarce breeders such as the bee-eater — *[Interruption.]* I am afraid that the ringed plover is not included in the schedule. No doubt that will cause some disappointment.

Schedule 1 protects birds that would be endangered by disturbance of their breeding. Any schedule 1 bird that was breeding in the area would halt any building progress taking place at that time. The ruff and the black-tailed godwit, which are in the schedule, breed in the area, although I do not know whether they breed in that precise vicinity.

Mr. Ron Davies: I gather that the provisions of schedule 1 are not the only provisions that prohibit the disturbance of breeding birds. As I understand it, any breeding birds, other than those which, under another provision, can be taken from pheasantries and so on, are offered a measure of protection under the 1981 Act. Not only the birds with special protection, but the oyster catchers and others mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) would be given protection.

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend is right. Although they are not included in schedule 1, those birds would be protected during the breeding season from the deliberate disturbance or destruction of their nests or eggs. It comes back to the question of the time scale of the construction work. The more common breeding birds in the area might be affected.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I have no knowledge of schedule 1 of the 1981 Act. However, I have been told that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) is a renowned bird expert. Are any of the birds mentioned in schedule 1 migratory? I have not taken part in the earlier proceedings because I have been tied up with the Local Government Bill, so I am now trying to pick up some of the necessary information. *[Interruption.]* I am an expert on the haggis, but not on migratory birds. Will my hon. Friend tell me whether any, or all, of the birds in schedule 1 are migratory?

Mr. Morley: Schedule 1 contains a combination of both types of bird. Birds such as the barn owl, for instance, do not migrate: they have their own territory. Other birds, such as the Tringa sandpipers, which breed in this country, are migratory. They are linked by the delicate nature of their distribution, both in this country and in Europe. That is why they are given special protection, apart from the protection that they are given under the 1981 Act.

Mr. Ingram: Schedule 1 dealt with migratory birds south of the border. Do any of those birds fly down from Scotland?

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend has asked an interesting question. Schedule 1 to the 1981 Act refers to the wryneck, which breeds in the south of England. But it is becoming extinct. However, the northern species of the wryneck, from Scandinavia, is increasing in the north of the British Isles and is moving south. That shows how the hardier northern species are pushing out the weaker southern species.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That may be very interesting, but I find it difficult to relate it to the amendments before the House. The hon. Gentleman must resist the temptation to be taken off the straight and narrow course by the interventions of his hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram).

Mr. Ingram: I raised that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) mentioned certain matters that cause me concern. If the wryneck is flying down from Scotland but will be unable to rest on this site, where will it be able to rest, and will it ever be able to return to Scotland?

Mr. Morley: The wryneck is a summer migrant. It spends the winter months in Africa and other southern regions. The southern wryneck is a special British sub-species that is becoming extinct. It is being replaced by the hardier northern sub-species of the wryneck.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the relevance of this question the relationship between the environment, nesting and the engineering works? We are trying to work out the extent to which the engineering works would affect the nesting places of these birds. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) referred to the nesting sites of schedule 1 birds and other birds. Do the nesting periods vary throughout the year? A different species of bird could be nesting in each month of the year. If we are to comply with the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the requirement that schedule 1 and other birds should not be disturbed during the nesting season, it is possible that no engineering works could be carried out at any time in the year. My hon. Friend has a duty to identify each species of bird that might be nesting at a particular time of the year.

Mr. Morley: One bird breeds almost continuously during the year — the collared dove. Until 1955 the collared dove was rarely found in this country. It can breed throughout the year, except when the weather is severe.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the collared dove is now classed as a pest and that it can be culled by any landowner or individual, provided that that individual has the landowner's permission to do so?

Mr. Morley: I can confirm that. Collared doves hang around docklands because they are attracted by grain on ships. When they first came to Britain in 1955 people came from all over the country to see them, but they are now regarded as a pest, as a result of their continuous westward spread.

4.15 am

Mr. Hardy: I hope that my hon. Friend will not be led astray by other hon. Friends. I urge him to resist the blandishments of my hon. Friends. My hon. Friend knows that while the House may be interested in collared doves and wrynecks, the particular importance of this area is the provision of habitat to accommodate the wintering population of gulls, ducks, geese and waders. We must not lose sight of that overriding consideration.

Mr. Morley: I accept my hon. Friend's point.

Amendment No. 16 deals with the disturbance that engineering causes. Apart from the construction of the dock, which we have dealt with in terms of civil engineering, there is ancillary construction such as cranes and floodlights. Modern docks are brightly lit at night and floodlights can alter the life patterns of birds on the mud flats. Research has been done on the disturbance of docklands and industrial sites. It has been discovered that because of brightly lit dockland areas, gulls that normally roost at night on reservoirs or inland pools tend to fly around all night because of the opportunity that is given to them by the very bright lights. It is not known what the long-term implications of that interference will be, but a great deal more research will be done on that matter.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I have been listening to the hon. Gentleman very carefully and with a great deal of sympathy. With regard to amendment No. 16, where he is seeking to insert the word "environmental" alongside "engineering", I think that he has made his case. I have recommended that the promoters accept it, and I am glad to tell the House that they do. If he wishes, that amendment can pass. As to amendment No. 15, the hon. Gentleman properly said that under the wildlife and countryside conventions three months' notice is the normal practice rather than one month, so I have recommended that the promoters accept the logic of his case. I am glad to say that they do, so that amendment can also pass.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is not the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) outrageously out of order in suggesting to the House that he has arrived at a private arrangement with the people who are paying him to pilot this legislation through the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw".] I seem to have hit a sore spot. If Tory Members are not prepared to accept the accusation that they have received a financial inducement to support this measure, I am sorry. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has no locus to suggest that he has arrived at a private arrangement with the promoters and that, therefore, there is no need for us to discuss the amendment or for my hon. Friend to proceed with it. It really is outrageous that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have noted the hon. Gentleman's point. The fact is quite simple. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is in charge of the Bill. It is quite customary for an hon. Member who is in charge of a Bill to give some idea—quite often at an early stage — of his view of amendments that are being discussed. The hon. Gentleman was quite in order in doing that.

Mr. Fatchett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Ron Davies: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I call Mr. Fatchett.

Mr. Ron Davies: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if my hon. Friend had not started to move his amendment or if the debate on the amendment had been completed, that would have been an appropriate time for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds to announce to the House his fixed agreement with the promoters of the Bill. Inasmuch as the debate on the amendment has hardly started—certainly, the amendment has been moved by my hon. Friend — many important points are to be made. Some of my hon. Friends wish to oppose the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Glandford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). Surely it is not an appropriate time for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds to announce his fixed-up agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I merely repeat that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds was within his rights in doing what he did. I got the impression that he was trying to be helpful to the House. It is quite normal for the person in charge of a Bill — whether it be a Back-Bench Member or a Minister—at an early stage to give some idea to the House about his attitude to amendments that are being discussed.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I confirm absolutely that I was seeking to meet the case that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) eloquently put. Of course, since I am responsible for the Bill in the House, I made it my business to consult the promoters and to advise them that the hon. Gentleman had made two points about the timing and the insertion of "environmental" which made good sense and that, if they were wise, they would adopt the amendments. I was reporting to the House to help the House. The promoters had accepted the two amendments.

Mr. Fatchett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am concerned about the procedural aspects. However, perhaps I do not need to be, and you can help me in this respect. I have listened to the debate for the past hour. I am keen to speak against amendment No. 15. In many respects, it is flawed. I should like to catch your eye, if possible. I am concerned that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is trying to railroad the amendment through the House and prevent detailed discussion. Some of my hon. Friends — indeed, some Conservative Members—and I should have the right to speak against the amendment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's intervention and his subsequent point of order were not taken by you in any sense as trying to pre-empt discussion.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the same point of order?

Mr. Lloyd: It is a different point.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the end of the debate, will you accept a motion that the House do now adjourn? It seems that an odd situation has developed. Clearly, the House has been detained at some length. It would have been helpful if, at some time over the past 18 months during which the amendments have been down, the promoters of the Bill had had the chance to consult the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) to consider which of the amendments they might be prepared to accept. Had they put their names to some of the amendments, the time spent

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

by the House could have been considerably reduced. It is not satisfactory for that consultation to take place during the debate as the time of the House is clearly being wasted. I hope that at the end of the debate on this group of amendments you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might consider allowing the House to adjourn. We could then return to the matter when the promoters and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds have had an opportunity to sort out their views on the Bill. We might then save some time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I repeat to the House that I have heard nothing out of order and we should now get on with the debate.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I put it to you that there are a number of oddities about the confession of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). I may be wrong—I stand to be corrected—but I have not seen the hon. Gentleman move from his place to consult the promoters. If I am right, the House deserves an explanation. We have had nearly an hour of debate—during which time my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) has advanced the environmental case most eloquently—and it would have been wrong for us to be detained if the information could have been provided earlier.

You, Sir, pointed out that in the consideration of public business a Minister may explain his intentions to the House early in the proceedings. However, in such cases Ministers are backed by the authority of the Government Chief Whip and know that he will mobilise the support of Conservative Members to guarantee that their intentions are translated into votes in the Lobby. Unless the Government Chief Whip is prepared to make a statement on this matter, which would be most useful, and to assure us that Conservative Members will not vote against the amendment, we can have no guarantee—other than the assurance that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds proposes to vote for it—that the amendment will be carried. Therefore, if the House is not to adjourn, it is most important that the Government Chief Whip should tell us what the Government propose.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat that I have heard nothing out of order. The Chair never deals with hypothetical situations and I certainly do not propose to do so now.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is significant that in making his concession the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) failed to recognise until this evening that the Bill was the subject of negotiations with the Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me? The hon. Gentleman appears to be addressing his remarks to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. If he has a point of order, he must address it to me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I sought to outline the nature of the debate that is now to take place in light of the concession made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. Hitherto, the debate has been about a Bill whose provisions have been negotiated by the Government and its promoters. Ministers — certainly Ministers from the Department of the Environment — will have negotiated over the Bill and accepted many of its clauses in principle. However, the hon. Gentleman's concession on behalf of the promoters will not have been discussed with Ministers, and they may wish to comment on it. They may wish to qualify——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not really a point of order at all. It would be perfectly in order to raise the matter in the debate, and I suggest that we now return to the debate.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) accused the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) of receiving payment I noticed that the hon. Gentleman was indignant. In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, would you give him an opportunity to put on record a denial that he has received any payment for his role in relation to the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must now return to the debate.

Mr. Ron Davies: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) mentioned me in his point of order. I realise that inadvertently I may have given offence to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). If that was the case, I withdraw my remarks unreservedly. If the hon. Gentleman will assure me and the House that he has received no payment whatsoever in connection with his promotion of the Bill, I will acknowledge that I have done him a grave disservice and withdraw my remarks. I look forward to the statement from the hon. Gentleman that that is the case.

4.30 am

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I do not intend to make any such statement.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the points that hon. Members are now making are not points of order for the Chair.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I hope that what was said by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) was recorded in *Hansard.*

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I gave the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds a fair and reasonable opportunity——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have already made it clear that these points are not matters for the Chair. I deprecate the fact that hon. Members are persisting in trying to raise points when I have already ruled that they are not points of order. We must now get on with the debate.

Mr. Morley: I remind the House that the issues we are talking about are serious in terms of the environment and conservation of the area concerned. It has been said that the promoters of the Bill are willing to accept amendments Nos. 15 and 16. I congratulate them on listening to the arguments that have been put forward sincerely. I appreciate that. However, one or two issues concern me a little and I would like to clarify them.

First, I am a little puzzled at the fact that the amendments have been accepted at this late stage when, as I understand it, they have been on the table for a long time. I am a little concerned——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The term of one month was an agreement reached between Suffolk county council and Suffolk Coastal district council and the promoters of the Bill. The local authorities were satisfied with one month. However, the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) has made a fair point that, in wildlife and conservation practice, it is normal for there to be three months. He made his case, it has been accepted and I hope that he will recognise that.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that this is an amazing situation? The amendments have been tabled for nearly 12 months. One would have thought that during that time the promoters would have looked at the reasons for the amendments. They could even have come and asked some of us who have our names on the amendments what the reasons were. We could then have tabled the amendments in the names of the promoters as well as those of Labour Members. That would have saved the House a great deal of time. It is unsatisfactory that only at this late hour are the promoters starting to decide to make the change. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) will press on to find out what other concessions may be coming so that we may be able to make faster progress — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Lloyd: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. From a sedentary position the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, having explained to the house that he has been convinced by the eloquent rhetoric of my hon. Friend, has now threatened to vote against the amendments. Clearly that conversion is humbug——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. These are not points of order. They are legitimate points of argument that can be deployed in the debate.

Mr. Morley: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that it is strange. I understand the logic of taking on board the three-month period because the case for the amendments is logical. I am prepared to accept the offer for three months. However, on amendment No. 16, I would like to be sure that we mean the same thing in terms of its operation if we put the word environmental into the Bill. By putting that word as well as the words "engineering factors" in the amendment, we shall put a responsibility on the company. If environmental or conservation groups point out to the company that the construction of the dock is having an undesirable environmental consequence, the company will vary the construction. I would appreciate it if the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) would confirm that.

Mr. Ingram: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could we have some order in the Chamber? An hon. Member is walking around the Chamber. I do not know whether he is trying to interject.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must be seated unless they are addressing the House.

Mr. Morley: I should appreciate it if the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would confirm that we are both on the same wavelength on the effect on the clause of the word "environmental". As I see the effect of the amendment, if the company's construction is disturbing wildlife, or the nature or design of whatever is being constructed has any detrimental effect upon the environment, the company would concede that point.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Clause 7(3), to which amendment No. 16 is addressed, exempts the dock company from giving notice to the two councils of an intended start of construction of the extended quay, or any part of it. It gives the company an exemption in any case where it does not foresee that the construction work is capable of being completed in one continuous operation. At the moment the company must make that judgment on economic and engineering factors only. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) is right to want to insert "environmental". The promoters accept it, so the clause will be amended precisely on the words of the amendment.

Mr. Morley: We are making some progress, but I want to be clear on the interpretation because I do not want to see the amendment rendered worthless by the interpretation of the company, or to see the company ignore an amendment that has been put in good faith by hon. Members.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) did not agree with the proposition put by my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). The hon. Gentleman only reiterated the original concession made and referred to the inclusion of "environmental" after "engineering". My hon. Friend should press for that undertaking, because it was conspicuous that he did not receive it. The intention of my hon. Friend's amendment is very different from the interpretation being placed upon it by the company and by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. I ask my hon. Friend to press this very important point of interpretation.

Mr. Morley: That is my point. I am trying to make clear how the clause will operate, so that there is no danger of misinterpretation by the company.

Mr. Hardy: I am obliged to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) for accepting amendment Nos. 15 and 16. They are modest concessions which he may be unable to make in relation to other clauses, but we appreciate them none the less. We are also grateful for his concession on the previous set of amendments.

The hon. Gentleman could be even more helpful and could maintain consistency by accepting amendment No. 17, too. I hope that the inadequate gratitude of some of my hon. Friends has not persuaded the hon. Gentleman not to help us with amendment No. 17. On behalf of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, I express the sincere hope — perhaps the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) will allow the hon. Gentleman to listen to my request — that he will accept that amendment No. 17 is also important.

My only comment about the two amendments that have been accepted is that I am astonished that Suffolk county council and Suffolk Coastal district council have such enormous resources that they could respond to the requirements and challenges of the Bill at one month's notice. My local authority has studiously avoided being rate-capped and has tried to comply with the Government's requirements, but I do not see how it, or any responsible authority, could have enough spare resources so that, at one month's notice, it could respond

[Mr. Hardy]

to those challenges. The ratepayers of that area should ask why the authorities have maintained that substantial spare capacity in the administration of several departments.

I am sorry that I had to say that, because I have some sympathy with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. Some of my hon. Friends have not perceived that the hon. Gentleman is trying to oblige several of his right hon. and hon. Friends who, because of ministerial office, could not sponsor the Bill. He is carrying a heavy load. It might be better for him — it would certainly be better for the country — if those hon. Members who represent the constituencies that will be most affected by the project ceased to be Ministers. The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is now on the Front Bench, has a much closer constituency interest in the project than does the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. The right hon. Gentleman should have been persuaded to depart from the Government so that he could have spared the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds from carrying that heavy burden. We have sympathy for the hon. Gentleman, as well as considerable appreciation of the substantial efforts that he has made.

While the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has made concessions on amendments Nos. 15 and 16, he has not done the same on No. 17.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Nobody has yet spoken to amendment No. 17.

4.45 am

Mr. Hardy: I shall speak to it now, and I hope the hon. Gentleman will provide us with a hat trick by accepting it because the arguments in favour of No. 17 are even more telling than those in favour of Nos. 15 and 16.

No. 17 would delete subsection (4). That provision, if not deleted, would relax completely the safeguards about deposited material arising from work authorised in connection with producing a smooth shore line or rounding off sharp angles on the north-easterly point of the shore line and terminating the construction work.

Why should those restrictions be relaxed? Are they not minimal enough? And why does a smooth shore line have to be produced? Does the company believe that a smooth shore line would be more aesthetically pleasing or that the waders would find it more difficult to navigate? We need evidence as to the desirability of a smooth shore line. Subsection (4) seems almost to provide the company with a charter to avoid some of the more praiseworthy, or less reprehensible, aspects of the clause.

Mr. Steinberg: As my constituency does not have a shore line, may I ask my hon. Friend to explain what a smooth shore line is? My geography is not good, having been a history teacher before becoming a politician, and I would be obliged if my hon. Friend would explain precisely what such a shore line entails.

Mr. Hardy: A smooth shore line is very different from, indeed the opposite of, a rough shore line. I too was once a history teacher.

Mr. Steinberg: My constituency does not have a rough shore line either, so perhaps my hon. Friend would explain what a rough one is.

Mr. Hardy: The company is obviously keen to have a shore line with no sudden gradations, no sharp edges, no precipitous slopes and one that is even and smooth in the distribution of whatever material of which the shore line is composed.

Mrs. Fyfe: Why is a smooth shore line preferable to a rough one? I would have thought that in terms of natural beauty and enhancement of the general appearance, a rough shore line would be nicer.

Mr. Hardy: We should assess what sort of shore line is most conducive to retain, effectively, the highest proportion of the important species of wildfowl that currently occupy the area. Those species command our attention and are the reason for our presence here at this absurd hour.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: A smooth shore line may mean something quite different. We presume that a smooth shore line would include material that would be environmentally acceptable. However, the formulation of that shore line may include the use of materials not environmentally acceptable — for example, sewage. The constructors may wish to raise a sewage deposit that was concentrated in a particular part of the estuary and place it on the shore line, which would cause substantial environmental damage. Other materials, such as mud, may be used. For example, the existing shore line may be sandy and mud may be deposited to aid the engineering works dealt with in other amendments.

Mr. Hardy: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because he leads me on to the point that I wish to make. The House may recall that some time ago, there was concern about the deposit of harmful materials on land. I recall discussion of the matter in the House. That issue illustrated the dangers that can accrue from the deposit of harmful materials.

The Yorkshire water authority—some time ago, but the case is still relevant — deposited sewage sludge on Warren House farm, in my constituency. It was a perfectly sensible proposition because such sludge is a valuable material for fertiliser. Unfortunately, the herd of shorthorn cows on the farm started to die, first the bull followed by quite a few calves and heifers and most of the milking cows. Everyone assumed that the deaths were caused by atmospheric pollution, but the farmer, Mr Ellis, a friend and an experienced farmer, said to me that he did not believe that that was the cause. Despite the visits of many experts, he said to me, "Peter, I think it is the muck that I put on the land." I therefore asked the local authority to analyse sewage sludge and we established that it contained high and harmful levels of fluoride salts.

I do not criticise the Yorkshire water authority and I am in no way suggesting that it was guilty of complacency or corruption. It made a genuine mistake; but it was a mistake that poisoned 40 beasts. If compensation had not been secured for Mr. Ellis, it would have meant the ruin of one deserving farmer.

Such things can happen and therefore I am entitled to express some anxiety about proper controls for the materials that will be used in the infilling envisaged in the project. For that reason I believe that it is essential to look carefully at clause 7 to ensure that there is no opportunity, provided by the existence of lines 27 to 36, for weakness to emerge.

Mr. Battle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the clause seems rather more concerned about the angles on the beach rather than the environmental impact with its reference to a smooth shoreline and a

"beach of suitable dimensions to round off any sharp angle?"

Does my hon. Friend accept that any deposit from any construction work undertaken should be monitored? If the hon. Member for Bury St Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has already accepted that environmental amendment, surely it is meaningless for him not to accept the amendment that will remove clause 7(4).

Is it environmental issues that concern us and not angles on the beach? Is my hon. Friend interested in pressing the hon. Gentleman in charge of the Bill to make clear whether he is prepared to accept the amendment or whether he is prepared to lead the House on an all-night ramble simply because he will not make clear his views?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Its purpose is simply to round out the end of the quay, otherwise it would be square and would create all sorts of eddies that would not be good for small dinghy sailors. So that hon. Members are under no misapprehension, if the House insists that the amendment be carried so be it. I have discussed that with the promoters and that is acceptable to them, but I must warn hon. Members that it would have some consequences for navigation that are not what the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is seeking to achieve.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman is seeking to be helpful, I am sure. The consequence of maintaining this part of clause 7 in the Bill is that the company would not have to notify the Suffolk county council or the Suffolk district council in advance of depositing material in three special sets of circumstances. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West and myself are not seeking to promote a navigation hazard. We are seeking to ensure that the local authority has adequate information and is notified in good time. The hon. Gentleman accepted that principle when he accepted the extension of the notice from one month to three months. I should have thought that this clause was entirely relevant and consistent with that concession, for which we are grateful.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am seeking to be helpful to the House, as indeed the promoters are seeking to be helpful to those who navigate in the river. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the environmental consequences, but I think that he accepts that the previous concession that I made in respect of amendment No. 16, plus the earlier agreement that no reclamation would commence without the consent of the Secretary of State for the Environment, who has a whole series of statutory duties placed upon him, cover the environmental matter effectively. I can only look at the amendment as it is drawn and as it would alter the Bill. It would alter it in precisely the fashion that I have suggested. It would remove from the promoters the obligation or intention to round out the end of the quay in a fashion that would be helpful to small boat navigation. If the House wishes to bring that about, it is quite acceptable to the company because, if anything, it will reduce its costs. However, I do not believe any responsible company ought to accept the amendment without advising the House of the consequences that could flow from it.

Mr. Battle *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is getting close to becoming an intervention within an intervention. I think that the hon. Member should be allowed to answer points one at a time.

Mr. Hardy: I shall ask the hon. Gentleman to comment on the points that I am about to make. It is suggested that, if this paragraph remains in the Bill, the company could use it at some future date to justify an operation that would be damaging to the public interest or harmful to the environmental cause.

5 am

Secondly, subsection (4)*(b)* exempts the company from notifying the local authorities if material is to be deposited so as to

"minimise any interference with the ebb and flow of the waters adjacent to . . . the Company's berths."

The RSPB suggests that that might be paradoxical. Surely the whole object of the Bill is to allow the company to commit substantial—even gross—acts of interference with the ebb and flow of waters in the Orwell estuary. Further deposits of materials under such an exemption would have implications for the conservation of birds elsewhere in the estuary because of the chain effect.

I am also advised that it is disquieting to learn that the company may require extra latitude of the same type. Surely if the quay and its berths are adequately designed and maintained, nothing could happen to justify deposits of material to minimise interference with the ebb and flow of the tide.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: One aspect of this issue has not yet surfaced. It is connected with the statement that my hon. Friend has just made about the ebb and flow of the tide and the movement of material.

I have a map of the area involved. We have not yet considered the fact that if excavations take place on Fagbury point it is likely that there will be a shift of material down the whole estuary, creating soil erosion along the coast, from Ipswich right down through the villages south of Levington, past Stratton Hall near Thorpe common, and even on to Trimley marshes. There could be further erosion on Shotley marshes to the north of Harwich, right around the coast to Cranes Hill and on to Chelmondiston. All those areas could suffer from erosion in the event that any excavation work was done on the Fagbury——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members must make their interventions briefer.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend has assumed—at some length—the point I was making about the knock-on effects further into the estuary. Subsection (4)*(c)* raises queries similar to those I have already expressed. Why should the company want to construct a beach to round off a sharp angle at the point at which work on Trinity quay terminated? Is there a chance that it did not design the works correctly in the first place? If so, can the company be trusted to apply proper design standards in future construction work? Does subsection (4)*(c)*(ii)—it refers to

"any part of the work"—

apply the exemption to the construction of the new berths for which authorisation is sought in the Bill?

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has put his finger on the point that there could be serious consequences for

[Dr. Marek]

much of the shore line; and we have no evidence about what is likely to happen. I hope that either the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) or one of his hon. Friends with expert knowledge will tell us whether any survey has been carried out.

It would be useful to know how much we can rely on subsection (4)*(b)*. What does "minimise" mean? It could be a completely free hand for the company which might say, "We have tried; we have minimised it but it did not work." Does it mean something specific? I am unhappy about this and I may have to speak about it later in the debate. Can my hon. Friend help the House on the matter?

Mr. Hardy: I think the only person who can help the House is the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). I am sure that he will seek to satisfy the House later in the debate.

As I explained earlier when my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) and I were discussing our previous careers, I have limited technological, hydrological and engineering qualifications. I would not dream of seeking to give the House the impression that I could speak authoritatively about technological and engineering matters. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will appreciate that your engineering skills far exceed those of most of us at present in the House. I maintain a close interest in conservation. It is perhaps because I am not an engineer that I remind the House of what can happen when experts prevail.

I said earlier that I would speak about the oyster catcher, and I shall do so briefly and relevantly. The oyster catcher provides an excellent example of leaving everything to the technologist, the expert. During the winter of 1963-64 there was a massive spatfall — an interesting word—of cockles on the Bury inlet which led to excellent yields. Oyster catcher numbers increased. The fishermen demanded a cull of the oyster catchers so as to return the population of that species to its earlier level. With the approval of the experts, 10,000 oyster catchers were shot. After that cull, the cockle population, which was supposed to have been protected by the cull, plummeted. No one knows the reason, but when the experts analysed the situation again they concluded that the oyster catchers had had far less impact upon the cockle population than had been suggested. So 10,000 oyster catchers had been shot almost certainly unnecessarily. That is one example of the effect of unquestioned acceptance of expert advice. That, not technological qualifications, is the reason for my suspicion.

Mr. Battle: The Bill is primary legislation. If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) accepts that the impact on the environment should be a primary consideration, as he had said on earlier amendments, and if he is prepared to accept that the company should give notice, then, if subsection (4) remains, there is a contradiction in the legislation because the key phrase is

> "Nothing in this section shall apply."

It would mean that the company would not need to give notice and would not need to take account of the environment. For that reason, it is illogical for the subsection to remain in the primary legislation.

Mr. Hardy: I have some sympathy with that view. Clearly it would have been better if we had known well in advance that amendments Nos. 15 and 16 were to be accepted while amendment No. 17 was not. Obviously, it would have been better if we had been able to consider the clause in the light of the generous concession made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). We have put some serious points and serious grounds for hesitation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman can allay our anxieties. The only way of doing so with any positive certainty would be to accept amendment No. 17 with the other two amendments.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). I have given the warning that I thought was proper on behalf of a responsible company. Nevertheless, in view of what the hon. Gentleman has said, I have suggested to the promoters that they accept amendment No. 17, and they have agreed to do so.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have had only an hour and 40 minutes debate on these matters and some of my hon. Friends are waiting to speak. Why has the debate been terminated in this way? Is this not unprecedented?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I heard the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) say that he was prepared to accept the amendment. In those circumstances, it seemed perfectly reasonable to allow the House to make a decision on the amendment.

Mr. Tony Lloyd *(seated and covered)*: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You responded to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) by saying that your reason for accepting the closure motion lay in the promoters' decision to accept the amendment. But saying that the promoters accept the amendment is not the same as saying that the House accepts it. To ensure that there was proper and adequate debate on all the outstanding issues, it was important that those of my hon. Friend's who had already intimated that they intended to oppose the amendments had the opportunity to put forward their case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The reason that I gave to the House was only one of several that enabled me to reach the view that the House should be given the opportunity to reach its decision. I must point out that the debate had been going on for nearly two hours.

Mr. Fatchett *(seated and covered)*: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although you were not in the Chair, you will appreciate from the record that, earlier, on a previous amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker recognised that some hon. Members wanted to speak against it. Although you may be right about the length of the debate there is an argument that we should have balanced debate in the House. All the speeches in the debate on these amendments have been in favour of them, and there has not been a speech against them. I wanted specifically, and I gave notice of my intention, to speak against amendment No. 15, not for frivolous reasons but because I felt that the amendment did not go far enough.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the House feels that the debate should continue, the House will reflect that view in the vote which is taking place now.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *(seated and covered)*: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it fair to those hon. Members who may without your knowledge have wished to oppose these amendments for you to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to take into account a number of factors when deciding whether I will accept a closure motion. I have exercised the discretion vested in me by the House. It will be for the House in the Division that is taking place to reflect its own view of these matters.

Mr. McCartney *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier I specifically went to see Mr. Deputy Speaker, who was in the Chair at the time, and I was given an assurance that those who opposed the clause would be called during the debate. During the change in the occupancy of the Chair, that information was not transmitted to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friends and I have been debarred from participating in the debate after being given an assurance that we could take part.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a matter for the House to decide. I have not debarred any hon. Member from taking part in the debate. I have allowed the House to reach a conclusion on the matter under consideration.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You said that you have not debarred the House from reaching a decision or debarred any hon. Member for speaking. On the basis——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have not reached my point of order yet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman had gone sufficiently far for me to reach a view about the matter on which he was addressing the House. He is getting dangerously close to challenging my ruling, and he must not do that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is not a question of challenging your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On a point of order, I put it to you that some hon. Members tonight have been prevented from opposing amendments to which they were opposed and they will reflect that in the Division Lobby. On the basis of your statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker there will be no need for any debate on any of the amendments. The House would simply have to decide the moment that the amendment is moved whether a closure should take place. That would be unprecedented. The debate has been——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot debate my ruling in this fashion. I have told him that these are matters for my judgment and discretion. I have exercised my discretion, and it will be for the House, in the Division that is taking place now, to make a decision on whether the debate should continue. The hon. Gentleman should not seek to debate my ruling in this fashion.

The House having divided: Ayes 124, Noes 20.

Division No. 56] **[5.10 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Fatchett, Derek
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Hardy, Peter
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Eric
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott

Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. John Battle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 141, Noes 5.

Division No. 57] **[5.25 am**

AYES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Bottomley, Peter
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Clay, Bob
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morley, Elliott
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Martlew and
Mr. Gerry Steinberg.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ian McCartney and
Mr. Derek Fatchett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Amendment proposed: No. 16, in page 6, line 26, after 'engineering', insert 'and environmental.'.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): *(seated and covered)* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is quite obvious that something is going on in the Lobby, or something is not going on in the Lobby, in that various hon. Members are delaying the procedures of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is obvious that there is some apparently inexplicable delay. Serjeant at Arms, please find out what is going on in the Lobby. The Tellers are here.

The House having divided: Ayes 22, Noes 124.

Division No. 58] **[5.40 am**

AYES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hardy, Peter
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Fatchett and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael

Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, John
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Forth and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask for your guidance on an important matter that arises directly from the Division. You were here for the debate on the previous set of amendments. You will recall the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) saying that he was in charge of the Bill and that he would accept the amendment on behalf of its promoters —*[Interruption.]* I should be happy to debate the point at length, but you will wish to rule on the matter quickly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Was it in order for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds to arrange for Conservative Members to go into the No Lobby to ensure that the amendment which he had accepted on behalf of the promoters would be defeated? I was under the impression that it was the responsibility of each hon. Member to ensure that his vote accorded with his voice.

My second point relates to a graver matter. I had a pleasant exchange of words with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, as you can imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Aye Lobby. Since 7 o'clock yesterday evening, we have been led to believe that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds was in charge of the Bill. In that capacity, he advised the House on what the promoters will and will not accept. Understandably, my hon. Friends and I accepted the hon. Gentleman at face value. You can imagine my consternation—not to say the horror of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) — when the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds made a frank admission that he was not in charge of the Bill. He said that it was the responsibility of the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer). His words were, "It's Gummer's Bill."

Is it in order for a Minister to be discreetly in charge, or in charge by means of subterfuge, of what is ostensibly a private Bill being promoted by outside interests? Is it in order for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds deliberately to mislead the House by saying that he was in charge——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Speaker has frequently made it clear that he will not accept the charge that an hon. Member has deliberately misled the House. On reflection, the hon. Gentleman may wish to withdraw the word "deliberately".

Mr. Davies: I accept your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If I implied that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds deliberately misled the House, I withdraw it. But will you advise the House whether it was in order for the hon. Gentleman, knowing full well that he was not in charge of the Bill—as he admitted to me in the hearing of many of my hon. Friends — to say that he was in charge of the Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: None of the matters to which the hon. Gentleman has referred suggests that there has been any breach either of Standing Orders or our practices and procedures. The question of a Member's vote following his voice would arise only if, when the Chair put the Question, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) had called in a manner contrary to that which he subsequently voted. I understand that that is not what is being charged.

6 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Nevertheless, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an interesting point of order arises for you in a twofold sense. The first is whether you were led to believe that events would work out in a way that they subsequently did not work out. You may wish to comment on that matter.

The second question which arises for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that of a vote following an hon. Member's voice. It is obvious that the voice of the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the Minister of State, went in a different direction from the way in which he voted because the two Members in question were in different Division Lobbies.

Mr. Skinner: I deliberately went into the No Lobby because I had an idea that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) had been kidding the House. Without going into the question whether he was deliberately misleading us, I must say that he seemed to be making wild promises based on the function at St. James's that was finally cancelled last night. Since then there has also been a change——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope the hon. Gentleman will let me know what point of order he thinks arises for me.

Mr. Skinner: Several more hours of debate are still to come and it is just conceivable that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will tell the Chair what he intends to do in the future, and then the Chair will be dragged into the issue in that the Chair will think that he intends to do things that he will not do because his right hon. Friend the Minister of State will not allow him to do them. That is likely to place the Chair in some difficulty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must wait to see whether such problems arise and then judge them. The Chair cannot rule on a hypothesis.

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that when the Question was put on the closure motion a number of points of order were raised by my hon. Friends, in reply to which you pointed out that the debate had lasted for an hour and 40 minutes and you saw no reason for it to continue, considering that the amendments had been accepted. It now seems clear that they had not been accepted, and that one of those acceptances has certainly been reneged on.

My point of order falls into two parts. The first is whether what took place on that amendment can stand as valid, and the second is to ask what action the Chair may take on another group of amendments——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Again, the hon. Gentleman is asking me to anticipate problems that may not arise.

Several Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One point of order at a time. On the hon. Gentleman's earlier point, he is really asking me to have a discussion with him about a decision that has already been taken. I cannot do that either.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to raise a different, serious point of order, and if I am allowed to develop it, you will recognise its significance.

The last Division created some sort of precedent and I am seeking your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this matter. This is the first time in my recollection when every speaker from the Labour Benches and, as far as I can recall——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman get to his point of order.

Mr. Hardy: I believe that an important precedent has been created. What is the effect on the conduct of the proceedings and the business of the House if every speaker in a debate agrees to support a proposition and then, in the Division, for some reason or other, an entirely different decision is taken? That is unparalleled.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No matter what the hon. Gentleman's reminiscences may be, it is not for the Chair to seek to discern what governs hon. Members' behaviour in the House in such circumstances.

Amendment proposed: No. 17, in page 6, leave out lines 27 to 36.—*[Mr. Tony Lloyd.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 22, Noes 123.

Division No. 59] **[6.06 am**

AYES

Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Fatchett, Derek
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hardy, Peter
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr.Frank Cook.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Forth and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 10

INCORPORATION OF PROVISIONS OF ACTS OF 1956, 1963, 1968, 1979 AND 1981

Mr. Loyden: I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 10, line 18, at end insert—

'*(cc)* Section 21 of the Act of 1956 shall have effect as if, after the word "Minister", where it secondly occurs, there were inserted the words "and subject to such conditions as he may require"; and as if for the words "harbour to its former condition" there were substituted the word "navigation".'.

The House should applaud my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) for bringing to it his great knowledge of ecology. His contribution has made many of us aware of the possible consequences of the Bill. I do not intend to follow him. I am sure that if I did, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would call me to order.

I want to deal with the navigation of the river itself, a matter as important as the ecology. We have been dissatisfied with the lack of evidence so far produced by the promoters on the feasibility study, which is central to the Bill. Although, I recognise the importance of the clauses we have debated, one of the most important aspects of the Bill is the effect of changes in the harbour on the meandering of the river and, consequently, the dredging that may be necessary. We are not satisfied that there has been a serious feasibility study which would satisfy us that the intrusion of the development will not result in navigational difficulties.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend has alluded to dredging. I should like to ask, in view of his experience in the industry, about the condition of the British dredging fleet, which I understand has been almost decimated by the Government's policy. Does British industry have the ability to provide the services required to maintain ease of navigation in the channel?

Mr. Loyden: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. The British dredging fleet, like the maritime fleet, is so depleted that Britain is almost wholly dependent on European, rather than United Kingdom, dredging fleets. We must take that into account in considering the Bill's implications.

I have had some experience of the industry, having worked for 28 years on the River Mersey. I have been connected with a hydrographical surveying section. When a minor development was taking place in the Mersey, four years of research were required by the local department of scientific and industrial research to carry out the surveys needed to decide the development's viability. Tidal and current observations and an examination of the salination level and of suspended solids and deposits were required. No scientist can predict what will happen when a development intrudes into a meandering river and alters it, thus causing siltation in other parts of the river. I have seen no evidence that such feasibility studies have taken place in this case. Perhaps the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) can convince me, although I doubt it.

Mr. Skinner: What happens if a person decided to start a feasibility study not because he was motivated by making money — unlike this exercise — but because, in the interests of the environment, he did not want to spoil the coastline or cause an intrusion? How much money would be involved in such a study? How long would the study take? Would it use British tackle? Would a feasibility study delay the scheme that we are considering and, if so, to what extent? Would the matter have to be considered in another Parliament? It seems to be a fairly long job.

Mr. Loyden: It is. I gave an example of a minor intrusion into the River Mersey. The department of scientific and industrial research and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board were involved in research. I was a part of it for four years. It was a process of making tidal and current observations and watching where silt was deposited. No matter how well the development is carried out, there is no way of predicting the outcome of the intrusion into the river.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and emphasise the ecological arguments that my hon. Friend has put forward today. In that sense the adjacent port, as well as the immediate port, should be concerned about the consequences. A document in my possession states that the Harwich harbour authority, which lies across the river from Felixstowe, could be impeded and restricted by any development taking place at Felixstowe. Indeed, the Secretary of State would be responsible for invoking an order that would require Felixstowe to put the harbour back to its previous state. In other words, the dredging responsibility would be a matter for the Secretary of State. I have seen no evidence that that long-protracted, necessary work has been carried out in connection with the Bill.

Mr. Morley: When my hon. Friend refers to dredging, can he confirm that there are three types of dredgers in common use, the bucket dredger, the crane grab dredger and the suction dredger, whereby mud is sucked up from the bottom of the estuary? It is argued in the Bill that the company will be subject to noise limitations. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the bucket dredger in particular makes one hell of a racket when it gets going, and that it is very hard to control the noise level of such a machine in the vicinity of residential areas?

Mr. Loyden: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. During my time at the dock board, one of the trade union officials who lived some three miles or more from the dock—he lived in a nice area, not a tatty area—complained that he was kept awake night after night by the workings of the engines of the bucket ladder dredgers. Bucket ladder dredgers are probably not part of the scene today, and the service is carried out by trailer suction dredging.

We must also take account of the cost of dredging. The ports of this country are affected by the fact that the whole cost of conservancy rests with the port itself, and in that respect our ports have to compete with European ports. A port with a dredging problem in addition to the normal port costs must impose on those sailing into the port the consequential cost of dredging.

Mr. Skinner: Suppose some hon. Members wanted to start a feasibility study dealing with dredging and we did not have much money or, not to put too fine a point on it, we did not want to spend money but we wanted a cheap job. Perhaps the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds had not been paid up fully by the police and they had only given him a six-month payment instead of a year's pay. What kind of dredging equipment would my hon. Friend suggest for a cheap job? Would he suggest the bucket job?

Mr. Loyden: Honestly, I think that my hon. Friend may have made a frivolous point. Certainly my hon. Friend's point gives me no opportunity to respond in the way that I would have wanted.

Mr. Clay: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Loyden: I want to finish this point first.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is very serious. The most costly form of

[Mr. Loyden]

dredging is obviously bucket ladder dredging. I do not know why my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is amused. There are probably machines down mines that I do not understand and he can probably tell me all about them. Bucket ladder dredging is the most costly and ineffective way of dredging. Usually it is used only around dock entrances and not in rivers. Trailer suction dredging involves moving a machine like a Hoover—using simple terms — over the bed. The machine sucks in the aggregates in suspension and lays out a river bed that can give access to navigational vessels and so forth.

Mr. Skinner: So that would be the dearest?

Mr. Loyden: That would be the most expensive, yes.

Such a study would take quite a long time. The hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton), who has worked as a river pilot on the Mersey, could tell the House that no pilot can take a ship down the river unless he knows about hydrographical surveying, where the banks are, and so forth. His information is dependent on two factors: surveying and dredging. There is no evidence that a serious, in-depth feasibility study has taken place so that dredging will not be a problem.

Mr. John Garrett: I do not think that my hon. Friend was in the Chamber earlier when we were discussing the ecological and wildlife effects of the development. Some of us referred to noise, and the disturbance that would be caused to nesting birds by construction and the subsequent operations. That consideration is of enormous importance in relation to over-wintering and nesting birds.

Will my hon. Friend confirm that, although the suction dredger to which he refers will not make the endless cranking sound of the bucket dredger which disturbed his friend some three miles from the Mersey, the awful sucking noise would almost certainly upset a wide variety of the bird life that we hope will stay in the area?

Mr. Loyden: Obviously, there is a correlation between the ecological argument and the question of navigation. The only bird that we have in Liverpool is the Liver bird, and I do not think that that will be affected. It has not moved for the last hundred-odd years, and there is little chance that it will hibernate or fly off somewhere. However, at Helbre island, in the mouth of the Mersey, there is an international conservation area. The birds there have been affected, even by the traditional way in which the dock company and the ecologists have tried to arrange for them not to be disturbed. The House is, I believe, concerned about preserving the ecology of an area, but I am trying to concentrate on what may, in a sense, be a more practical problem.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend has raised an interesting point. He is a man with considerable experience of that part of the Mersey, where the mud flats are and wildlife abounds. I believe that the changing state of the mud flats is caused partly by the river system and partly by dredging. Once there is a stable bird population, it is not as large as it would be if the river were allowed to develop at its own pace.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are not discussing Merseyside or Liverpool harbours; we are discussing Felixstowe.

Mr. Loyden: I appreciate the point that you raise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But, in a Bill of this kind, it is necessary to draw on experiences of other ports to concentrate the mind of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and enable hon. Members to foresee the possibilities — indeed, the probabilities.

I do not know how many people know the Mersey. I am merely giving an analogy. People in the area will be very concerned, and will wish to draw on experiences of the Mersey. I do not know how familiar you are with the Mersey, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am sure that some hon. Members will know that, at one time, there were three holiday resorts on the Mersey. New Brighton was one of them. When I was a child my mother took me to New Brighton, where I played on the beach. In the 1930s the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board decided to construct a revetment down the main channel of the river. If the natural meandering of a river is altered, nobody can foresee what will happen.

It took more than 20 years to build that revetment—a wall on the bed of the river—and it destroyed the beach at New Brighton. It also destroyed the fishing and every other amenity in the area. It is now derelict and unattractive. The working class people of Liverpool no longer go over to New Brighton by ferry to enjoy themselves. The environment and navigation are closely linked.

I spent 38 years on the River Mersey, and I know what happens when there is an intrusion into the meandering of a river. The development of another dock meant that eventually both the eastern channel and the Garston channel were closed.

Harwich and the other ports on the east coast will be affected by a similar development. No account has been taken of the feasibility study or of the consequences of that development. The board does not know whether the development will affect navigation. It will lead to additional cost, because it will be necessary to introduce dredging. The tides in East Anglia may make it necessary to dredge. The cost of trying to remedy silting will be enormous.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend says that amenities of New Brighton and other resorts have been destroyed and that there could be similar blight along the east coast. *[Interruption.]* The nature and character of that area could be changed by these proposals.

Mr. John Garrett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am unable to hear what is being said by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) because of the continual gossiping and walking about of Conservative Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Background noise does not help. Too many sedentary conversations are being conducted on both sides of the House.

Mr. Frank Cook: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not so much the murmuring as the snoring that is making it difficult to hear.

Mr. Skinner: Because he worked as a dredger on Merseyside, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) knows what could happen at Felixstowe, Ipswich and elsewhere on the east coast. The natural environment could be altered because P and O wants to make a few bob.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief. The hon. Gentleman is going on at excessive length. I hope that he will bring his remarks to a close.

6.45 am

Mr. Skinner: I am drawing an analogy—it could be a parallel — that the Mersey experience could be transposed on to the east coast, with all the consequential development, the blight——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just had to endure the longest intervention that I have heard in 23 years in the House.

Mr. Loyden: I was about to ask my hon. Friend to give way. I have tried to explain to the House—at the time I am speaking of there were 42 dredging components in the river — that a model was erected at Wallingford that simulated the tides and activities of the river. That model was observed for 18 months by scientists and people involved in hydrographical surveying. However, by the end of that 18 months they could draw no conclusions, in spite of the fact that they had a model that simulated the tides and winds.

Mr. Clay: will my hon. Friend move to the question of who will pick up the tab if things go seriously wrong? I am sure that he has persuaded all of us that they might. In my constituency the port of Sunderland is having continually to dredge the entrance to the River Wear because if it did not do so we would not only be finished as a port but as a shipbuilding town. In effect, the local authority is financing a port authority to dredge the river. Thus the ratepayer is subsidising British Shipbuilders. We do not object to that, because we need those jobs on the river and British Shipbuilders is a publicly owned company. If events at Felixstowe led to difficulties at Harwich what come-back would the Harwich harbour company have to ensure that it did not have to pick up the tab for the irresponsibility of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company?

Mr. Loyden: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, but I have already touched on that point. The Minister would require the Felixstowe authority to do the dredging.

Mr. Clay: Would he?

Mr. Loyden: Whether he would or not is a hypothetical question. He has the power to impose on Felixstowe the burden of dredging.

Mr. Skinner: By bucket?

Mr. Loyden: No, bucket dredgers are no longer used.

As to the model, will the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds tell the House whether a model has been made of the Felixstowe harbour development and whether the scientific observations of it have been analysed and what conclusions have been reached?

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend will recall the conversation that I had in the Lobby with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) who is now leaving the Chamber. He denied all responsibility for the Bill. He said that it was not his Bill, that he was not in charge of it, and that it was "Gummer's Bill". Will my hon. Friend reconsider his view? Is there any profit to be gained from addressing his question to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds?

Mr. Loyden: That is an interesting and important point. I am sure that, when he returns to the House, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will take it on board.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that, to a certain extent, his experience on Merseyside is limited? On Merseyside, the docks and harbour authority was responsible for both sides of the river. Therefore, it made decisions about the welfare of the whole of the river. Unfortunately, the Felixstowe dock and harbour authority is on one side of the estuary and the Harwich port authority is on the other side. The House has just passed a Bill to give powers to the Harwich side to extend its docks.

Who is responsible if things go wrong and, for example, mud flats develop in the wrong places? Also, the port of Ipswich needs a free channel. We have the problem of three dock authorities. There is the difficulty of predicting which new works may or may not be necessary — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Loyden: Again, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter. A solo authority on Merseyside — the harbour company, as it now is — is responsible for both sides of the river. I dread to think what would be the situation if there were two authorities. In such circumstances, the authority on the other side of the river would be concerned at any Merseyside dock and harbour authority development and what effect it might have on the other side of the river with regard to dock access. At the end of the day, it is nonsense to argue about the development of the port if the river is not navigable.

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Loyden: I shall finish my point and then I shall give way.

In a buoyed channel, which is the way in which ships are guided into a port, the port authority must assure vessels as to the depths in the various channels. In that sense, it requires one or two things. The whole matter is based upon a datum, which is a benchmark from which tidal movements are measured. I do not say for one moment that those who promote the Bill have not considered the draft of vessels that would be able to navigate the river in the likely event that a problem occurs, necessitating dredging of the river——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I spy strangers.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Harris *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to have to raise another point of order in a Division, but I am afraid that there is a repetition of previous trouble and there is obviously mischief in the Aye Lobby. Hon. Members are delaying; my suspicion is that a plot is afoot. Certain Opposition Members are anxious to wipe out the Opposition business later today, particularly Scottish questions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It might be wise to avoid the extravagant language until I have found out the reason for the delay in the Lobby. Will the Serjeant at Arms please inquire into the reason for delay?

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Every hon. Member is well aware that in each Division Lobby there a certain small house that may need to be used as a matter of emergency. I am sure that the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has been caught short on occasions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman heard me ask the Serjeant at Arms to make inquiries. I think that it would be sensible to await the outcome of his inquiries.

The House having divided: Ayes 4, Noes 139.

Division No. 60] **[6.53 am**

AYES

Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Foster, Derek
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Clay, Bob
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Dorrell, Stephen
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grocott, Bruce
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCartney, Ian
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliott
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steinberg, Gerald
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Loyden: I will try to pick up the threads of the argument on navigational dredging. I am glad to see that the Minister for Public Transport is here.

Mr. Skinner: Two Ministers.

Mr. Loyden: The Minister is responsible, and the Secretary of State for Transport is also responsible, because if a problem of siltation arose out of this development, it would be the responsibility of the Secretary of State and the Minister to pick up the tab for navigational dredging, to restore the navigational path to its original state.

Mr. Clay: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend so early in his speech, but he has got something wrong. It is not the Secretary of State who will pick up the tab if there is siltation or any other problem. But the Secretary of State may require the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company to pick up the tab. I hope that my hon. Friend will develop this line, because we must clarify the matter. There are no clear guidelines on the considerations which the Secretary of State must bring to bear on whether he will require—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are having great difficulty hearing my hon. Friend. Will you ask Conservative Members to be a bit quieter?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I said earlier that sedentary discussions on both sides of the House make it difficult for hon. Members including the Chair, to hear the debate. I hope that we can have a little more order.

Mr. Clay: My hon. Friend should explain what he believes will happen when the Secretary of State jumps the first hurdle of requiring the company to make amends for any disasters. What if the company no longer existed? The environmental disasters, including the changes in the meander of the river which he described, might last for many more years than the company. Some hon. Members may argue that if the Channel fixed link is built, many ports on the south and east coasts will be so adversely affected that they may cease to trade. In those circumstances, there would be no company which the Secretary of State could require to make amends. Who will pick up the tab then?

Mr. Loyden: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I apologise for partly misleading the House about the Minister's responsibilities, but in this case he would have to demand that the company restored the navigation channels to their previous state. My hon. Friend's question was rather wide of the amendment, but it is important to understand the effects of the Felixstowe development on other United Kingdom ports. There is a serious imbalance in port distribution and capacity, which will give rise to serious consideration about what will happen if there is a fixed link. It could make those other ports redundant. If that happened, the ports would become fallow and would experience problems of siltation. The cost of solving the problems would be enormous, and, in all probability, the ports would be left to wither on the vine.

Mr. Skinner: Why does my hon. Friend follow the path that was laid down in this debate several hours ago? Some hon. Members have a fixation about the Common Market. Now they are talking about the fixed link. Why does not my hon. Friend accept what I said earlier? The fixed link is dead. The company has had to catch some Russian gold to get the money——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This does not have much to do with navigation at Felixstowe harbour.

Mr. Skinner: It has some connection——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand what I said, I will tell him. His remarks are irrelevant and he must resume his seat.

Mr. Loyden: My hon. Friend is right to draw our attention to that point, but he may have gone a little wide of the debate. I appreciate the point my hon. Friend makes, which is now on record, and I am sure that the House will have to concern itself with that issue, if not now then in the future.

7.15 am

On the question of navigation, I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will be able to convince the House at the end of the day, but I think it highly unlikely that he will be able to convince those of us with years of experience of the ports and of dealing with the whole question of the conservancy of ports on this issue, and the points we are making deserve consideration by the promoters of the Bill. After all, I am sure that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has no desire to see other ports adversely affected because the promoters have not seen fit to conduct a detailed analysis of the issues involved and reach the right conclusions concerning navigation.

I challenge anyone to contradict me when I say that there is no way, from a civil engineering or hydrographical surveying point of view, to predict many of these issues with any degree of certainty. Allowing for a margin of error, we insist on evidence being produced by the Bill's promoters to show that proper tidal and current observations have been carried out, along with silt-tracing surveys.

Much can be done in modern terms. For instance, it is possible to charge silt with radioactive material and then trace the silt by geiger counters fitted to vessels, following it down to see where it has gone. There has been a great deal of technological development in these areas. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is aware of these facts. Has the authority taken the trouble to see that such examinations have taken place so it can give assurances, so far as they can be given, that the navigation in that river will remain, because that is an important factor in regard to this Bill?

Mr. Clay: My hon. Friend thinks that the time has come for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths)—or the real master of the Bill, the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—to give some assurances. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should also be expecting the Minister for Public Transport, who is in his place, to give some assurances? We have discussed the role that the Secretary of State for Transport may have to play in certain circumstances, but unfortunately throughout our discussion the Minister was busy talking to his hon. Friends. The time has come for Government spokesmen to clarify these issues.

Mr. Loyden: I am sure that, given the opportunity, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will do exactly that. I hope, too, that the Minister will give some assurances, as my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) aware that it would be impossible for the Minister or my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) to give sensible assurances to the House in the light of what he has been saying? I have listened carefully to everything he has said for the last five minutes, and he has strung his sentences together in such a way that he has not made grammatical sense and it has been quite impossible to understand what he has been talking about.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A few nights ago some tinpot Tories were talking about wanting Latin on the curriculum, and that was snobbishness in the extreme. Now we have this little whipper-snapper, the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin)—just elected—attacking my hon. Friend, who spent years dredging with buckets and suction pumps and who is expected to know the English language inside out. I lay odds that my hon. Friend could match this Sloane ranger or whatever he is—a public school boy no doubt. I challenge the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) to make a speech comparable to that of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Loyden: I am shocked by the intervention from the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). I did not go to a public school, I left school at 14 and most of my learning occurred afterwards. If the hon. Gentleman cannot follow what has been said it is clear that he knows nothing about the Bill.

I am sure that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and the Minister are fully aware of what has taken place and understand the facts — despite the constant interventions from the Labour Benches. In fact those interventions are not always of value to me and have caused some incontinuity in my speech. However, do not blame me for that. My hon. Friends are constantly intervening and that has broken the continuity of my speech. One must appreciate that I am doing my best and I am certain that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and the Minister understand what is going on. They are knowledgeable people.

Mr. Frank Cook: I believe that my hon. Friend will be assured to realise that the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) who criticised his syntax, is a barrister. All students of the English language know that in the Oxford dictionary barrister is placed somewhere between bankruptcy and bastardy.

Mr. Loyden: I did not know the professional status of the hon. Member for Stockton, South, but I can never

[Mr. Loyden]

understand barristers at any time. Lawyers speak a different language and it is not one that anyone generally understands.

Mr. Grocott: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he would be happy to give way to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) who has had all the advantages of an expensive education and long training. I have been listening to my hon. Friend for a short time, but it is clear to me that he has tremendous expertise on this subject. However, it may help in the wider context to judge the merits of an expensive education that has been received——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the personal exchanges have gone far enough and we should get back to navigation.

Mr. Loyden: I shall certainly give way to the hon. Member for Stockton, South if he wishes to make a contribution. The House would be interested to listen to a barrister talk about navigation or anything to do with anything.

I am glad that the Minister is present. His interest in this matter is clearly established by the fact that he is here, at this hour, listening attentively. I hope that he will seek advice from the Secretary of State on the powers that the right hon. Gentleman will have in the event of a problem arising out the development of the Felixstowe dock, which in turn could create navigation problems. How would the Secretary of State empower the Felixstowe authority to put into the pre-conditions the navigational areas of river on which the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company development will take place?

Labour Members are dissatisfied with the lack of evidence that the promoters of the Bill have put forward on all those things that I believe are necessary, based on my 28 years of experience working on the River Mersey, having spent nearly all my working life on the water—I do not drink it — and the consequences that I have mentioned. This is a serious matter, not waffle. What contingency plans do the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company or the Secretary of State have if those navigational problems occur?

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend said that the company should have undertaken a feasibility study. It should be paid for not by the ratepayers, who are probably rate capped, but by the company. He also said that the feasibility study may detail the changes that may occur. However, he admitted that the study may not show what may occur. Does it make sense to spend money on a feasibility study if we cannot be sure that it will project what will occur? Should the local authorities incur expenditure without the company having a model first?

Mr. Loyden: The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company would be responsible for the cost. There is no way of determining the consequences of any intrusion into the river on siltation and the forming of banks. Labour Members are concerned whether the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds can tell us the extent to which the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company has experimented with simulated models or a feasibility study. I acknowledge the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that, at the end of the day, one has to consider that in any study there may be a margin of error that is acceptable.

The navigation of a river is a serious matter. If a river is not navigable, it dies. The draught of vessels is changing dramatically. Vessels now require a draught of 45 or 46 ft to berth in ports. Will the depth of the river be affected? I know that there are limits, but can the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company advise whether those depths will be affected?

Have the necessary steps been taken to ensure that the river remains navigable around Felixstowe and the adjacent ports? That serious question has not been answered. We have seen no evidence. The information should have been provided when the Bill was first promoted. It is a tragedy that at this late hour, long after the Bill came before Parliament, we should be discussing matters that could have been avoided if that information had been given to us earlier. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth did the House much service by drawing our attention to these problems, and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has accepted some of my hon. Friend's arguments because of their strength. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and the Minister will continue to show that sort of tolerance.

7.30 am

This is not a trivial matter; it is a serious one. It concerns the issue of whether the port and river will remain navigable, without being affected by the intrusion.

Mr. Skinner: The Bill started its parliamentary career in 1984. Is my hon. Friend saying that, in the intervening years, the company has had adequate and admirable chances to get the feasibility study under way?

Secondly, do we have any British dredgers, or will they have to be imported?

Mr. Loyden: My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) raised that very point. The Minister will be aware of it because I raised it with him. Unfortunately my union did not lay on a champagne do for us tonight. It, of course, treats this matter seriously.

There has been a dramatic decline in the numbers of British-owned and manned dredgers. We now rely almost totally on European dredgers for these ports. The Minister must take that fact into account. In the long term, the Minister must realise that we need a dredging fleet. Twenty-four hours is a lifetime in politics. Anything could happen to take those vessels off to some other part of the world—some ply their trade in north Africa—and we could be left with no dredging fleet.

I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds can give us assurances about the feasibility study and its effects. In that way we can ensure that the Bill will not entail navigational problems for Felixstowe and the environmental catchment area around it.

Mr. Frank Cook: Will my hon. Friend please be cautious? We have already received two undertakings from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on which he has reneged. I ask my hon. Friend not to invite the sort of undertaking that could not be substantiated later.

Mr. Loyden: I can understand the cynical view taken by my hon. Friend because of what has happened. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has taken seriously points that we have made. We want to know from him whether certain things have been done. We should be satisfied if we had an undertaking that the consequences of the development have been taken fully into account.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: There are few hon. Members who have earned and deserve so much respect as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden), who has been in the House for as long as I have and perhaps a little longer. In response to his speech I should like to tell him that when I first arrived here I was immediately put on a private Bill Committee, which went on for nine weeks, to consider the effects on the navigation of the Severn river of a large new steel quay that was to be built in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Woodspring (Sir P. Dean), now a Deputy Speaker. I learned a good deal from pilots, from masters, from hydrologists and from people like the hon. Gentleman who were expert in that subject.

Since then I have served for a time as a Transport Minister. During that period I was responsible for ports and harbours, and I had to learn—and enjoyed learning—much about the problems of navigation and dredging of the Humber and the Mersey. I might mention to the hon. Gentleman that I grew up on the banks of the Mersey. My parents had their honeymoon at Wallasey. I frequently crossed the river on the ferry to Birkenhead and to New Brighton before the tunnel was built. I share with the hon. Gentleman a great affection for that river.

No one takes more seriously the problems of navigation, of siltation and of dredging in the port of Felixstowe than the three surrounding port authorities. Harwich is very much involved, because the Harwich bar is at the opening of the river. Felixstowe is concerned because it provides for the large ships and, as the hon. Gentleman said, it has the deep water. Ipswich further up the river is concerned for its type of trade. The pilots in that river understand very well what the hon. Gentleman has been talking about, and so do I.

To answer his specific questions, there is a model which was produced some years ago; it has been updated. What it produced, among other things, was a strong recommendation that a bay on the northern side of the river ought to be filled in, because that would improve the navigation for all three ports. The Bill provides powers for that to be done so that the navigation can be improved. That is a product of the feasibility study or the model which was produced to examine that matter on behalf of all the ports. Of course, who is more concerned about the matter than those who are investing large sums of money and those who have to look after large ships and turn them round in the river? So what the hon. Gentleman has said is taken seriously.

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No, I shall not give way. I am addressing myself to the hon. Member for Garston who made a serious speech and who is entitled to an answer.

Having listened to the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I am glad to tell him that the amendment which he has moved —I take it with the support of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) — is entirely acceptable to the dock company. If the House is willing, it will be inserted into the Bill.

Mr. Hardy: The House listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) when he informed the House that the Bill's promoters are prepared to accept the amendment so ably moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden). I do not wish to carp, because the hon. Gentleman has heard me express gratitude in response to his earlier acceptances. Unfortunately, although I in no way blame the hon. Gentleman, the fact remains that other acceptances have not provided the necessary harvest—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members can make their speeches after me, if they wish. I am addressing the speech of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. I am not criticising him. We accept his statement gracefully, but I hope that he accepts that he cannot speak, and has not spoken, for his right hon. and hon. Friends.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: So that the record is accurate, will my hon. Friend place on record the fact that, in each Division, Ministers have led Conservative Back-Benchers into the Division Lobby in opposition to amendments that had been accepted by the Bill's promoters?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right to ensure that that fact is on the record. Some less experienced Conservative Members, especially the young barristers and chartered accountants, could be forgiven for going into a different Lobby from that occupied by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. More senior Conservative Members and Ministers of the Crown who have deliberately gone into another Division Lobby after the hon. Gentleman accepted amendments have acted reprehensibly — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members can make as much row as they like. The fact remains that each time I have voted —one can speak only for oneself—in accordance with my voice, and I shall continue to do so.

I do not question the acceptance of the amendment, but I should like to make some points on behalf of the conservation interest. Over the past hour or two we have heard much less about the birds and the fauna than about dredging. It was right that the House should be informed of the hydrographical and dredging interests that are so relevant to the amendment. My concern relates to the amendment directly. I think that I put the position fairly if I say that, if the harbour silted up, there would be approval for dredging to take place to restore it to its former condition. If mudflats developed because of deposition and that area were not required for the purposes of navigation, there would be no point in carrying out a dredging exercise.

In view of the acceptance of the amendment by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, my speech will not be as long as it would have been. I intended relating this point to a species that has not been mentioned in the debate —the redshank. I am sure that hon. Members who have looked at Britain's flora and fauna will acknowledge that it is an attractive bird. It is one of the species that is declining in number and may well feed in or on the mudflats that are likely to appear. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds accepted the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Garston that we can never be certain, no matter what trials and tests are carried out.

Mr. Clay: Will my hon. Friend clarify whether he is talking about the redshank or the spotted redshank? I am trying to follow my hon. Friend's comments closely, and we shall need to know the answer if we are to follow the full power of his argument.

Mr. Hardy: It has been a relatively long night and I had promised some hon. Friends that, to be accurate about a particular species, I would use the Latin name. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) had reservations about the use of Latin in this Chamber. The species to which I was referring is a species that is——

7.45 am

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hardy: I will give way in a moment.

The species to which I was referring is sometimes called the common redshank, but is actually the redshank tringa totanus. It is not absolutely in danger or really scarce, but numbers are declining quite perceptibly. That species is readily associated with this area of the east coast. If the appropriate vegetation grew on some appropriate mud flat and if the appropriate crustacea or invertebrates fed on those flats, and if those mud flats emerged as a result of tidal movements, I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would agree that there would be no reason for those mud flats to be dredged or cleared, especially if they were not an impediment to navigation.

I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St.Edmunds will assure us that there will be no unnecessary dredging, not because some of us are repelled by the noise referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) earlier when he described the disgusting noise of the suction dredger, but because we do not believe that natural habitat should be removed unnecessarily.

Before we end the debate on amendment No. 42, I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds can obtain the relevant assurance from the sponsors and give the House satisfaction on that point. I am sure that there is general approval of my point. I hope that his assurance will be given in the full knowledge that a possible contribution to conservation can be obtained.

Mr. Skinner: I have been looking at these Latin names. Can my hon. Friend tell me what is the common name for tringula nebularia? That bird belongs to the shank family and that is my hon. Friend's first clue. When the dredging operations occur, and they may take place through bucket or suction pump operation, there will be much disturbance to nesting tringula nebularia. With all his knowledge about these birds, can my hon. Friend tell us which among the redshank and tringula nebularia will be affected most, either by bucket or suction pump operation, or by that other form of dredging referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) which I could not interpret? Will my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) shed some light on that?

Mr. Hardy: Tringula nebularia is the greenshank. I have no evidence that the greenshank is a frequent visitor to that area. There is no evidence in the information provided for me of the significance of the greenshank as a breeding species in the locality. However, the greenshank would be disturbed by the noise of this suction dredger, but even Conservative hon. Members who have been remarkably silent and probably have been sleeping during the night might be disturbed by the noise of that dredger. I assure my hon. Friend that the tringula nebularia is not particularly relevant to the amendment or to the site of scientific importance. However, the redshank is a significant local resident. It is migrant and also breeds in the area. Because of the possibility that additional habitat and food supply can be found for the redshank and other significant, internationally and nationally important species in the area, I hope that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will be able to amplify his assurance and that his right hon. and hon. Friends will join him in the Lobby on this amendment.

Mr. Grocott: In an effort to be fair to Conservative Members, and as my hon. Friend is an expert on this matter and can tell us about the effects on birds of changes in the estuary, will he concede that while dredging activity might threaten species in the area now, changes in the estuary might encourage birds which do not nest in the area at present to come into that area? I am trying to be fair to both sides of the House. The news would not necessarily always be bad for species. Changes in the estuary could help other species to come in.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is entitled to suggest that possibility. He has always been rather more optimistic than many other Opposition Members. I hope that his assessment materialises, but I do not share his view. I think that the possibility of harm is much greater than the possibility of good.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I merely wish to ensure that the hon. Member for Wentworth and I, who are seeking to achieve the same result, understand each other. The hon. Gentleman said that we should see each other in the Lobby to carry the amendment, but there is no need for that. If his hon. Friends do not divide the House, the amendment that he and I want will be accepted.

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Gentleman's interpretation may be accurate; I would not dream of claiming omniscience. However, I think that, if he made some calculations, he would establish that the number of Conservative Members who have gone into the No Lobby greatly exceeds the number of Opposition Members who have gone into it with them.

Dr. Marek: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has said that he will vote against what he and his hon. Friends believe if Opposition Members divide the House. As far as I know, Opposition Members vote according to their beliefs. This is a free vote. I think it is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to say that, if we do not divide, the amendment will be gained, but if we do, it will be lost. That is contorted logic, sadly typical of the Conservative party.

Mr. Hardy: This has been a very sad night. I am not critical of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, because his voice has matched his vote. When Conservative Members have had time to think—and, perhaps, a little sleep—they may regret having voted in a way that showed inconsistency. I accept that some of my hon. Friends have been through the No Lobby, but their number was greatly exceeded by the number of irresponsible Conservative Members in the same Lobby.

Mr. Skinner: I was one of the hon. Members in the opposite Lobby from my hon. Friend on the occassion when he believed that he was going to rescue those poor little birds. I did not join him for the very good reason that I could not put any trust in what the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said, and he could not guarantee that he would be able to deliver again.

Let us say—following the hon. Gentleman's logic—that he agrees with us on the amendment. Let us suppose that no Opposition Members shout the appropriate words when the Question is put. As a result, we might be outflanked by some hon. Members not abiding by what the hon. Gentleman said. We would think that there was to be no Division. There would then be a Division, and we would have lost everything. We cannot put any trust in what the hon. Gentleman said, in view of experience.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is perfectly entitled to his interpretation. I merely say that I believe the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds to have voted honourably and properly, and I deeply regret that so many of his hon. Friends have placed him in a position that may be seen as embarrassing.

I do not wish to continue much longer; I did not intend to make a long contribution. I wanted to listen to my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), who has been waiting patiently for some time to speak in this debate, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill).

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Much has been said throughout the night about birds. However, many other species will be affected by the draconian measures that are contained in the Bill. Are my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) able to enlighten the House about the effect on fish of these operations?

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that, although a great deal has been said about birds, very little has been said about other aspects of the British flora and fauna. The international importance of this habitat for certain species of birds has led to its designation as a site of special scientific interest. We seek an assurance that there will be no destruction of a habitat if it does not impede navigation.

Mr. Frank Cook: If my hon. Friend should seek an accommodation with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), would it not be prudent to recall that when there were discrepancies in the Lobbies a few Conservative mavericks voted against the agreement? Apart from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, there was a well-orchestrated and well-disciplined effort by Conservative Members to vote down the agreement.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend is entitled to reach that conclusion, though not because of malpractice by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover reminded us earlier that the Bill has been before the House for a very long time. In all the Divisions the old school tie has taken the place of the three-line Whip and it has proved to be just as influential as the harshest discipline that can be imposed by the Minister. Because hon. Members should have been able to exercise their judgment, Opposition Members were horrified to find that Conservative Members voted to a man in favour of the destruction of this site of special scientific interest. I hope that maturity, good sense and a wish to assist the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will apply to this amendment. That would alleviate slightly the inconsistency that, sadly, Conservative Members have demonstrated in the Division Lobbies.

Mr. David Mitchell: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) has helped the House on more than one occasion with his detailed knowledge of navigation. On this occasion he has helped the House by dealing with navigational safety and with the need for dredging. He expressed anxiety about the certitude of safe navigation in the Felixstowe area.

If carried, amendment No. 42 would empower the Secretary of State to request the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company to remove any accumulation of silt resulting from new works that appear to him to impede free navigation in the Harwich harbour, or to cause this work to be carried out. That should reassure the hon. Member for Garston that his anxieties have been properly taken care of.

Restoration of navigation, as proposed in the amendment, seems to be a narrower objective than restoration of the harbour to its former condition. We are perfectly happy to accept amendment No. 42.

8 am

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I have sat here for about 12 hours waiting to speak, but on every amendment procedural motions have been moved to destroy debate.

I should like to draw attention to my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) who has tried to speak in every debate but has not been called. *[Interruption.]* Tory Members seem to be raising a hubbub; some of them have not been here all night. The hon. Member for Kingswood (Mr. Hayward) has been here for a considerable time, but even he did slip out on certain occasions. I do not think that he would be in a good position to instruct the House as to what happened in his absence.

We are grateful for the progress that has been made in these amendments. I am a little disappointed that the Minister did not in his extremely brief speech spell out the circumstances in which he would want to use these powers. The amendment gives the Minister additional powers. It would have been to the benefit of the House if he had spelt out the circumstances in which they would be used.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that the amendment leaves the power with the Secretary of State for Transport? Some of my hon. Friends were wondering whether there should be joint power between the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for the Environment. The point of the amendment is to balance the right of navigation with environmental rights. Will my hon. Friend press the Minister to give an assurance that, in exercising the power given by the amendment, he will balance the environmental and transport considerations?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point that I intended to raise. We have sat through many hours of debate, on the rare occasions that we heard from the Government Front Bench it has been from the Department of Transport, when it would have been of benefit if Ministers from the Department of Environment made themselves available. Possibly in these circumstances we should have heard from a Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, although I appreciate that it may have found itself in a difficult position had it chosen to speak.

We heard at length from my hon. Friend the Member for Garston, who with his experience of river systems was able to enlighten the House. I recall some years ago when I was a student that I took a course in fluid mechanics. I confess to the House that I understood little of it then and

[Mr. Lloyd]

I understand even less now. However, I appreciate how difficult it is to make predictions about the movements of fluid and how much more unpredictable it is when those fluids come into collision with solid bodies. The ability to make long-term predictions about movement defies even those who are expert in those matters.

Mr. Grocott: Will my hon. Friend address his remarks to the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) about a feasibility study? I came here with an open mind—I did not hear the previous debates—but I was unconvinced by the remarks of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who talked about a plan being considered, and tried to suggest that it was a suitable way of assessing whether changes in water movements were suitable. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Garston talked about a full-scale feasibility study. It seems to be quite inappropriate to talk simply in terms of a model. A model could be a cheapjack way of assessing problems. We should consider whether a feasibility study or a model is sufficient.

Mr. Lloyd: I am not sure whether the charge of cheapjack can be levelled against an organisation that is prepared to spend a great deal of money entertaining Conservative Members to encourage them to stay here all night to vote. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) raises an important point. One of the criticisms that Opposition Members level at the promoters of the Bill is that they simply failed to make the information available to those of us who have taken a serious interest in the Bill for many years. Even less so have they made information available to those such as my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin, who, because he was temporarily absent from the House for some years, was unable to follow the Bill's progress in the last Parliament. For those reasons, even at the end of the Bill's stages through the House, we find that we do not know what reliability we can place on the company's feasibility study into the river system.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garston, who is a man of great experience, as has been conceded by all hon. Members, has had great compliments paid to him by the promoters of the Bill. From his long experience, he expressed the strong view that, without such a feasibility study, it would not be reasonable or responsible for the House to look at the future of the river system, particularly the navigation system, and have any confidence or certainty about what it would produce.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) pointed out the need to take environmental issues into account. Quite clearly, one of the major thrusts of the debate over the past hours has been the importance of the river ecosystem that has developed over many centuries. Quite clearly, changes will take place when the harbour is built. At the time of such changes, my hon. Friends——

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for Opposition Members to be asleep? It is disgraceful.

Mr. Speaker: It may well be that they are better able to concentrate with their eyes closed.

Mr. Lloyd: Even asleep, my hon. Friends make a bigger contribution than the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) does, with all his faculties seemingly intact. Nevertheless, I welcome him to the debate. That may have been his first or second intervention. It certainly was not the best contribution that has been made over the course of these long hours.

My hon. Friends have suggested that the changes that will be induced by the harbour system could produce results of all kinds. I am grateful to the expert in fluid mechanics who has tried to explain to me the intricacies of the manner in which the river will work. I am genuinely grateful for that. He did it with considerably more gusto than ability. Nevertheless, I am grateful for what little help I ever get from Conservative Members.

I was trying to make a simple point. All hon. Members recognise that the river system will change. Some of my hon. Friends suggested that it will change for the better. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) was of the view that it would be rather for the worse. I share his view for the simple reason that the mud flats as they exist in the Felixstowe area are the product of many centuries of development. The precise balance of the system has developed over many a long year. Even the development of the new mud flats will not immediately mean benefits for crustacea, oyster beds or the great variety of life that presently exists. Clearly, the mud flats will be incapable of sustaining the present level of life on the beds. That means that the migrant and domestic bird populations will no longer have their present feeding grounds. It is inevitable that the environment and the bird population will suffer.

For all those reasons, my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish suggested that the Minister should take into account environmental factors. I think that the hon. Gentleman is indicating that he will take them into account. However, it would greatly benefit the House if he would make it clear that he will consult his colleagues in the Department of the Environment to ensure that there is an agreed strategy, rather than a strategy led by the Department of Transport alone. The Minister is nodding and seems to be making that clear. The House will welcome that undertaking and expect him to keep it.

Mr. Loyden: I am guilty of omitting one point. There are two types of dredging—dredging for navigational purposes and commercial dredging, in which aggregates are dredged by private companies. Most of the environmental problems on the Mersey arose as a result of commercial dredging for aggregates for the building industry. Will my hon. Friend pursue that point and seek assurances that commercial dredging will be controlled, as well as navigational dredging?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point, with the knowledge and experience that his background has afforded him. I hope that the Minister will respond to it in the same gracious manner in which he made it clear that he intends to take the environment into account in his deliberations. Will he take into account my hon. Friend's important point about the commercial exploitation of the river system?

Mr. Skinner: *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will correct me if I have failed to understand.

Mr. Skinner: The Department of Transport may decide to dredge the river for environmental reasons and may assure the House that the dredging is for that purpose alone. But someone who is in for making a few extra pounds, may come along and say, "Look, I've got a better scheme than that. Never mind about dredging the river system for purely environmental reasons. I've got a lorry and I've got a firm outside. I can dredge it and make some money by getting the sand and aggregates. I can make a big fat killing." If that happens, environmental reasons go by the board. The river system has been dredged but those dredging it have been motivated by the desire to make money. The net result is that the environment has not been protected but the pocket has been lined. In his discussions with the Minister, my hon. Friend should make sure that he establishes the kind of dredging that is to take place. I shall not vote with my hon. Friend if I believe that there is half a chance that there will be commercial dredging rather than dredging for environmental reasons. Therefore, notwithstanding what the Minister has said, there could be a Division.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend raises a serious point. I fear that, during the long hours of the debate, some cynicism has grown up among my hon. Friends who normally suffer from no such feelings about Conservative Members. Were it not for the long night I would find it almost hard to believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is suggesting that a company such as P and O might put profit before other matters. Perhaps my hon. Friends feel that they have been betrayed during our proceedings, and their cynicism may not be totally unjustified.

Mr. Skinner: Come on: let's grow up. We know the score. P and O will come along and shoot all the little birds and put them on the breakfast tables of its liners the following morning while the commercial dredgers come in and pick up the sand and aggregates to make some more money. I do not intend to go along with that.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend obviously touches on matters of great concern to the House. For Conservative Members who have not been with us during the course of the night I should say that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has been raising those issues for some hours now. He has expressed concern for the fate of the ringed plover. He has suggested that P and O may see the ringed plover as simply open to commercial exploitation, which will result in them being served up by the stewards on the various liners and that P and O's only interest in the whole exercise is one of profit. We have not heard a word from Conservative Members that could give any comfort to those of us who are trying to obtain satisfaction on that. Therefore, my hon. Friend does not raise those matters in a totally cynical way.

8.15 am

Mr. Morley: When dredging takes place, it is often expensive to move the spoil to deep water for disposal and, as we all know, competitive tendering can attract some undesirable people into the market who just want to cut corners in order to maximise profits. Such people may be tempted not to carry the spoil out to deep water but to dump it as close to the workplace as possible and cut corners, just as many private contractors have cut corners in the past. If dredging is to take place at Felixstowe, will my hon. Friend seek assurances on that from the Minister?

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend also seems to suffer from the growing cynicism among Labour Members that all may not be well with the private sector, or even with the Department of Transport. The Department of Transport is responsible for highway design on some of the roads under the control of the county councils. It was the Department of Transport which decided to institute the process of tendering and which refused, in certain circumstances, to allow the county council to tender for contracts above a certain size, because it felt that the contract would be carried out more reliably by the private sector. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) knows that we can trust local authorities to do the job. With that sort of background, my hon. Friend's concerns may prove to be not totally unfounded. What assurances can we be given that, in exercising responsibility for transport and for maintenance and navigation, he will guarantee that a cheap and nasty job is not done in the interests of cutting a few corners and saving a few bob?

Mr. Skinner: One of the dredging companies, using the old bucket system, dredging for commercial reasons in order to make a quick buck, could deliberately move the aggregates, the sand and so on and leave it deposited close to where it removed it. That company could have a friend down the road with the suction pump system. The first company is saying "Everything's all right, Jack. I'm going to make some money out of this. I'm not going to shift the spoil very far." Along comes the bloke with the suction pump who will have to move the spoil for a second time. It will cost a small fortune and there will be two firms, one with the bucket dredger and the other with a suction pump dredger, making money out of the job.

Mr. Lloyd: I see that the Minister for Public Transport has been so struck by the force of the argument by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover that he has had to quit the Chamber and leave others to answer the questions. I hope that the Minister now occupying the Front Bench is able to give some reassurances, which his hon. Friend failed to give the House during the moments that he occupied the Dispatch Box. There is a belief that corners will be cut. There is a belief that in cutting those corners the private sector will look after itself and that the public interest and wider environmental interests — my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover has drawn attention to the interests of the mammal and bird life in the area, particularly the ringed plover — will not be protected. We have had no assurances from the Government that those interests will be taken into consideration.

Mr. McCartney: Will my hon. Friend give way? [HON. MEMBERS: "He is awake!"] At least I have been here throughout the night, unlike other hon. Members.

For a number of years I have worked and lived in Dover, and during that time a new terminal was constructed on the western arm of the dock. To construct that terminal, thousands of tonnes of cubic sand were removed from the Goodwin sands. There was miscalculation by the construction company. The sand was never taken back to Goodwin sands; it was left adjacent to the construction site. There is a need to look at this matter, because companies do make miscalculations and do not replace what they have taken out.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point, which is of such concern to hon. Members opposite that

[Mr. Lloyd]

one or two of them have woken up. First, he is right to draw attention to Goodwin sands. Secondly, he reminds me of dredging by the Department of Transport some years ago in my area when the Department was sponsoring the M63 motorway which was built to the south of Manchester. At that time, an artificial dredging pump was created. Rumour has always had it — I do not know whether this is true, but it has never been denied—that in dredging the pond, those undertaking the work got the dimensions wrong. Instead of having it so many yards long and so many deep, the figures were reversed, so we now have the deepest but smallest dredging pond in the United Kingdom. If that can happen when dredging for motorways, I am sure that it is more likely to happen when dredging, with all the imprecision which my hon. Friend the Member for Garston has already explained is inherent in dredging on the sea front.

In order to make some progress, and as it seems to be quiet in the Chamber, the issues before the House are fairly simple. We have made some progress; it has been recognised that there is a wider interest than navigation needs. The Minister has stated that they will be taken into account, as will environmental interests. I would be more impressed if the Bill had something specific for the promoters — *[Interruption.]* I am told that our amendment gives power to the Secretary of State for Transport. This is not my amendment; it is tabled in the name of some of my hon. Friends. I say on behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition that we are grateful that my hon. Friends have tabled those amendments to improve this Bill. It would be unreasonable to expect hon. Gentlemen — amateurs assisted by various under-funded groups such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds — to have the competence, draftsmanship and design skills of those who pay a small fortune to promote these Bills, the highly paid agents who do regular work.

My hon. Friends have achieved the signal success of getting the promoters to accept so many amendments. I say to Conservative Members, particularly the sponsor of the Bill, that it is an odd state of affairs that, although these things have been discussed not just over the last few hours — we are coming into the fourth year of this Bill's progress through Parliament — at this late stage we are beginning to recognise, in the amendments which have been accepted, that the environment is important.

Mr. Grocott: In summing up, will my hon. Friend help those of us who have not had the benefit of being here during the last hours while all this has been going on? I am concerned that there have been so many unanswered questions, despite the length of the deliberations. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend would tell us, from his recollection — perhaps my hon. Friends will intervene to help here — what value we can place on assurances given by the Bill's promoters. We are told to accept assurances on this amendment on the grounds that a model has been constructed. We must have some evidence about the credibility of their assurances. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) has more expertise than anyone, and he knows more about the costs of feasibility studies than can be considered in glib answers by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). Those of us who are new to debates on this Bill would be helped to know how many of the assurances given by the promoters have been fulfilled.

Mr. Lloyd: As ever, my hon. Friend has been most helpful and has drawn the attention of the House to an important issue. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, and especially those who are fairly new, have begun to discover the credibility gap. Many of us discovered it a few hours ago, when we were led to believe that the promoters could deliver the vote — especially since it was obvious before then that the vote was being delivered on behalf of the Conservative party. Yet the promoters could not deliver their promises during the vote. We do not know what reliance we can place on comments made by the promoters, whether directly in the House or about the long-term future of the Bill.

I must disappoint my hon. Friend and admit my ignorance. I do not know how many times the promoters of the Bill have lived up to their promises. Perhaps my hon. Friends can help me, especially those who have a more intimate knowledge of the Bill than I have.

Mr. Grocott: Does my hon. Friend further agree that hon. Members who are in my position — there are many in the Conservative party — would be ill-advised to be anything other than deeply sceptical about the Bill? From what I have heard so far, there seem to be large question marks over whether the promoters will live up to the assurances that have been given. At the very least, we can assume that there will be abstentions from all Conservative Members who were not here for previous debates on the Bill.

Mr. Lloyd: Unfortunately, my hon. Friend attributes rational behaviour to Conservative Members, but rationality goes out of the window when the Government Whips are involved. We are told that it is not a whipped Bill, that this is private legislation, but the Chief Whip has spent many a happy hour with us during the night. He has played an important part in delivering the promoters' required votes on closure. There is no hope of rational behaviour among Conservative Members, who know little. The fact that Conservative Members are ignorant has not stopped them voting in the past, so there is no reason to assume that they will do so now.

Mr. Grocott *rose* ——

Mr. Skinner *rose* ——

Mr. Lloyd: For the sake of variety, I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Skinner: In that case, why did my hon. Friend advise the House to accept the word of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds that he would accept the amendment? I assume that my hon. Friend is leading up to the point of saying, "We will give it another ride." On the basis of what he said at 4 or 5 o'clock this morning, I believe that we should examine what happened in practice. Never mind the promises, the theory or the rationality: the fact is that they did not deliver between 4 and 5 o'clock this morning. My hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), who was probably in bed, obviously did not know what happened. The fact is that the promoters made a promise, but then did not deliver. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford will understand that some of us are not prepared to go down that road again. What advice will my hon. Friend give us? Has he made his mind up? Will he accept the word of the promoters this time? Will he give them a second chance?

8.30 am

Mr. Lloyd: I may well have given my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover certain advice on previous votes, but because of the procedural motions put forward by Conservative Members, I never had the chance to persuade my hon. Friends one way or the other. That is something that I bitterly regret. In fairness to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin, I believe that he should be given the opportunity to explain his absence during the course of the debate.

Mr. Grocott: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. At the beginning of the debate, before my short period of absence —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—I did point out that politics is something of an endurance test and that Conservative Members had the huge advantage of constant hospitality provided to sustain them.

Hon. Members: No, not true.

Mr. David Shaw *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend should give way to the bald eagle.

Mr. Shaw: He should, because I am a jolly nice chap —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Grocott: We discussed the matter of hospitality earlier on in our debate. I believe that that hospitality was beneficial to those Conservative Members who took advantage of it. We still do not know what that hospitality consisted of. I am wondering——

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you give us advice on what is a statement, what is an intervention and what is a speech? We seem to be having constant statements and speeches from the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott).

Mr. Speaker: I sense that the House wishes to get on with this. I think that in his intervention the hon. Member for The Wrekin should be questioning his Front Bench spokesman and not making a speech across the Chamber.

Mr. Grocott: I wonder whether the hospitality team would now be serving breakfast? That gives Conservative Members a further advantage when considering the Bill. Those Conservative Members who, in common with myself, have not unfortunately heard the previous four years of discussion on the Bill might be sustained, helped and even persuaded about how to vote. I would be especially attracted by breakfast at the moment, but I am unable to leave in case I am criticised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Obviously the night's events have been long, and it is only fair that I place it on record—Conservative Members would expect me to be that charitable to them—that all the entertainment facilities were called off literally at the last minute last night. Conservative Members were taken for a ride. They were brought here under the pretence that they would be entertained all night with films, drink and all kinds of things only to find that they have had to pay for their own all night.

Mr. John Garrett: I may be able to help my hon. Friend. I should confess that at about 9 o'clock last night I went into the Jubilee Room to find it empty and rocking slightly, rather like the Marie Celeste, having been evacuated, I imagine by a number of Conservative Members. All that I could detect of their presence was some 25 glasses containing the dregs of a rather unpretentious Bulgarian chardonnay.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentlemen in question have my sympathy on the grounds that they had to pay for themselves. I assume that they had to pay as no hospitality was provided. That confirms my view that they were taken for a ride by the organisers of the non-existent thrash.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I can inform my hon. Friend that I have a copy of the letter that was sent to hon. Members on House of Commons headed paper and in House of Commons envelopes. I remind my hon. Friend that the letter stated:

> "Refreshments will be served from 10.30 pm. You are most cordially invited to a late night champagne supper party at the St. James Court Hotel. Wives are most welcome too. There will be film shows from midnight onwards."

Mr. Speaker: Order. This has already been mentioned many times. When I was in the Chair earlier, I was given to understand that the party had been cancelled, so I do not think that there is much point in drawing attention to it now.

Mr. Meale: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was wondering whether the films were educational and whether Conservative Members were to be shown films on dredging or the effects of the Bill on bird life?

Mr. Lloyd: It is clear that we have come to that time in the morning when the House would like to make progress. However, before I sit down, I should like to respond to the challenge thrown at me by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, who asked me whether I was going to be gullible and be led once again down the potential primrose path by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and whether I would be advising my hon. Friends to follow suit. I do not think that I can follow that second course. I have to tell my hon. Friends that they will have to use their own discretion. They are all people of judgment and integrity. Because I was brought up in the way that I was—to believe in charity—because I have implicit faith in the persuasive powers of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and because I know how he has been betrayed by his hon. Friends, I cannot believe that he would fall into that same trap again. I am prepared to test that once more. Some of my hon. Friends may want to follow suit, but I can give no guarantees to the House about what may happen.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend has responded admirably. It is a free vote. Unlike Conservative Members, Labour Members will vote according to their conscience. The only reason that I asked my hon. Friend to comment was so that I could evaluate what he was prepared to do, not for him to give instructions to any other hon. Member. He has now explained that he will give the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds another run for his money. I cannot go down that road. It is a free vote and, because we have had to deal with matters such as this throughout the night, some Labour Members will be voting one way and some another

[Mr. Skinner]

way. Some of us believe that we cannot trust the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. He led us down the wrong path last time.

Mr. Lloyd: I have two final points. First, the House will now vote and we will see whether my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover is right or whether I am right. Secondly, the debate may still be young. I believe that many of my hon. Friends still want to speak. It would be wrong of Conservative Members if they did not listen and consider what my hon. Friends have to say, as I am sure they will. They have not been charitable so far, but I am sure that they will want the debate to continue. At the end of the debate, the House may unite on the amendments. It is for my hon. Friends who want to speak so to persuade Conservative Members.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Division has been going on for a long time. Do you judge that it is time that the House knew the result of the vote? This has happened repeatedly throughout the night.

Mr. Speaker: I have already asked for inquiries to be made about what is happening in the Division Lobby. I am waiting to hear.

Later—

Mr. Speaker: I request that the Serjeant at Arms should find out what is happening in the Lobbies.

The House having divided: Ayes 164, Noes 32.

Division No. 61] **[8.38 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burns, Simon
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Paice, James
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Ward, John
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Battle, John
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Foster, Derek
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McCartney, Ian
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Marek, Dr John
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Morley, Elliott
O'Neill, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Steinberg, Gerald
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wilson, Brian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division; but no Member being willing to act as Teller for the Ayes, MR. SPEAKER *declared that the Noes had it.*

Mr. Speaker: We now come to amendment No. 21.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Division has proved to be abortive. In conversation with me, a few moments ago, the promoter of the Bill said that in his opinion a vote of no in the Division was to do the work of P and O. He may be right or he may be wrong, but as the promoter of the Bill he would at least be entitled to state certain views.

Although this may be a difficult matter for you to rule on, Mr. Speaker, as the Division was aborted, it has come to my attention that the Prime Minister went into the no Lobby some moments ago to cast her vote for—in the opinion of the promoter of the Bill the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds — P and O. Can you advise the House whether that is in order?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House makes its decision by Division. If there are no Tellers for the Ayes, I am bound to declare that the Noes have it.

9 am

Mr. Lloyd: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My question was in no way intended to reflect on your decision to call off the Division. I accept that, without Tellers, you are not in a position to allow it to go ahead. I was merely seeking clarification.

If the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is right, and the P and O vote was a no vote, is there any significance in the fact that the Prime Minister chose to vote no for P and O?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can have no knowledge of why Members of the House, whether they are right hon. Members or Back-Benchers, vote aye or no, provided that their feet follow their voices.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there were four Tellers for the Opposition and none for the Conservatives. Over the years, certainly since I have been an hon. Member, it has been customary to advise new hon. Members acting as Tellers, who may not have the necessary experience on where they should sit and what they should call. I cannot understand why on this occasion the Tellers were not given such advice.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I try to be as helpful as I can to new hon. Members, and both the new hon. Members telling for the Noes will be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that I instructed them on exactly what they should do.

Mr. Forth: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not reasonable to assume that, as we have had a good many Divisions over many hours, all hon. Members attending the debate and following the progress who are prepared to act as Tellers know what they are doing? If that is not the case, their colleagues can advise them. To suggest that, at this stage in the proceedings, hon. Members do not know how to act as Tellers is patently absurd.

Mr. Speaker: Order. What has occurred has occurred, and we cannot undo it. I do not think that there is any profit in continuing.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that last night—if I may describe it thus—we asked you whether you had been informed by the Government whether they intended to make a statement on the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian. *[Interruption.]* Despite the obnoxious moaning of Conservative Members, you, in discharge of your duties as protector of the House, gave it as your opinion that such important matters should be reported to the House.

I wondered whether you had yet heard from the Government, or from the Leader of the House in particular, whether such a statement would be made. We understand that the Secretary of State for trade and Industry, Lord Young, is now announcing not only the outcome of the deliberations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, but the Government's response to them. We think it only right and proper that, as Lord Young cannot come here, because he is a Stranger — apparently he is a stranger to the Prime Minister nowadays — the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should be present to explain exactly what is going on, and to report to the House.

The matter is particularly important because, although there are a good many Tory landowners from Scotland in the House of Lords, there is no elected member of the House of Lords from Scotland. The future of British Caledonian, the jobs that go with it and British Caledonian's connections with Scotland are very important to my hon. Friends from Scotland. It is not being suggested, however, that the Government will make a statement today.

Mr. Speaker: The House knows that it is for the Government to decide whether to make a statement. Normally I am told at 12 o'clock. The Annunciator then shows that a statement is to be made immediately after Question Time.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do you recall any previous occasion when such a decision has been made the subject of a statement in this House? You know, as the House knows, that because Tuesday's business is not yet completed it is still Tuesday in the House. Is it not, therefore, illogical and absurd for something that is happening outside the House on Wednesday to be dealt with by the House on Tuesday?

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has raised an interesting puzzle, but it is legitimate to seek your guidance. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was right to point to the difference between this case and many others. While the House is sitting the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is giving information outside the House to a press conference. That information ought properly to be given first to this House. We should like you to look at the precedents. It is on that point that we seek your guidance.

There can be little doubt that the Secretary of State is being required to exercise his judgment on an important issue. It affects both competition policy and airline policy. Not least, it affects about 25,000 jobs. We understand the Secretary of State's problems, and we regret the fact that he cannot come to this House and make a statement. However, he has deputies—for example, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. If he is still busy pulling Britain out of all further European space research, the Secretary of State could send another Department of Trade and Industry Minister. If a decision of such magnitude is being announced to others while the House is sitting, it is right

[Mr. Bryan Gould]

that a Minister should first announce that decision to the House. To do otherwise is to treat the House with contempt.

During the last few minutes we have ascertained that even now we cannot obtain from the Library a copy of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report, or any indication of what the Secretary of State is about to say. That places the House in a uniquely disadvantaged position in relation to the whole of the press corps and all the parties to the decision. To add insult to injury, I understand that one of the parties that is most affected by the decision — British Airways — is to hold a press conference at 11 o'clock this morning. It will then be able to comment to the press at large on the Secretary of State's decision, before the House has been formally informed of that decision. We look to you, Mr. Speaker, to defend the rights of the House.

Mr. Speaker: It is not for the Chair to dictate whether a statement should be made. I repeat what I said earlier. If there were to be a statement it would normally be made after Question Time today, and by noon I should have been informed that a statement was to be made. At that time I shall consider any other applications that may be made for information on this subject.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did not expect that I should speak in this debate, but when I was lying cosily in bed this morning at about 7 am the "Today" programme came on the radio and I heard that a statement would be made today about the British Caledonian-British Airways merger. I assumed that the report referred to a statement being made in the House. I hurriedly dressed, washed and came to the House to hear the statement, like many other Labour Members. As I listened to the report, I realised that the statement would not be made to the House but to a press conference at some point in the morning. I felt it incumbent on me to come to the House to raise points of order should the House be sitting. *[Interruption.]* I had a lovely night's sleep and I would recommend it to Tory Members, some of whom are already taking my advice.

I came to the House to ask on a point of order that the Leader of the House—who is now present—should say why a statement cannot be made to the House on the merger before it is made public outside. Mr. Brian Redhead on the "Today" programme inferred that——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point, but it is not a point of order. He has asked a question of the Leader of the House, which is not a matter for me.

Mr. McNamara: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You said that it is normal practice for the Government to inform you by noon whether they intend to make a statement. However, we are in an abnormal position. You will recall that there are precedents for the Government to interrupt business to make a statement. It is possible for the Government to inform you and the Officers of the House that, for example, at 10 am the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will come to the House to make a statement on the Government's decision about the proposed British Airways-British Caledonian merger. Is it not within the power of the Government to inform you that that is their intention? As we are still in Tuesday, in terms of the proceedings of the House, it is possible for the Government to interrupt today's business, albeit on Wednesday morning, to make such a statement.

Mr. David Shaw: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have always understood that it is your duty, to look after the interests of Back Benchers, particularly those who are prepared to sit through the night and concentrate on Bills that affect their constituents rather than frivolous Back Benchers who were in bed last night and who do not care about the business of the House. Will you therefore return the business of the House to what concerns us today, which is still Tuesday, and allow us to get on with the Bill that affects my constituents and those of many of my hon. Friends?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with one matter at a time. It is possible for the Government to inform the Speaker that they wish to make a statement, but the normal time to make statements is after Question Time at 3.30 pm or at 11 am on a Friday. The disadvantage in making statements at other times is that hon. Members who would expect to be present for statements may not know about them. There are precedents, of course.

Mr. Allen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order.

9.15 am

Mr. Skinner: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, a few days ago, we tried to get the Chancellor of the Exchequer to come to the House when many negotiations were taking place with regard to the BP sale. At one stage, it was agreed that the Chancellor would come to the House at the normal time. He did not appear. Further representations were made, and there were suggestions that he would appear at 7 o'clock. According to what you have had to say, Mr. Speaker, that would have been an unusual time. Generally speaking, 7 o'clock would be an unusual time for a statement to be made. However, he did not appear at that time; he finally appeared at 10 o'clock.

If it is right for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to find the time to appear at 10 o'clock and explain the position regarding the BP sale, it would seem to me that, when it looks possible that the normal business for Wednesday will not proceed, it is practical for the Minister to come to the House before 2.30 to make a statement on British Caledonian and British Airways. Outside this place, it is an important day. It is 11 November. Some of the idiots on the Government side would say that it is 10 November. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Happily, I was having a conversation and did not hear what was said.

Mr. Skinner: I was speaking generally, Mr. Speaker —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a much-respected Member of the House. If he said anything that was touching upon the honour of an hon. Member or out of order, I am sure that he will wish to withdraw it.

Mr. Skinner: It was a generality, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Generality or not, I ask the hon. Gentleman to be a sport and withdraw it.

Mr. Skinner: It was not a matter of honour, it was a matter of intelligence. An hon. Member's intelligence can be questioned. In fact, if you had been here right through the night, Mr. Speaker, you would have heard it referred to several times.

This day, 11 November, is important for many people. On a day such as this, when there is a possibility of a statement being made outside the House by a peer of the realm, the Government should have the decency to get somebody to make a statement in the House before it adjourns.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall call Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On many occasions, Mr. Speaker, you have made it clear that, as a matter of principle, you believe that Ministers should make statements to the House first and statements to the press afterwards. On this occasion, it appears that a Minister—albeit from the other place—deliberately set out to make a statement to the press early in the day, knowing that, in normal circumstances, it would have been impossible for him or a deputy representing him to come to the House until 3.30. That suggests that he was trying to avoid making a statement in the House until the matter had been thoroughly discussed outside by the press and by the companies concerned, and that he intended to come to the House only after such discussions have taken place.

Judging by your comments, Mr. Speaker, I should have thought that you would see that as a deliberate affront to the House and would want to make some inquiries. It just so happens that the House is still sitting. It is possible for the Government to make amends by stating that, within the next half hour, they will bring a Minister to the House to make a statement. The fundamental question is why a Minister of the Crown deliberately set out to call a press conference at a time when he knew that it would normally be impossible for it immediately to precede or follow a statement to the House. You should be prepared to pursue the matter. If that practice continues, the right of the House to have the first opportunity to question Ministers, before the press or others, will be further eroded.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with the points as they arise. I cannot be expected to divine the motives of Members of either House of Parliament. I have no knowledge of those matters and I have nothing further to add to what I have already said on the question.

Mr. Gould: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to say that the Secretary of State originally intended to give a press conference at a time when the House was not sitting, which would have rendered it impossible for him to make a statement to the House beforehand. By a happy circumstance, however, the House is sitting and there is nothing to prevent the Secretary of State's deputy—it has to be his deputy for reasons that we understand—from making a statement to the House, if not before the press conference, as soon as possible after it.

I fully understand your position, Mr. Speaker. It is not for you to organise the business of the House or to decide when Ministers should make statements. However, the Leader of the House is present, could he not come to the Dispatch Box and tell us at what earliest possible opportunity a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry will come to the House to tell us what has already been broadcast to the press corps and to the nation?

Mr. McLoughlin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not patently obvious that the Opposition are intent on losing Wednesday's business? Is it not the case that you could not know of any intent to make a statement on Wednesday until 12 o'clock and that requests made before that time fall outside the time limit? Would not the most sensible thing be for the House to get on with the business before it? If we did that, we might have some hope of saving Wednesday's business and, indeed, Scottish Questions. Anyone who looks at *Hansard* will see the amount of wasted time and false Divisions caused by Opposition Members throughout the night with the result that we are in danger of losing Wednesday's business.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House should get on with the debate. I shall take only one more point of order.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, the Government could withdraw the Bill and bring it back another day. In two hours' time I shall be on local radio. My constituents are very up-to-date, keen and astute and they will be following all our business carefully. Is it right that I should have to try to explain to them why the Leader of the House has not come to the Dispatch Box at least to tell us when a statement is to be made? When I tell them all that has happened they will say that the House has been brought into disrepute by a Minister of the Crown by his treatment of the House, of hon. Members and of you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Grocott *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall call the hon. Gentleman as he has been rising, but this is the last point of order.

Mr. Grocott: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that you are not answerable for the Government, and I do not blame you for that. I am sure that you are happy with that situation. This afternoon we sat through a long debate—with you, Sir, in the Chair throughout, as I recall—on the procedures of the House. Hon. Members on both sides of the House repeatedly argued that threats to democracy do not occur like flashes of lightning but by a steady erosion of hon. Members' rights. I put it to you that twice within the last fortnight hon. Members have been unable to question Ministers on key issues that are being raised across the nation. We have been misled by the Leader of the House in the past. When he raised it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If we can get on with this matter it may well be that we shall have Question Time and that all these matters can be resolved. That seems to be the obvious solution to the dilemma in which the House finds itself.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

I am moving the motion because, as I understand it, the Bill has had a long and contentious passage through the night. Clearly it involves a measure of considerable significance that has aroused strong feelings on both sides

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

of the argument. I appreciate that significance and the strong feelings, which have been shown during the past few minutes by the Government Back-Benchers as well as by my right hon. and hon. Friends. There is a strong case for accepting that we have, to use an English metaphor, had a good innings on the Bill and that there is every justification for the House to decide that we should leave the matter and return to it on another day.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. David Shaw *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: There is an important matter involving the way in which we conduct the business of the House. I am interested in some measure of consistency. It will not be beyond your memory, Mr. Speaker—it is quite recent history—that since the summer recess we have debated a Bill relating to the finances of the Scottish Development Agency. It was put on at what we thought was an inconvenient time, starting well after 10 o'clock at night and we decided to debate it on the basis that it should have the same sort of consideration as it would have had if it had appeared at 3.30 pm, as happens in the normal course of events.

The Government then took the view—I understand their reasoning—that we should adjourn and report progress because it was not neat or suitable for the House to sit interminably, and that, as it did not concentrate the mind wonderfully on the subtleties of the argument or the merits of the business, we should truncate the debate and meet on a further day. I believe that the Government made that decision at about 2 o'clock in the morning.

I accept, and Conservative Members are entitled to say, that this Bill has had a lengthy parliamentary history. I have been aware of it engaging the attention of the House on and off. However, the fact that it is highly contentious is perhaps an additional reason why we should postpone further consideration and have it at a more normal time of the day. I urge that upon the House, if you, Mr. Speaker, are prepared to accept the motion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a matter for the House to decide. The Question is,

That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

Mr. Dewar: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I should like to say one or two other things.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman may say them now on the motion he has proposed.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

There is another important reason why the House should adjourn and that is the interest of hon. Members on both sides of the House in the crowded agenda that is scheduled for the coming parliamentary day. —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to put forward reasons why he believes that further consideration should be adjourned.

Mr. Dewar: I refer to the business scheduled for today. If the Government continue their present course of action, that business is clearly at risk.

9.30 am

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): It is a private Bill.

Mr. Dewar: Whether it is a private Bill or a public Bill, the Chairman of Ways and Means is in a position to produce more time, if that is necessary and is the wish of the House. I suggest that that is the wish of the House, or ought to be the wish of the House. Later today a number of items are scheduled, for example Scottish Question time at 2.30—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"]—I take the point. I make it clear that it is the business of the House to organise its affairs. It would be an unreasonable proposition that people who feel extremely strongly about the Bill being debated should artificially truncate their opposition and not debate the Bill as they see fit. I say that for hon. Members on both sides, because Conservative Members also have strong feelings. Because the House wishes to debate the Bill, the Government should not relentlessly insist on continuing the debate at the expense of other business, when the business can be easily rearranged to encompass a proper debate of the Felixstowe Bill and to allow the other business of the House to proceed. I would think that I am speaking for the vast majority of Hon. Members. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]. The vast majority of people will not understand why we have to sacrifice important business——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member seeks to make a case as to why further consideration should be adjourned. I ask the House to allow him to do it.

Mr. Dewar: I was trying to explain to Opposition Members that it is sometimes useful to stand back from this place, from the anger, and try to understand what people think of our democratic processes.

Mr. David Shaw: This is democracy!

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Member talks about democracy. It is important that we try to protect both sides of the House. We are being asked to accept that because there are strong feelings for and against the Bill, which will involve lengthy debates, we should either artificially truncate the debate—that is the choice the Government are giving us, which cannot be in the interests of democracy or the proper debate of the Felixstowe Bill—or we shall be invited to lose significant and important business. The fault lies in the fact that we are being invited either to sacrifice important business or artificially to truncate a contentious matter which hon. Gentlemen wish to debate.

Mr. Loyden: Anybody who sat through the long hours of the debate would reject the argument that the Bill is not being taken seriously by both sides. The Bill has been subject to great scrutiny, quite rightly, and I absolutely reject the argument that this has been purely a delaying tactic. I am sure that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is aware that this has been a serious debate.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Those matters may be canvassed in the debate. This is a debate, and I ask hon. Members to treat it in that spirit.

Mr. Dewar: Many other hon. Members want to speak in the debate, so I shall be brief. As my words may have been lost in the babble coming from Conservative Members, I repeat and make clear my point; there is a legitimate issue of contention in the Felixstowe Dock and

Railway Bill, and the House should allow time for its debate. We should not be blackmailed into the position where hon. Members on both sides of the House must either truncate their arguments or have to sacrifice——

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It would not be appropriate to take points of order now. Hon. Members will have an opportunity to have their say in debate.

Mr. Gale: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If this turns out not to be a point of order, I shall think very badly of it and I shall not forget it.

Mr. Gale: This is a genuine point of order for the Chair to decide. Is it not a gross contempt of the House for a Front-Bench spokesman to try to truncate an important debate on a Back-Bench Bill when that hon. Member has not even attended the debate?

Mr. Speaker: The House will decide whether the Bill should have further consideration. That is what we are engaged upon.

Mr. Gale: I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to protect Back-Bench Members.

Mr. Dewar: What I am saying should appeal to the hon. Gentleman, because I am trying to protect his interests.

Mr. David Shaw: Back-Bench Members should be saying this, not a Front-Bench spokesman. This is an abuse.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell the hon. Gentleman, who has not been here for very long, that I decide whether there has been an abuse. This is a debate, and I ask the House to treat it in that spirit.

Mr. Dewar: I am taking longer than I thought on this, Mr. Speaker, largely because of the difficult circumstances in which I am trying to make a comparatively simple point.

I am not unsympathetic to the necessity for a proper debate on the Bill. But we should not do it on this long-drawn-out basis—an endurance race to a conclusion—when we could protect hon. Members' interests by adjourning now and returning to it another day. That would also preserve important business, which is significant to many hon. Members, although it seems to attract scant respect among Conservative Members, which I regret.

I remind hon. Members of what they are sacrificing by their perverse wish to continue the debate instead of adjourning it to another day, when there could be more sensible, considered and refreshed discussion. Scottish Question Time is of special interest to me. If we lose it today, we shall not return to the Government's policies in Scotland until Christmas looms.

It would be sensible for the Government to consider carefully whether their determination to continue the debate, despite the sensible advice that has been offered, will redound to their credit. We understand that there will be a statement on housing in Scotland on the publication of the White Paper. There is the British Caledonian-British Airways merger, which is of considerable interest to the House. There will be a debate on transport, which anyone who takes an interest in transport will appreciate is significant. In this instance I do not intend to dwell on why they are important because I think that anyone with half a wit would understand why. We have no wish to sacrifice them.

We are extremely interested in adjourning the debate as that will allow hon. Gentlemen with a particular interest in the Felixstowe issue to come back on another day after a decent night's sleep.

Mr. David Shaw: Why should we? We have been here all night.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) must contain himself.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Is the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) aware that Mr. Speaker accepted his motion some minutes ago? If he believes in democracy why does he not allow the House to decide the matter? Is he not contradicting himself by speaking at great length on a matter already decided upon by Mr. Speaker and given that his complaint is that the House is not getting on with the business?

Mr. Dewar: I believe that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) should recognise that it is normal to offer some explanation. That explanation would be considerably briefer if I were not constantly interrupted by shouts and calls from the Conservative Benches. If the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who I understand represents local interests, and who has been especially vocal in the past few minutes, wants to argue about adjourning now and coming back in a calmer atmosphere when matters can be properly considered, he should think about his conduct in the past 15 minutes. That conduct seems to be a remarkably good advertisement for suggesting that we all need time for reflection and time to come back in a rather more rational state of mind.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) not understand the anger that is felt on the Conservative Benches when a Johnny-come-lately comes here, after a night in bed, when we have been discussing this Bill in detail—

Mr. Grocott: This is the first contribution from the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett).

Mr. Bennett: We have been obstructed by the hon. Gentleman's friends from England and Scotland. We are prepared to carry on with this debate and we are not prepared to sit here and listen to your arrogance [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"!] I apologise, I meant the arrogance of the hon. Member for Garscadden in coming here at this time of the morning, interrupting a debate which has been going on since 8 o'clock last night and speaking to us in this manner.

Mr. Dewar: I always enjoy the rather bouncy contributions of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett). He is fairly prominent when he is on his feet or present in the Chamber because he cannot keep out of anything. I understand that he has not been exactly prominent during the debates on this Bill, but that is a matter for his conscience.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): In response to the rather synthetic anger on the Conservative Benches, *[Interruption.]* will my hon. Friend explain to those

[Dr. John Reid]

Benches that, far from waiting since 8 o'clock last night, Scottish Members have been waiting for a month to ask questions.

Hon. Members: Oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is possible that I may be able to give the hon. Member the opportunity to say that in the debate if he wishes.

Mr. Dewar: It is clear to me that there is a great deal of anger in the House. At the end of an all-night sitting tempers get ragged and it is not sensible to conduct our business in this way. I return to the point that it is worth considering the public perception of the House and Parliament and the way that we conduct our business.

Mr. Grocott: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to put the record straight, because the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) misled the House by suggesting that he has been taking part in the debate throughout the night. I have been listening at length to the contributions in the debate and so far I have not heard any serious contributions from Conservative Members, least of all from the hon. Gentleman.

9.45 am

Mr. Dewar: I hope that my hon. Friend will not resent this, but I think that a lucid examination of the activities of the hon. Member for Pembroke is not something that should delay us. However, I leave that for private discussion.

The perception of the House is important to me and, I believe, to every hon. Member. People will simply ask, "Is there not a better and more rational way of conducting our business?" If there is an issue that raises the strength of feeling that has been displayed by the uncharacteristic, I am sure, shouting of the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), it seems to me that we have to recognise that there should be a proper and due time for debate, but at a reasonable and civilised hour.

I suggest that it must be right that, having had a long bash at the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, we should adjourn the House and ask those who are in charge of private business to look for another day when the debate can be continued in a calmer atmosphere. That, surely, must be in the interests of the promoters of the Bill and the people who are interested in the future of the Felixstowe dock as presumably there will not be such a fevered atmosphere on another day and we will be able to look at the arguments that are at issue. It must also be clear, if I may say so on behalf of those of us with an interest in the business of the House, that the Government will do no good by forcing on private business in this perverse and prejudiced fashion and, in the process, sacrificing so much business that is worthwhile and of importance not just to my hon. Friends and myself but to every hon. Member.

9.45 am

Sir Eldon Griffiths: With great respect to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and to my hon. Friends, the Bill is not the business of the Government. Therefore, it is for the promoters of the Bill to answer the suggestion of the hon. Gentleman that we should now abandon our proceedings. I am bound to say to him that, listening to his speech, it sounded to me as if the Labour party had dug its own grave and had now fallen into it. The plain situation is that the Bill has been before the House for just on four years. It has had no less than 152 hours of debate. It has had the longest Committee stage of any private Bill since the war, and probably this century.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the hon. Member give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am sorry, but I will not. It has had no less than seven days' consideration and one night's consideration on the Floor of the House. In those circumstances, I think that it is totally unfair to the promoters of the Bill, to the dockers of Felixstowe, to the merchants, to the shippers, to the pilots, and to all concerned with the Bill who have waited four years for the House to deal with it, if the motion of the hon. Member for Garscadden were to be accepted. It surely would be grossly unfair to those who have been looking to this House for a conclusion on the Bill. I am bound to say that the responsibility for the fact that the House has been prevented from reaching a conclusion on the Bill, not only tonight but throughout the months and years and the debates, lies solely with those on the Labour Benches.

Of course, I understand—although I do not think the hon. Member for Garscadden does — that some Opposition Members may well feel exhausted after sitting through the night. For my part, I have never felt so fit and ready to carry through this Bill for as long as it takes to arrive at a conclusion. My right hon. and hon. Friends, including senior Ministers with heavy responsibilities, have turned up regularly, which demonstrates that they, too, are fit and ready to carry the Bill through. So it ill behoves the hon. Member for Garscadden, who will lose his Scottish questions and his debate about BCal, to come here and squeal — for that is exactly what he has done. When it comes to a vote, I believe the House will reject his motion.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said that this was private business. However, some of us saw the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister going into the Division Lobby this morning. So are we sure that this is private business? Usually, Prime Ministers of the day do not go into the Lobby to vote on private business.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I remind the hon. Gentleman that it is not for the Chair to follow the footsteps of any right hon. or hon. Member through the precincts of the House.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): If the Conservative hon. Members who have stirred up this synthetic indignation were really interested in the issues raised here, they would want to deal with them in a more sensible way. If, as the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) said, this is private business, why are Government Whips scuttling around like little mice among the Conservative Back Benches trying to orchestrate this verbal hooliganism? If we are really dealing with jobs and dockers and all the other matters connected with Felixstowe, why are we not dealing with them in a far more practical way?

Perhaps the proceedings are about something else altogether. Those of us who were here in the early hours of the morning were conscious that a deliberate exercise was afoot. It had, and has, little or nothing to do with the port of Felixstowe, and has everything to do with trying to ensure that the Government's humiliation in Scotland —*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Robertson: It is only a matter of months since the Conservative party in Scotland was whittled down to a meagre 10 Members of Parliament out of 72. I suppose, therefore, that it is scarcely surprising that the Government want to spare themselves the further humiliation that stems from Scottish Question Time once a month. As my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said, it was clear from the fact that even the Prime Minister participated in this business that it was an exercise designed to rob the Scottish people of the brief period of accountability when Ministers come before the elected representatives of the people.

In the last Session of Parliament the Government brought to the House another important piece of legislation, the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. That was the legislation that enacted the Single European Act that the Government were committed to implementing by the discussions that took place in the European Community. The Single European Act and the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1986 are of vast constitutional importance, and the Opposition wanted adequate time to debate issues that affect the sovereignty of the United Kingdom within the European Community. We said that we were willing to go through the night to allow adequate time to debate the legislation.

What was the response of the Government and the party of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds who just now made his speech and promptly departed from the Chamber? The Conservative Government's response was not to say that it was a matter of massive constitutional importance that demanded the attention and the time of the House. Their response was to bring a guillotine motion to the Dispatch Box and to get rid of that Bill, with all its ramifications and important consequences for Britain. They disposed of it in one afternoon and did not permit a single hour of debate into the night. That is where the double standards come in.

I am sure that Conservative Members are exhausted, but if they expect to be taken seriously they must tell the people that an element of consistency is involved. All their noise and synthetic anger counts for absolutely nothing to a populace that recognises that a device is being played here that will drive this sitting right through the morning specifically to prevent—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Robertson: That device is specifically to prevent the Scottish people from having an opportunity to cross-examine Ministers who are too frightened and timid to come to the Dispatch Box and justify their policies in Scotland.

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I have called the hon. Gentleman to order several times and must ask him to resume his seat. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is obviously not giving way.

Mr. Robertson: I am grateful for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. Conservative Members do themselves and the House no good in the eyes of the public by these orchestrated displays. It is eminently possible to have a debate that involves a clash of opinions without the hooliganism that they manifest. It persuades nobody outside.

Mr. Gale: Before the hon. Gentleman accuses us of delaying business, would he care to ask his hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) how long his speech lasted? Will he reflect on the fact that his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) spoke for 40 minutes from the Opposition Front Bench and delayed our Bill still further?

Mr. Robertson: We must come to a conclusion as quickly as possible on this motion. If Conservative Members would stop interrupting, shouting and catcalling in a juvenile, public school way, I could terminate my speech at an early opportunity.

This is an important debate. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds did not even have the courtesy to stay for the speech that followed his, but I am willing to concede to him that this is an important issue that requires debate. However, when it is used simply as a device to protect Scottish Office Ministers from those who were elected to represent the people of Scotland, it is a wholly illegitimate use of parliamentary time and does no service to the House.

I commend the motion to the House because we should return to this Bill, as we return to so many others, at a proper time, in a proper place, with proper opportunities for hon. Members on both sides of the House to participate. It is essential—this is the right of the people of Scotland—to ensure that we are not denied our one opportunity to cross-examine Scottish Office Ministers because of a device invented, orchestrated and masterminded by the Government Whips' Office.

10 am

Mr. McLoughlin: We should review the events of the past 13 or 14 hours before we are lectured by the Opposition about us somehow wanting to talk out Wednesday's business—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member needs to be heard.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am trying to trace the evening's events. Since we moved on to the Bill, there have been some 20 Divisions, one of which was called on a motion moved by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) that strangers do withdraw. Only two hon. Members voted in favour of the motion. If hon. Members care to check the *Official Report* they will find that points of order were raised during several Divisions about the time that it was taking various hon. Members to pass through the Division Lobbies. At one time, some 32 hon. Members passed through one Lobby, but the other, with more than 100 hon. Members, was cleared well in advance. That wasting of time and eating into the debate must be put on the record.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is leaving the Chamber. Obviously, he arrived here this morning and saw what his Back Benchers had been doing. He is embarrassed by that and, to give him his due, extremely anxious to have

[Mr. McLoughlin]

Scottish questions. But it is nonsense to blame Conservative Members for preventing Scottish questions. People outside this place, including those in Scotland, should look at *Hansard* and see the contributions made during the evening by the Opposition and some of the matters which we have been discussing. It has been a total waste of Conservative Members' time.

Mr. Battle: Like the hon. Gentleman, I have been here listening to the debate all night. I have been struck by the fact that it took seven days and a long night of debate before three amendments were conceded by Conservative Members, because of the arguments put tonight. That is the reason for supporting our case.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have heard of home goals. Why did the Opposition force Divisions on amendments that had been conceded by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and go on to waste more time?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I have given way enough. Other hon. Members want to speak.

It is obvious that the hon. Member for Garscadden has seen the shambles here and the shambles of press reports in Scotland during the past few months. He has now gone because he does not care. I do not know where he has gone.

Many Conservative Members are tired, but we cannot accept the lecturing from Opposition Members who have not been present in the Chamber all night. It is unacceptable for those Opposition Members to tell us that we should sacrifice this Bill in which we passionately believe and which we believe should be passed by the House. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds said, the legislation has been around the Chamber for quite long enough.

Mr. Forth: I can help my hon. Friend and the House by stating that I have just been told that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) left the Chamber to talk to the press. The hon. Gentleman is not showing the House the courtesy of listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin).

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was very interested to hear those comments from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). He complained about the Opposition Front Bench spokesman talking to the press, but this morning on "Good Morning Scotland", which I managed to hear in London, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire said how important it was that Scottish questions should take place because he wanted his English colleagues to take part and hear what was going on. However, he is now saying something entirely different. Is the hon. Gentleman allowed to have two views? Is an hon. Member allowed to have two views, one for the House of Commons and another for consumption in Scotland?

Several Hon. Members *rose*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not the keeper of hon. Members' consciences.

Mr. McLoughlin *rose*——

Mr. Allen: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is not my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) following a precedent in the House in that he speaks in the House before he speaks to the press, unlike Lord Young who this morning is giving a statement on a major merger between British Caledonian and——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We have been all through that. That is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. Clearly, the *Official Report* will show that what has happened over the past 12 hours was not the fault of Conservative Members. I hope that the people in Scotland will get the chance to read the *Official Report*.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) is doing the House a considerable favour. I understand that he is presently appearing on television and that gives the House a unique opportunity to switch him off.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have had a very long debate and many points have been raised and conceded. However, even after points were conceded, the Opposition forced Divisions on those issues, thus wasting a considerable amount of time.

We must pursue the measure today. Had the Opposition not wasted a considerable amount of time on points of order and this motion to adjourn, had we had a more responsible Opposition, we might have been able to finish the debate in time for Wednesday's business. It is clear from the Adjournment motion that the Opposition intend to continue to filibuster the Bill and keep hon. Members here throughout the day.

Mr. Gale: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is now over an hour since the motion was moved. Many hon. Members who have taken part in the debate all night have constituency interests in the Bill. May we have some indication of how long you propose to allow this debate to continue before the debate that was in progress can proceed?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That depends on how many hon. Members seek to catch my eye. But it is not over an hour since the motion was moved: it was moved at 9.25 am.

Mr. Hardy: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It would have been better if the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who mentioned me in his contribution, had waited until I sat down before making his point.

I have been here all night, and, unlike many Conservative Members, I have made a modest contribution. Conservative Members who wonder why so much time has been spent might consider more than the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). They might then understand the reason for our detailed opposition to the Bill. They should realise that, if this country tells the European Community that a wetlands site in East Anglia is of major importance under an international convention to which it has attached a national signature — a convention that requires observance of its conditions unless there is a dire national emergency — there can be no excuse for frivolous departure from that international commitment.

It is surprising that, after hour upon hour of debate, Conservative Members have decided that the Bill should be amended. The acceptance of our suggestions illustrates the need for that lengthy debate.

Mr. David Shaw: Get back to it.

Mr. Hardy: Surely the hon. Gentleman, whose sole contribution to the debate is to announce that he is a jolly good fellow, can restrain himself for a moment longer.

It is not only right hon. and hon. Members from Scotland who wish to reach Scottish Question Time; I do as well. I have a question tabled. It may surprise Conservative Members to learn that some of us take a genuine interest in conservation—such as my right hon. and hon. Friends who have spoken throughout the night rather than slumbering on the Government Benches. If an English Member wishes to pursue matters involving timber and forestry, he has to intervene in Scottish Question Time. My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden's case is perfectly valid. But let not Conservative Members claim that there has been no legitimate and conservationist argument to advance against a Bill that should take very much longer to debate before it sees the light of day.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I regard the conduct of the Opposition as being as squalid as any I have ever seen; and I regret to say that I regard that of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) as utterly schizophrenic. Having slept soundly in his bed, the hon. Gentleman woke up in the morning to find that the idiots around him had walked straight into a minefield that they themselves had planted. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman went to his Chief Whip and said, "What are we going to do?", and that the Chief Whip said, "I tell you what you must do. Put your hand on your heart and pretend that you are interested in reaching Scottish questions — but make sure that you take 40 minutes to do it."

It is humbug and hypocrisy. The hon. Gentleman is not trying to reach Scottish questions; he is trying to pretend that he wants to. But the insult goes further——

Mr. Dewar: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman advise his hon. Friends to call my bluff bv letting me reach Scottish questions?

10.15 am

Mr. Fairbairn: I know that the hon. Gentleman may think that I am a mug, but if Labour Members think that they can get away with destroying the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill without seeing that they will achieve neither objective, God help them.

The humbug goes even further than that. Let the Scottish people listen to this. The hon. Gentleman says that we are all tired little men and that because we have been up all night we are not fit to talk about the Bill. We are mentally exhausted; we cannot think. But these are the people who will have to consider Scottish questions. So if the hon. Gentleman wants a lot of dead-beat flunkeys—*[Interruption.]* Furthermore, when they had not been up all night and had only just got out of bed for the previous time we had Scottish questions, they gave the impression to the people of Scotland that the 50 Opposition Members were zombies. They say that they want devolution, that they want an assembly, and that we in the Conservative Government are not entitled to rule in Scotland because we do not have a mandate—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

If that is so, where are all the braw Highlanders with their claymores? Have they not the strength? Are they not allowed to go to their Whips and say, "By the way, old fellow, I wonder whether you appreciate that if your dog-tired malingerers filibuster all through the night in an attempt, for doctrinal reasons, to defeat an excellent Bill" —which will have considerable effects on Scotland—"we shall lose Scottish business."? I say to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary that if the firearms legislation requires amendment, it should be a measure to protect the Labour party from shooting itself in both feet—*[Interruption.]* I shall come to the nasty bit later.

The hon. Member for Garscadden forgets that all the questions that have been tabled will be answered. Every single one will be answered. There is not a single question to the Secretary of State that will not be answered. But what Labour Members have succeeded in depriving themselves of, for doctrinal reasons and by filibustering and malingering all night, is supplementary questions. I cannot believe, knowing the genius of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, that since the previous lot of questions, Labour Members have done a crash course in intelligent supplementaries. If they have, I should vote for the closure just to see how successful it has been. But I do not have the slightest doubt that in the circumstances those who had run the course would be arrested for fraud.

Let us be clear about the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. It has major and important implications for the port of Perth, which I do not suppose many Opposition Members have heard of. It has major implications for the oil and supply industries at Aberdeen. This is an important Bill which is being deliberately stopped for doctrinal reasons of pique at not being able to nationalise the company, and I dare say that it will be outside the dock. The measure will also create many new jobs.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Would my hon. and learned Friend care to state the reason why Labour Members, whom we must put up with talking a lot of sanctimonious claptrap on unemployment, should oppose a Bill which creates 2,000 or 3,000 new jobs?

Mr. Fairbairn: When it comes to a choice between supporting the tenets of Marxism, which the Labour party pretends to have dropped, and the tenets of employment, which it pretends to promote, the tenets of Marxism always triumph.

The Opposition have no case. Let Scotland understand how lucky it is that there is a United Kingdom Parliament when those who cannot even see a 90 ft trench full of mines before their eyes and fall into it would otherwise be ruling it. If we ever get devolution——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): We would have time for Scottish business.

Mr. Fairbairn: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is Scottish. There is the line.

If ever we get devolution, I think that the people of Scotland would vote to go to Felixstowe.

This is all humbug. Labour Members have been hoist on the petard of their own doctrinal stupidity. They are

[Mr. Fairbairn]

not only blind, but purblind. It shows the bankruptcy of Socialism. For hon. Members who have spoken in the debate to pretend that they oppose the Bill because they are interested in the conservation of butterflies, trees and birds is absolute hypocrisy. Oh ye hypocrites, ye of little faith, you have done your own damage and you have done no harm to Scotland whatever.

Dr. Reid: I shall speak more briefly than the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) because I have a genuine interest in ensuring that the debate is adjourned and that Scottish questions are answered this afternoon.

First, if the hon. and learned Gentleman stayed awake throughout the debate, I congratulate him. He will have extended a compliment to the people of Felixstowe which he did not manage to extend to the people of Scotland as he slept through the last debate we had on Scottish issues.

I think that it would be helpful if we brought a few cool heads into the debate. Therefore, I appeal to the rationale of Conservative Members which, despite all the evidence I must presume to prevail, and ask them to support the Adjournment motion. We are not asking that the debate be truncated—a word used earlier—or abandoned, but adjourned. We appreciate the importance of Felixstowe. Few places in England are nearer to my heart than Felixstowe. It is exceeded only by Dartford and Thurrock. The name of Felixstowe constantly drips from my lips. Therefore, I do not demean its importance to hon. Members.

Extremely important Scottish business is tabled for this afternoon. In the absence of any other explanation why the Government Whips should be pulling hon. Gentlemen into the Chamber to hear a debate on a supposedly private Bill, we are left with no other conclusion than that it is a deliberate ploy to engineer the loss of Scottish questions this afternoon.

Mr. Home Robertson: There is more at stake than just another Scottish Question Time. We understand that the so-called Secretary of State for Scotland, the leader of the minority Administration in the Scottish Office, intended to make a statement later today introducing a White Paper on Scottish housing, which is likely to have far-reaching effects and implications for tenants the length and breadth of Scotland by forcing up rents and further reducing the availability of rental housing. In addition, my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) is to introduce an Adjournment debate tomorrow on the crisis in the Scottish penal system. The Government are trying to sabotage more than Scottish Question Time.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reinforcing my point. Two other issues which are of vital importance to Scottish people will not be taken today.

Of course, it is only once a month that the Lord Lieutenant, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) faces Scottish questions in the House. It is almost a state visit to Scotland on such occasions. There are a number of issues. Quite frankly, the Government are frightened to answer questions. I shall mention only one matter, and that is the poll tax. It is becoming plain that the poll tax will not only affect every individual in Scotland but will be twice the amount—about £500 per head—that the Government have been predicting. I do not wish to dwell on it, but it is an important point and we wish to raise it this afternoon.

Tangential to that matter is another scandal regarding the poll tax. It would have been raised had the Government not tried to talk it out. Every minister, priest, nun and religious institution in Scotland will have withdrawn from them the 100 per cent. rates rebate or discount that they presently enjoy. In that sense, we should congratulate the Government on their role in the ecumenical movement. Almost singlehandedly, through the poll tax, they have managed to unite Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus and Muslims, and that will cost British churches about £10 million a year.

I said that my remarks would be brief. I intend to say a little more. As I said, in the absence of a genuine attempt to support the adjournment of the debate, and allow further discussion, the only conclusion that Opposition Members, my constituents and the people of Scotland can draw is that the Government are so frightened to face up to their lack of responsibility in Scotland that they are not even prepared to go to the Dispatch Box once a month and answer questions on behalf of a country that they purport to represent.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): It will come as no surprise to the House to hear that I was expecting that we would deal with Scottish business today. I imagine that there is something about the way in which I am dressed that would give that impression. I listened to the speech made by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). It was interesting to note how the Labour party can change its views, attitudes and arguments in relation to adjournments. It was proposed to adjourn the Scottish Development Agency debate in the early hours of the morning. It was said that that was hideous and odious. Now, of course, because this Bill——

Dr. Reid: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that we opposed that adjournment so that we could have a debate on Scottish issues? We support this adjournment so that we may have a debate on Scottish issues this afternoon. There is no inconsistency in that.

Mr. Walker: There is an inconsistency. The hon. Gentleman is standing his argument on his head. He cannot have it both ways. However the hon. Gentleman views the matter, the motion to adjourn the Scottish Development Agency debate gave an opportunity to have a debate in prime time at a later date. That was opportune. But Opposition Members in turn objected to the adjournment. You will recollect that, Madam Deputy Speaker. The House will recollect that during the debate on the Scottish Development Agency, the subjects of Ford in Dundee and the private hospital to be built in Clydebank were discussed. Both projects would create jobs. It is rather interesting that Opposition Members were not prepared to endorse either of them—first, because of trade union disputes and, secondly, because of their doctrinaire attitudes.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that Opposition Members in any way failed to support the attraction of inward investment into Dundee through the Ford plant. That has been consistently supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) and me.

10.30 am

Mr. Walker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that I have been prudent and careful in deliberately restraining from commenting on the Ford plant. I understand the ghastly situation in which the hon. Members for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) and for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) found themselves. The trade unions, who are their paymasters and supporters, were not behaving properly. Consequently, we had uncertainty. That is the best description that I can give the hon. Gentleman. In the light of the television programme about Dundee last week, one can understand why hon. Members do not want to talk too much about the matter. Sadly, if the city regains its previous image — which one hoped was disappearing — very few employers will want to come to Dundee. I would find that terribly distressing, as many of my constituents commute to Dundee.

The loss of Scottish questions today, which looks likely, means that those of us who wish to question Ministers are being denied the opportunity to do so. We are being denied the opportunity because throughout the night, Opposition Members have kept up what can at best be described as a protracted debate. Others, less charitably, would describe it as a filibuster. Anyone who reads the report of our proceedings will realise that this has been a deliberate attempt to prevent the Bill's passage through the House.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Would not my hon. Friend agree that, given the number of Scottish Opposition Members'—of which they constantly remind us—had they bothered to turn up for the debate on the Bill they could have had a preponderant influence on the Opposition and might indeed have managed to get the business done with sufficient despatch to save the Scottish business today?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend has focused clearly on the problem that the Labour party faces. The Scottish members of the party form its largest single element. Unfortunately, however, Scottish Labour Members seem to have no influence whatever on the conduct of business in this place. They are constantly shooting themselves in both feet, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) said. It is clear that the loss of Scottish business today is the direct result of the Labour party's Scottish representatives being unable to persuade their colleagues of the importance of Scottish business to them and to the rest of the House.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does my hon. Friend accept that the motive that led Scottish Labour Members to bed was that Felixstowe is in England and so did not matter? Regardless of what happens elsewhere in the United Kingdom their attitude is that provided that business relates to Scotland they must have time to discuss it.

Mr. Walker: My hon. and learned Friend is perfectly right. There is no doubt that one constantly hears Opposition Members who represent Scottish constituencies girning and greeting about lack of time. Yet they are unable to organise their own troops to conduct a meaningful debate on a very important Bill. Instead, they ensure that the Bill makes little progress. They do so because it is clear that the Bill is important. It will create jobs, it will create new attitudes and it will improve existing attitudes in the very fine port of Felixstowe. The danger, as the Opposition see it, is that the Bill will make Felixstowe even more successful and will show the way for the other United Kingdom ports. As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross said, we in Scotland will be unable to ignore the effect that Felixstowe will have after the Bill is passed. It will be vital to North sea oil operations and to the factories and production units in Scotland which export the great majority of their goods. A good example is whisky.

The people of Scotland should understand that we are in this position today because of the incompetence of Scottish Labour Members.

Mr. John Garrett: The tenor of the debate during the past hour has been rather excitable. It is time for reflection. I have been here all night; I have followed every amendment; I have spoken briefly on some of them; and I have tried to express a deeply felt concern about the environment, which is threatened by the Bill. The environment and ecology are major issues in East Anglia, as the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) will know from his mailbag, as I do from mine. It was my duty to represent the protests about the damage that will be caused to a major site of special scientific interest in East Anglia, because no Conservative Member has done so.

It is remarkable how many of our amendments have been accepted by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), whom it is proper to call the sponsor's surrogate, since in my hearing he called the Bill "Gummers's Bill". The fact that he accepted many of our key amendments shows the value of our debate. We needed several hours on each group of amendments to convince him to convince the promoters of the Bill of the need to accept the amendments.

We have debated four of the 10 groups of amendments, and we now have time to pause and reflect. There are many more important amendments: on explosives in a nature reserve—I ask you; on access; on the planning process; on the effects of construction; on the use of Trimley marshes; on the innovative concept of changing arable land into a nature reserve, which has not been done before; and on future safeguards for the dock development. Those amendments deserve many more hours of consideration; we should not abandon the debate, but we should adjourn it to another day.

Mr. Forth: It may surprise the House to know that I share many of the views expressed by Labour Members. I had been looking forward with great anticipation to Scottish questions. I and many of my hon. Friends remember the events during last Scottish questions when there was a shambles on the Opposition Benches and a triumph on the Government Benches, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and his Ministers came to the House and gave a full account of their stewardship in Scotland and displayed to the people of Scotland the complete ineptitude of the Opposition.

Not only was that bad for the Opposition on that occasion; Conservative Members are now being denied a repetition — something to which I have been looking forward for some time. Many of my hon. Friends have tabled Scottish questions — so interested are we in matters north of the border, and so eager are we to see my right hon. Friend and his colleagues displaying yet again how well matters are going north of the border.

[Mr. Forth]

Nevertheless, some hon. Members from south of the border are concerned about how well the Scots are doing and how generous the Government are being to the Member. That is one reason why we wanted to question my right hon. and learned Friend—although I know that he would have provided perfectly good answers to the questions.

I wish to explain to the House why Scottish questions are in jeopardy. We have still to deal with the Bill in detail, as many Labour Members have said. The House should be aware that during the night Opposition speeches lasted for as long as 32 minutes, one hour and five minutes, 43 minutes, 72 minutes and so on. I have a complete list of them. The great bulk of this parliamentary day has been taken up by Opposition Members—and mainly English Members.

It is now obvious to the House that Scottish Labour Members, having slept through the night, have come to the House only to be appalled to find that their English colleagues have detained the House for so long that Scottish questions are in danger. I feel sorry for Opposition Members, because they will have to sort this out for themselves. I have no doubt that the Labour Chief Whip is at this moment trying to calm some of his colleagues who are probably grasping each other by the throat. However, that is not a concern of Conservative Members——

Mr. Fairbairn: Is it not even more painful for Scottish Labour Members to know not only that they will lose their business, but that they were so stupid as not to have realised that that was inevitable?

Mr. Forth: Indeed, that is becoming obvious. There was shock on the faces of Opposition Members as they trickled into the Chamber, having had a night's sleep. The way in which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has moved this unfortunate Adjournment motion, interrupting the business of the House and our detailed consideration of the Bill, shows that the tragedy is that Opposition Members cannot make up their minds whether they want to destroy an excellent private Bill or whether they want to go through a further shambles at Scottish questions and submit themselves to humiliation. That is why it is quite obvious to us——

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): The hon. Gentleman referred to a shambles on the Opposition Benches and the way that the Scottish people have listened to the Secretary of State on his stewardship. Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that in the many local government by-elections since June, because of the vacancies created by former Labour councillors entering this House, in by-election after by-election the Tory party has come fourth? Is it not true that the only reason that it has come even fourth is that the Green party and the Communist party did not put up candidates?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Paul Dean): Order. We must not stray from the comparatively narrow procedural motion before the House.

Mr. Forth: Indeed not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the truth is that the hon. Member for Garscadden scurried out of the Chamber to speak to the press a short time ago because the Labour party received such an appallingly bad press following the last Scottish questions. He had to ensure that he salvaged something for the next Scottish questions. There is fear on the faces of Opposition Members as they contemplate what happened during last Scottish questions, and that gives the lie——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) had to come to the Chamber to move the Adjournment of the debate shows that the Opposition are divided? Does it not show that Scottish Members cannot persuade their other colleagues to reduce their opposition to such a worthwhile Bill?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend, as ever, puts his finger on the problem. The Opposition are hoist by their own petard. They cannot decide whether to filibuster the Bill or to have Scottish Questions. However, that is their problem, not ours.

We know that the main business of the House today—this is why we shall vote against the motion proposed by the hon. Member for Garscadden—is to complete our consideration of the Bill and dispatch that business. If other business has to fail, the country and the Scots people will know that the reason for that failure lies at the Labour party's door alone.

10.45 am

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I start with the confession that during the night I showed as much interest in the Bill as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). However, I am sure that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) would welcome that non-intervention as a contribution to the expedition of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Garscadden said that today's business would be worthwhile and of importance. That is perfectly clear. Only once every four weeks do we have Scottish questions and the opportunity to question Scottish Office Ministers on a range of subjects. The business consisted of a statement on housing in Scotland and a debate on transport on the very day that we expect an announcement on the proposed merger between British Caledonian and British Airways. Indeed, I think that I am right in saying that there was also the formal presentation of the hon. Member for Garscadden's Bill for Scottish home rule.

The Labour Front Bench appears to have a slow learning curve. On at least one occasion during debates on the Bill which abolished the GLC in the previous Parliament, the Labour party tried to take business through the night and panicked at about nine o'clock when it found that it had gone too far. The Government then stepped in to complete the business earlier than would have otherwise been the case.

That has happened again today. We all know a parliamentary filibuster when we see one. Last night, points of order were taken at considerable length, encouraged by the Labour Front Bench. I seem to recall that they were about trying to obtain a statement from the Department of Trade and Industry before a statement was made to the press. If we continue to sit this morning, and if the horse has not yet bolted, that might still be possible.

The point is that the Labour party's antics have taken us through the night and it has scored an own goal.

Mr. Hind: I, like the hon. Gentleman, have tabled a question for Scottish Question Time that I should like answered. Does he agree that if this motion had not been proposed, the one and a half hours that have been wasted on it could have been used to debate the Bill and make it more likely that we would have reached Scottish questions?

Mr. Wallace: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, although I regret taking an intervention about such an obvious point that, in itself, has taken up time.

The hon. Member for Garscadden has now proposed a parliamentary lifeboat to save the Labour party's face. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said that the Government are now trying to protect Scottish Office Ministers. With respect, if one looks at the list of speakers during the night, there were precious few Conservative Members. Most of them came from the Labour Benches.

This is the second occasion in the few weeks since the summer recess that the Labour party's shambolic tactics have lost us an opportunity to challenge the Scottish Office. The Labour party's shambolic tactics on the Scottish Development Agency Bill meant that we lost a debate on the Scottish economy which the Secretary of State for Scotland would have had to answer.

Mr. Maxton: If the Labour party lost an important debate on the Thursday evening, why did the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) stand up in the House of Commons at 2 o'clock, when the motion on the Adjournment of the House was being debated, to oppose it? He said that he wanted the debate to continue throughout the night. We would have completed the Bill if it had not been for the idiotic tactics of Government Whips.

Mr. Wallace: I well remember the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). He was scathing about the Labour party's tactics, which lost us a debate. I was present and I clearly remember my hon. Friend's speech. We lost a debate on the Scottish economy which would have brought the Secretary of State for Scotland to the Dispatch Box. *[Interruption.]* — There are many issues on the Scottish economy which go beyond the Scottish Development Agency. That is the point.

We are in danger of losing important Scottish business again today. The people of Scotland will know that it is the Labour party's shambolic tactics that are denying us the opportunity to challenge the Scottish Office.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 305, Noes 5.

Division No. 62] [10.50 am

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buck, Sir Antony
Buckley, George
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Bob
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Grocott, Bruce
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Douglas
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hinchliffe, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lewis, Terry
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McAllion, John
McCrindle, Robert
McFall, John
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
McKelvey, William
Maclean, David
McLeish, Henry
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin

Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meale, Alan
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morgan, Rhodri
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Paul
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Paice, James
Patchett, Terry
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Reid, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robertson, George
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Salmond, Alex
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*

Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steinberg, Gerald
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walley, Ms Joan
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wilson, Brian
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Eric Forth.

NOES

Dalyell, Tam
Hardy, Peter
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.

*Question put,*That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

*The House divided:*Ayes, 119, Noes, 205.

Division No. 63] **[11.00 am**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Alton, David

Anderson, Donald
Armstrong, Ms Hilary

Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Blair, Tony
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Lewis, Terry
Livsey, Richard

Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerald
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*

Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Eric Forth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The House will be aware that last night the Opposition demanded a statement from the Department of Trade and Industry on the proposed British Caledonian-British Airways merger. At 9 o'clock this morning that request was renewed. At the very time when it was refused in the House, a press conference was held by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, details of the merger were given, questions were answered and the report was put in the House of Commons. It is outrageous that the House has been denied an opportunity to respond to this report.

Conservative Members may not care about the interests of consumers, the interest of employees or competition policy. The Opposition do care about those things. This is an important matter of public interest and the House has been treated with contempt. We must have a statement today from the Department of Trade and Industry.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall deal first with this point of order. I say to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that on a number of occasions during the night Mr. Speaker and other occupants of the Chair dealt with this matter. Mr. Speaker dealt with it as recently as two hours ago, when he made it very clear that it was not a matter for the Chair and that there was nothing that he could do to assist the hon. Gentleman. I can add nothing to what Mr. Speaker said on that occasion. I will, of course, take further points of order. However, I want to remind the House that a moment ago the House agreed that the debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill should continue. It is my job to ensure that the wishes of the House are carried out. I therefore hope that those hon. Members who are rising on points of order will reflect on what I have said and, if they believe that they must persist, I urge them to be extremely brief.

11.15 am

Mr. Fairbairn: Can you assist me on a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker? In the previous two Divisions, Labour Front Bench spoksmen voted in both Lobbies. Since I understand that Labour Members are in a state of warfare, perhaps the House could adjourn for five minutes to allow Labour Members to meet in separate rooms—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The voting habits of hon. Members have nothing to do with me, thank goodness.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I want to raise a different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker and particularly I want to consider the British Caledonian and British Airways merger. This is a very important issue and I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree, although I accept that you said that it was not a matter for the Chair. Nevertheless, the future of the air transport industry, and the merger's effects on jobs and on air fares are matters which should be debated as soon as possible.

[Mr. Doug Hoyle]

You were quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to pass comment on my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) who explained that a press statement had been issued by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Although this is not a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appeal to the Leader of the House to come to the Dispatch Box as soon as possible and make a statement. This is a very important and vital British industry, and the merger will have an effect on international trade.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not really a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian and I am sure that he will seek other opportunities which are in order to raise the matter that he seeks to ventilate.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many Conservative Members have been up all night and have voted in all of the Divisions. They are very anxious to make progress with the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. One of the reasons why we are anxious to make progress is, as my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) explained that we want to get on with Scottish questions and other Scottish business this afternoon so that we can hear just how successful our Ministers are being in Scotland—*[Interruption.]* In those circumstances, is it in order for the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to come to the House—and he has not been here for the past 15 hours—and raise a point of order upon which Mr. Speaker and Mr. Deputy Speaker have already ruled twice in the past two hours, especially when it has been the practice of both Conservative and Labour Governments not to make statements on Monopolies and Mergers Commission reports?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: None of the points that have been raised so far are points of order. I am gaining the strong impression that we are wasting time that should be devoted to the debate. The House has recently decided that the debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill should continue.

Mr. Malcom Bruce (Gordon): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that this is a genuine point of order.

Mr. Bruce: I accept that you and Mr. Speaker have already ruled on this issue. However, I want to stress that on many occasions Mr. Speaker has said that he does not approve of the way in which the Government refuse to make statements. *[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has made a statement to the press that the merger should go ahead, and that totally flies in the face of the stated Government policy to promote competition. We are entitled to have a statement in the House. As the Leader of the House is present, will he consider doing the House the courtesy of saying when a statement will be made to the House so that business can proceed?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Again, that is not a matter for the Chair. I apeal once more to the House: we really should get on with the debate. I hope that the next point of order will be genuine.

Mr. McLoughlin: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you confirm that it is still entirely possible for a statement to be made; that notice must be given to Mr. Speaker's Office before 12 o'clock; and that any action taken before that would pre-empt any decision, that might be made?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is correct.

Mr. Blair: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The demand has been made through the usual channels a number of times. The Leader of the House is here now. Why does he not tell us whether we can have a statement? Must a statement on such an important matter be made outside and not inside the House? If so, that is wholly wrong.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The statement about the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian is dated Wednesday 12 November, but we are still on Tuesday 11 November. How can we discuss something that is in the future?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Again, that is not a point of order for me.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On an entirely different point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know of the concern of the Chair to protect Back-Bench Members. Four items of important Scottish business were to be debated today, and 67 out of 72 Scottish Members are Back Benchers. Can you explain, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how it is possible for the usual channels, which normally involve the Front-Benchers of both major parties, to bring us to an impasse in which four matters of vital importance to the Scottish people are in danger of being lost?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has reinforced the point that I have been trying to make for some time—that we should get on with the debate.

Clause 10

INCORPORATION OF PROVISIONS OF ACTS OF 1956, 1963, 1968, 1979 AND 1981

Dr. Marek: I beg to move amendment No. 21, in page 10, line 21, at end insert—

'*(dd)* section 24 of the Act of 1956 shall have effect as if after "Council" there were inserted "and the Regional Officer responsible for the County of Suffolk of the Nature Conservancy Council".'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take amendment No. 22, in page 10, line 28, at end insert

'and with the chief executive of Suffolk Coastal District Council'.

Dr. Marek: Although I am speaking for myself and cannot commit any of my hon. Friends—*[Interruption.]* —let me say first that the Opposition look at the Bill——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is too much sedentary conversation. I want to hear what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Dr. Marek: We shall try to oppose the Bill where we think that it should be opposed, and we shall try to improve it where we think that it should be improved. We feel that that must come first, because it is the business that we are discussing today.

We have a Bill before us. We are not responsible for the management of Government business; it is not up to us to propose Adjournment motions. We have not the power, because we have no majority. It is the Government's responsibility whether or not we proceed.

I intend to proceed. I intend to try to improve the Bill through these amendments. This must be absolutely clear: we do not want misconceptions to arise from the antics of some Conservative Members which might make the public believe that we want to talk out our own business this afternoon. Of course we do not. We want to keep our business this afternoon.

Amendments Nos. 21 and 22 are important. People in Felixstowe, Harwich and East Anglia will be extremely interested in how we proceed. The amendments deal with disturbance to birds and bird life. Many people are members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and an even larger number are desperately worried about the plight of birds and bird life in the United Kingdom. Amendment No. 21 seeks to give the Nature Conservancy Council a little scope—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I suggest that my hon. Friend remains silent until he feels that the House can hear him?

Dr. Marek: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's suggestion. There is much noise, coming from many Conservative Members. The Conservative Front Bench seems to be holding a tripartite conversation. However, things are quietening down and I can continue. At least, I hope that hon. Members on Opposition Benches will be able to hear me.

I do not want to be too long because I have been here throughout the night. I have noticed that there has been a temptation on Conservative Benches to try to move closure motions whenever possible. I have no reason to believe that the Government or the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who is in charge of the Bill, will do any different on this occasion. I suspect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will allow the debate to continue for about two hours, after which a closure motion will be moved. As has happened before, although plenty of points need to be made in this important debate, they will go by the board. We shall be forced into a closure and the debate will be curtailed.

It is a great pity when the Government, with a majority of over 100, cannot organise their business so that proper consideration could be given to previous amendments or to the ones that we are now debating, amendments Nos. 21 and 22. I should have thought that if the Government party was keen on getting the best legislation through the House, as are we in the Opposition, without a shadow of doubt, it would listen to all the arguments and not be keen to move closure motions as soon as possible.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend says that it is the Government party that moves closure motions, but it is obvious it is more than the Government party—it is the Government. It is the Tory Government in receipt of £30,000 a year fom P and O who have hastened the legislation through to such an extent. We have even seen the Prime Minister taking the unusual step of voting on what we are told is private legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has given his preamble. I hope that he will resist the temptation that has been placed before him by his own Front Bench.

Dr. Marek: I am sure that hon. Members heard what my hon. Friend said. I shall leave it at that, as you suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I now refer to amendment No. 21. Section 24 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1956 deals with the use of explosives. It might be useful to read it out. The Act is inadequate in many ways, and section 24 demonstrates that. It states:

> "Before any explosive substance is used in exercise of the powers of this Act the Company shall give at least seven days' notice in writing marked "Urgent" (which shall be served by posting by registered post) of the intention to use an explosive substance addressed to the engineer and surveyor of the Felixstowe Urban District Council."

That is all that the section says. Hon. Members will have noticed that there is nothing to stop the company using explosives at any time if it wishes. All that it must do is give at least seven days' notice and mark the letter or document "Urgent". The difficulty is that explosives frighten birds. People who have been to the Fagbury marshes tell me that there are thousands of birds there and that if a shotgun is fired at the wrong time, those birds will fly up.

Mr. McCartney: May I remind my hon. Friend of the Brent geese, which migrates from the USSR to winter in the United Kingdom? They are particularly vulnerable on marshland to cold weather. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides for the Secretary of State to take action on shotguns. If he can take action on shotguns, what would be the position on explosives? One can only hazard the guess that the thousands of birds in a flock would be frightened by explosives and that explosives would, therefore, greatly endanger the migratory pattern of the geese.

11.30 am

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I thought that he would anticipate me and make my point, but he made the slightly different point about dangers to migrating birds and migrations. I take his advice on that because he knows more on this subject than I do. I am a mere amateur at bird-watching. My point is slightly different but, I hope, equally valid.

We accept that loud noises disturb birds and that an explosion in midwinter will darken the sky with tens of thousands of birds. Clearly, they will expend much energy. I am told on good authority that in the depths of winter birds do not have enough energy to be continually, or even irregularly, frightened by loud noises. They must spend their time on the mud banks seeking food simply to get enough energy to stay alive. If birds are frightened into the sky, first, they expend energy and, secondly, they are not looking for the food that they need to stay alive.

There are rules against firing shotguns in certain areas and I understand that the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 provides for cold weather orders. Therefore, it is not a question of the House debating something which is absolutely new or that nobody has thought about; such provisions already exist and the danger has been recognised and appreciated by experts and ornithologists. All my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and I are seeking to do is to ensure that the spirit of the cold weather orders is carried into this Bill in

[Dr. Marek]

relation to the use of explosives. Clearly, it would be anomalous if the company were allowed to use explosives either without any control or with only seven days' notice, while people who shoot—there are plenty who shoot and use shotguns in that area—are rightly barred from doing so because of the cold weather orders.

The amendment does not spell out the matter precisely or make it absolutely clear. It inserts into clause 10:

> '*(dd)* section 24 of the Act of 1956 shall have effect as if after "Council" there were inserted "and the Regional Officer responsible for the County of Suffolk of the Nature Conservancy Council".'.

I shall not bore the House by reading the Bill; hon. Members can read it and the amendments. If the amendment is accepted, explosives could be used, but only when they do not harm feeding birds, waders and the Brent geese about which my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) is rightly concerned.

Amendment No. 22 is slightly different. I support it and hope that it will be accepted, but I confess that I am not completely happy with it. It states:

> "in page 10, line 28, at end insert 'and with the chief executive of Suffolk Coastal District Council'".

Section 39 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1956 deals with the correction of errors in deposited plans and books of reference. In addition to referring to the county of East Suffolk, section 39 of the 1956 Act requires duly authorised certificates recording details of the error in question to be deposited with

> "every clerk of a local authority and chairman of a parish council or parish meeting with whom a copy of the deposited plans has been deposited in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Houses of Parliament or who has the custody of any such copy so deposited".

The local district council fits the description, but, subject to any comments that will be made by the hon. Gentleman in charge of the Bill, it does not include the Suffolk Coastal district council. The amendment simply seeks to correct the problem so that all local authorities are involved and none is left out. The Suffolk Coastal district authority is one of the two principal authorities in the region.

Chief executives are mentioned in the amendment. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish can advise me on the matter. I would prefer the amendment to refer to the chief executive acting on the advice of his council, not in a personal capacity. Most chief executives act on the advice of their district councils, but it seems——

Mr. McCartney: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Marek: I shall finish the sentence and then I shall give way.

The way the amendment is worded, it could mean the chief executive acting of his or her own volition. If so, that is a slight defect of the amendment, but nevertheless I support it.

Mr. McCartney: I shall try to help my hon. Friend. I am a recent member of a local authority. It may be that the provision has not caused many difficulties. In most instances, local authority standing orders specifically designate what role a chief executive will perform under the instruction of a committee or council and which roles will be delegated to him. I am absolutely sure that the district council concerned, having considered the issues involved, pursuant to the standing orders, will decide whether a power is delegated to him personally or through the appropriate committee.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that elucidation. My hesitation was based on existing practice. In regard to electoral registration, the chief executive of any council acts as an agent of the Home Office. In other matters, perhaps——

Mr. McCartney: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dr. Marek: I shall finish my remarks and then perhaps my hon. Friend can correct me.

In respect of other matters, the chief executives attending district council planning committees would clearly be acting as agents of such committees.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend has it slightly wrong. At district council level, the electoral registration officer acts on instructions from the district council's policy committee and is not responsible to the Home Office. He can, of course, refer matters to the Home Office for advice.

Dr. Marek: I bow to my hon. Friend's superior knowledge. I admit that I am not sure about the position of a chief executive when acting as a returning officer in the context of electoral registration. If my hon. Friend says that the drafting of the amendment is satisfactory to him, it is certainly satisfactory to me. As I believe in democracy——

Mr. McCartney: The amendment is not entirely satisfactory.

Dr. Marek: I shall be happy to give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. McCartney: The difficulty to which my hon. Friend is drawing attention may not be as great as he suggests, but that does not mean that I go along completely with the amendment.

Dr. Marek: Without any further delving into the precise implications of the wording of the amendment, I am content to say that I am quite happy with it, especially after the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield, and I commend it to the House.

Mr. Loyden: Perhaps my hon. Friend will care to probe the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) about how much underwater explosive will be used and the ecological consequences of the use of it. I think that my hon. Friend is right about the issue of Home Office intervention. If we are being asked to make a decision on these matters, we should know whether responsibility rests with the Home Office. My understanding is that it does. I invite my hon. Friend to probe the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds on these issues.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Lloyd) for raising an important question, which I cannot answer definitely. I would hope that any company would have expertise in the use of explosives and would know the consequences of any discharge of them. I hope that the Minister listened to my hon. Friend's question and will answer it. It is an important issue and the House will want an assurance.

Amendment No. 21 takes up the important issue of the scaring of birds in deep midwinter, thus making life extremely difficult for them. If they are caused to fly in the depths of winter they will expend a considerable amount of energy, and when flying, they will not be able to look for food. That is critical. In the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, there are safeguards against the use of shotguns. The amendment seeks to widen the scope of that Act to bring within its terms the use of explosives in the context of the Bill. I commend the two amendments to the House.

Mr. McCartney: I address myself to the use of explosives and the effects of discharges of them on communities close to the proposed development. I represent a Lancashire coalfield constituency with one of the largest areas of opencast mining activity in the country. The community which I represent is involved in the problems that are caused by explosives in industrial areas close to built-up areas in which people live and work. I wish to ask the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) a number of questions and I hope that he will be able to satisfy me on these matters. If he can, he will perhaps be able to support the amendments.

11.45 am

First, has the company sponsoring the Bill published proposals to deal with expected noise levels and, indeed, the duration of the noise, which is equally important? Very often, it is the duration of noise that creates the largest environmental difficulties for communities close to industrial establishments. We can all deal with the use of explosive substances on a one-off basis from time to time, but their daily use from Monday to Saturday is a different matter. The company should address itself to that difficult and detailed problem. What proposals has it placed before the district or county council in regard to the use of explosive substances and the noise that that creates?

We also need to know the hours of work on the site. That is especially relevant to the area in which the development is to take place, because of its proximity to areas of international importance for wildlife. It is essential to have some information about the likely hours of work and their effect on wildlife and the local community. Has the company, at any stage during the long proceedings on the Bill, consulted the local authorities or local community and environmental groups on the matter?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I gather that the hon. Gentleman wants to know about hours of work on the site because of the possible effect on wildlife. I shall make it my business to get the answer to his question. However, may I ask him what are the hours of work of the wildlife that he is worried about disturbing?

Mr. McCartney: I am worried about hours of work in relation to the use of explosive substances. That is very important in terms of the level and duration of noise, and my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) has already explained how noise affects migrating birds.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I put it to my hon. Friend that any undertakings given by the company are of no consequence. In large construction contracts, the main contractors subcontract and they invariably find it impossible to enforce conditions imposed upon them by the planning authorities. Whatever conditions the main contractor gives, the chances are that there will be default on the main contract.

Mr. McCartney: Tragically, that is my experience, too, in my present local community and in other communities in which I have lived. However, having said that, I am prepared to give the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds the benefit of the doubt, at least during the debate, to allow him to set out proposals. We could then discuss whether those proposals were adequate and what steps the local authority could take to ensure that they were implemented. I would welcome the hon. Gentleman's proposals on these matters.

For local residents, another concern in relation to the use of explosive substances is structural damage, which should be monitored. Local communities often find themselves on the losing end. They give companies the benefit of the doubt, allowing them to use explosive substances, and they subsequently find that their properties suffer structural damage, cracked windows, dust and so on. What arrangements have the promoters made to monitor properties near the site for possible structural damage? Where it occurs, what action will they take to remedy the problem, either by carrying out repairs or by granting compensation to the owners of properties that have been damaged?

In the early hours of the morning, we had a lengthy debate on whether the Bill should include a money resolution to deal with its consequences for local authorities. Our amendment tries to tidy up the position and to make the local authority the body responsible for monitoring the use and effects of explosive substances. What resources will be made available to the district council, whose environmental health officers will have to monitor the regulations to ensure that they are adequately carried out and, where they are not, that action is taken? Capital expenditure will be involved, because the local authority will have to provide the equipment necessary to monitor noise and dust. I should welcome the comments of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds on any discussions that have taken place between the district council and the company.

On the storage of explosives, because of vandalism and for other reasons, problems have arisen in my constituency where companies have stored explosives in such a way that they have fallen into the wrong hands or are used wrongly on site. Has a planning application been made to the district council in relation to the storage of explosives on site or near to the site?

Mr. David Shaw: I am especially interested in the hon. Gentleman's point about the security of explosives. He said that he had experience of this in his constituency. Will he describe what happened?

Mr. McCartney: One problem occurred, not with a private company, but in a British Rail establishment in my area. It has happened in other areas. In foggy conditions caps are placed on the line. Young children have taken them, the caps have exploded and the children have been injured. At a property close to where I live, vandals took some explosive substances which could have caused great damage. This is not a spurious point. I am worried not only about the safety of persons on site but about the possibility of vandalism or other reckless action. I hope that hon. Members agree that, where explosive substances are to be used, they should be stored safely. That would be consistent with the Opposition's attitude in seeking assurances that the storage of explosives on the site will be monitored by the environmental health officers. We also want to ensure that adequate attention has been paid to planning methods.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that those matters are already covered by the strictest of legislation—for example, the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974? As anyone working in the coal industry knows, there is strict security for any explosives kept on Coal Board property. It is a requirement of law, so there is no need for the hon. Gentleman to ask for assurances.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman, quite obviously, has never served on a local authority planning committee. If he had, he would know that anyone wishing to store explosive substances—irrespective of any licence issued by the Health and Safety Executive or the mining authorities — must first have permission from the planning authority for the construction of the physical place in which those explosives are to be stored. There is no better example of that than in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott), where an ICI explosives factory has recently extended its production. I served on the planning committee that dealt with the application for that extension, which included the storage of explosive substances.

Another problem will be the noise on industrial sites caused by the repair and storage of vehicles. Can the sponsors of the Bill give me some idea whether the company has consulted the planning authorities and local residents about the number of hours needed to repair vehicles? The repair and storage of vehicles on construction sites can cause considerable difficulties both for local residents and for wildlife. That is especially true at weekends if companies allow such work on heavy plant and machinery.

The proposed site is in a sensitive area, and it would be quite unacceptable to allow either explosive substances to be used or the repair and maintenance of heavy plant and machinery to be carried out during weekends. What discussions have the Bill's sponsors had with the appropriate environmental health officers? It is essential that planning regulations prevent the site from being used at weekends.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I have listened carefully to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), who has already spoken on a number of occasions. There was much force in many of his arguments. For a number of years, when I was an Environment Minister, I was chairman of the Noise Council, so I understand the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the impact of explosives—not only on wildlife but on the comfort of those living in the area.

I also listened carefully to the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on the difficulties of enforcing on subcontractors the undertakings entered into by the prime contractors. Of course, it would be for the public authorities to take action against any subcontractor who caused noise or nuisance that was unacceptable under the general health laws. The laws are there to protect citizens and no contractor, simply because of the Bill, can escape liability under the general noise regulations. Therefore, this Bill could not in any way give immunity from prosecution to anyone whether prime or subcontractor. That is the standard that applies to any legislation.

I have had some private discussions with the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and I think that I now understand a little more clearly what he and the hon. Member for Makerfield are seeking to achieve.

Section 24 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1956 is applied to the Bill by clause 10. In other words, we have taken over from the 1956 Act a requirement that the dock company must give seven days' notice to the Suffolk Coastal district council before it uses any explosives. That is a statutory obligation arising from the previous Act which is now incorporated in clause 10.

12 noon

Amendment No. 15, with which we have already dealt, would require the dock company to serve a similar notice on the regional officer of the nature Conservancy Council. The dock company has no objection at all to that additional requirement, which we have also considered.

Section 39 of the 1956 Act, as similarly applied to the Bill, provides for the correction of any errors in the deposited plan and the book of reference. That procedure involves an application to the local magistrates court. The magistrate may correct the deposited plan or book of reference and he can then issue a certificate of correction to make sure that the matter is right. That is done by an independent quasi-judicial authority. Section 39(3) requires the dock company to deposit a copy of such a certificate with, among others, the chief executive of Suffolk county council.

Amendment No. 16 would require the dock company to deposit a further copy of that certificate with the chief executive of the Suffolk Coastal district council. Again, the dock company has no objection to that further requirement.

To the extent that those requirements parallel the two amendments that have been moved by the hon. Member for Wrexham, I am sure that the Bill's promoters would be willing to accept amendments Nos. 21 and 22. I shall so recommend to them and I hope that I can confirm in a few moments that if the House is willing to accept those concessions, and not, as happened before, to reject them by Divisions, I hope that the dock company will be prepared to accept the amendments.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has done precisely what he has been doing all evening. He has been giving undertakings to the House on behalf of the promoters. Ministers have not been coming to the Dispatch Box to comment on those undertakings, and, when Divisions have been called, his hon. Friends have voted against his undertakings and those given by the promoters.

That means not so much that we have to convince the hon. Gentleman, but that he must convince his hon. Friends. We must convince his hon. Friends, because he cannot give us an undertaking on behalf of his hon. Friends, in the event, that, if any hon. Member were to seek to divide the House so as to allow his constituents to gauge the measure of support given by hon. Members to the amendments——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Let me clarify the point. On behalf of the promoters, I have made a fair offer—to accept the amendments. If there is no Division, those amendments will stand part of the Bill. They become the law—at least, the private law—of the land. Only if an hon. Member insists on seeking to divide the House is there any question of those amendments not becoming part of the Bill. Therefore, Labour Members can have concessions only if they do not seek to divide the House.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is a remarkable statement by a Member of the House of Commons, who was elected by 50,000 or 60,000 constituents and who now comes to Parliament and says, "If you divide on this issue, you will be defeated." One has a right to divide the House so that constituents may know the way in which their Member of Parliament thinks on such matters. The Division lists of the House of Commons are a gauge that enable people outside to examine and understand the positions taken by their Members of Parliament. I put it to the hon. Gentleman that he has an obligation to convince his hon. Friends that they should not vote against these amendments. He cannot expect to win a debate in this House by default, but that is what he wants. He wants a win by default, rather than one achieved by way of voting judgment. That is an abuse of our procedures. We are perfectly entitled to seek to divide the House and to seek an expression of opinion by hon. Members.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: During the night, when I and may hon. Friends were present for all the Divisions, I watched closely those hon. Members who called for Divisions. I noticed that the hon. Gentleman called in an opposite way to the way in which he had spoken during the debate. It must confuse the hon. Gentleman's constituents greatly to hear him speak in favour of an amendment but then shout "No". When there is no distinction or Division in the House on the amendment, it seems quite contrary for the hon. Gentleman to shout against his own amendment and force a Division. It is not surprising that my hon. Friends who have conceded the point feel that if the hon. Gentleman is not prepared to take part in the general undertaking, the undertaking no longer applies to them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I understand that the hon. Gentleman was elected in July——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: No; it was in June.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I presume that the hon. Gentleman observes what is happening. He will note, and tomorrow *Hansard* will confirm, that I have not spoken in the debates that have taken place. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could tell me when I did so and in what debate I expressed my views. Will he do so?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. He may not have made a formal speech, but he gave many expressions of his point of view by intervening in the speeches of other hon. Members.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will be aware of the strong stricture in "Erskine May" against an hon. Member expressing a voice in one direction when a vote is called, but voting in the opposite direction. I understand that "Erskine May" makes it quite clear that any hon. Member who has a complaint about that should raise it at the first opportunity. If my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) had possibly committed that error—I am sure that he did not—surely it would be incumbent on any hon. Member making such an allegation to raise it immediately at the end of the Division in question. As it was not raised, surely it is wrong for any hon. Member to come back now, many hours later, and make such an allegation? Would it not be appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that allegation?

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not in any way seeking to make a complaint about the actions of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I understand why he did so. It was to obstruct the Bill's passage because there would be a 15-minute delay in the debate while we had a Division. I understand that. I have no complaint, because that is what I expect.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): This is an unnecessarily convoluted argument. Mr. Campbell-Savours.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The reason why I sought to divide the House was as I have already stated. I believe that Divisions should take place so that the public can then measure the views of their Members of Parliament. Most Conservative Members represent rural seats, with large rural communities and a great body of green opinion, or they seek to do so. I want that green opinion to understand that those green expressions are not being represented in the Division Lobbies of the House of Commons. Anyone examining our proceedings will notice that I was one who called Divisions to enable the public to measure the support of Conservative Members for the amendments to the Bill. They will be shocked when they read the Division lists.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): The facts are far less sinister than the hon. Gentleman has suggested. The reason why Conservative Members voted against the amendments put forward was that a quid pro quo existed. The agreement was that if the Labour party did not waste time by calling unnecessary Divisions, we would not vote against or object to a minor change in the Bill. However, if the Labour party intends to waste the time of the House, by George, we will get exactly the Bill that we want.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I shall not give way on this matter again. However, hon. Members will know that the Labour party had no Whip on this Bill. Labour Members have been voting freely all night. There was no official Labour position. No one has been required to vote in any way and, indeed, throughout the night, I have voted against the position adopted by my hon. Friends. Therefore, the case put by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) falls.

The next issue raised by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds—I should be grateful if he would consider this matter, although he is standing behind the Bar—was that subcontractors should be dealt with by local authorities with what he describes as the substantial powers available to those authorities. The truth is that, invariably, local authorities do not exercise those powers and do not do so because of the expenditure involved. Often, the authorities seek undertakings. However, the problem on this occasion is that, within a seven-day period, damage could be done to the environment. That is what we are trying to prevent. Indeed, it is the noise disturbance arising from explosions, dealt with in the amendments, that has led me to put my case today.

I live outside Keswick in the Lake district. I live on the hill that leads to the lowest slopes of the highest mountain in England, Skiddaw. My home is in the middle of a natural habitat for thousands of birds. It is perhaps one of the most bird-infested—that is not the right word because they are a joy—areas of the United Kingdom. I know what happens when men come with their shotguns to disturb the peace and tranquility of the area. Indeed, I

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

believe that the hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd), at present sitting on the Treasury Front Bench, also lives in the Lake district in similar environmental surroundings. He will also be aware how explosions can disturb the tranquility of our area.

The proposed Felixstowe dock expansion would involve the construction of new docks in the Orwell estuary. That development would, in turn, lead to the destruction of an area of inter-tidal land providing mud flats, salt marshes and old oyster beds. We have referred to that area as Fagbury flats. I apologise for my slight hesitation, but perhaps it is because I have been here all night. Fagbury flats are of critical importance to the environment and conservation.

The Bill will allow that area to be used for expansion by the Felixstowe Dock and Harbour Company and it is proposed to give in return an area known as Trimley marshes. What worries us is what will happen on those marshes as and when construction work begins on the area that is to be reclaimed in favour of the Felixstowe Dock and Harbour Company. The company has also promised extensive screening with a massive tree-planting programme.

Mr. Clay: My hon. Friend is dealing with an important point. I am intervening at this time because I am aware that, during the course of the debate throughout the night, he was helpful as he had a number of maps that were useful for guidance. The new reserves are an unsatisfactory gesture. What is the proximity between those new reserves and the area in which the explosions will take place? It will be something of an irony if a new conservancy is set up in an area so close to a site on which there will be explosions that birds will not settle there.

12.15 pm

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The answer is simple. Trimley marshes is shown on the map as next door to Fagbury flats. Therefore, there would be a disturbance of the new conservancy area. There is to be a promised extensive screening and tree-planting programme. That is significant because that recognises that there is a need to form a barrier between the new conservancy and the old one. That barrier is being set up to deal with the problem that we are considering in the amendment.

Mr. McCartney: Can my hon. Friend indicate the position of the county council to the so-called environmental measures? It is my understanding that at about 3 o'clock this morning it was suggested that the county council considered it wholly inadequate and totally contrary to its policy, despite the discussions that have taken place between itself and the company.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I can only presume that those people in the local authorities who have interests in the environment would support the amendment that we are proposing and would support every effort reduce the number of explosions that are likely to take place and disturb the natural habitat. The natural habitat includes not only the area that is to be the subject of reclamation and the Trimley marshes, but the tributaries of the Orwell. The Orwell is regarded as one of the most beautiful areas of the United Kingdom. I found a book in the Library called "Tideways and Byways in Sussex, Essex and Suffolk" by Archie White. The book refers to the area as beautiful, quiet and undisturbed. The amendments deal with the effect of explosions on the area, so I shall read this beautiful and delightful poem:

> Of Philip de Broke, of 'Chesapeake' fame;
> Of Candish who sailed round the world O.
> Of Vernon who hatefully watered the rum.
> (They nicknamed the felon 'Old Grog O')
> But more than all these, I tell of a star
> Which shines in the East like a jewel.
> Sparkling enchantingly down to the sea
> The wonder of Suffolk—The Orwell.

Another beautiful description is to be found in a book called "Suffolk" by William Addison. He described the scenic route along the Orwell:

> "Skirting Ipswich we pass from the Gipping to the Orwell, where the river changes not only its name but every aspect of its character."

All that is to be shattered by explosions in the development.

> "The quiet villages of the Gipping are quickly forgotten as the eye sweeps the broad estuary of the Orwell, its waters busy with vessels bearing their merchandise to Ipswich or away to distant ports. Yachts and rowing boats enliven the scene throughout the summer months, and when the tide is out the gulls glide down to stalk about the mud banks, where they chatter in the wind and search the ooze for worms. The pull of the restless tide is felt as it runs out of the spacious estuary, and we feel, too, that we are on the brink of hazard and adventure".

What beautiful words, evoking a scene that is to be shattered by the explosions.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: As one who has lived in the area for the past 25 years or so and cares deeply for it, I must say that, while I appreciate the idyllic picture that the hon. Gentleman is painting with the aid of one of our better writers, the reality is that there is far more noise around in the Orwell. For example, there is the noise from the Ipswich football ground and from the aircraft that take off from military as well as civil airports — and from the substantial amount of heavy industry that we are glad to have in Ipswich. Such occasional sounds are part of the requirements of the construction of civil works.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The villager from Trimley in Suffolk with whom I conversed tells another story. He speaks of the area being disturbed much more than it is by any existing background noise. So I think that the hon. Gentleman may well be egging his cake too much in his defence of the company's proposals.

Mr. Clay: It seems to me that the discussion of the amendment has centred overwhelmingly on explosives and the noise that they cause. My hon. Friend has used words, such as "shattering", which show that he is thinking of the noise problem. However, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has just made the point that explosions are, after all, one-off noises. It would be interesting to discuss the United States military bases and other such matters if we were discussing a different type of Bill.

Is my hon. Friend aware of any undertakings having been given about dust arising from explosions? That is not a one-off matter, because the dust can remain for a long time, as can other types of atmospheric disturbance. It is crazy that the new conservancy should be situated next to an area in which explosions will take place. The noise, dust and other types of atmospheric disturbance will make a mockery of it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes; that is what the villagers of Trimley think. I presume that their village is in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. Their views are not being represented in our debate.

There is another publication to which I should draw the House's attention. It concerns what there is of historical interest in Trimley, which may be damaged by explosions, particularly violent ones. Referring to Trimley, it states:

> "Another case of two churches sharing the same churchyard. The church of Trimley St. Martin is now mostly 19th century. That of St. Mary has a ruined 14th century west tower with a fine medieval doorway. Inside is a cartoon by an Italian artist showing the Madonna with the Infant Christ and John the Baptist."

All this is placed at risk. Although parts of them are used, these are historic ruins. There is a danger that vigorous and fierce explosions in the area may well further disturb these buildings of historic interest. The publication says:

> "The buildings of the rapidly expanding port and dock of Felixstowe are encroaching along the river, almost to Trimley."

That opinion is also expressed in Trimley, where people are worried about the development that is likely to take place if the Bill secures Royal Assent. The people of Trimley are worried about the effect that it will have on the village.

Mr. McCartney: It was precisely the issue of residents and the company's desire or otherwise to consult them that I raised in my earlier intervention. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) suggested that he would give us some assurances, but so far he has remained dumb on the matter. My hon. Friend's correspondence shows that the company has made no effort whatever to have genuine consultations with the communities that will be affected by the proposals. That being the case, will my hon. Friend press the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds — if that hon. Member can tear himself away for a moment from his discussions with his hon. Friends — to answer the points raised earlier about consultation with residents?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The reason for the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds ignoring what is happening in the debate was revealed a few minutes ago when he said "It is just outside my constituency." Perhaps I could use the words that the hon. Gentleman used in the Division Lobby. He said, "It is Gummer's problem." That is the hon. Gentleman's difficulty. He is unwilling to accept that because the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) cannot speak on the Bill, he should be more ready to take on the burden. The hon. Gentleman wants to talk but not to listen, and that is precisely what he has been doing for the last few minutes. The central point that must be argued again and again is that the Orwell estuary is a natural habitat of outstanding natural beauty, not just in any statutory sense but in every way.

Mr. Morley: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Nature Conservancy Council was prevented from giving evidence to the Committee in terms of putting forward its points of view about the effects of the Bill on the environment? Does that not lead one to think that the Government and the promoters of the Bill have something to hide in preventing the Nature Conservancy Council from giving its professional advice?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No doubt the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and his right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal took a great interest in the infamous letter, about which many of my hon. Friends will not be aware but which we discussed overnight. The Select Committee Chairman, who was a signatory to the invitation, will know why the Nature Conservancy Council was prevented from giving evidence — if that was the case. That proposition is remarkable, but it seems that it must have happened. Perhaps some hon. Member — the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds — could explain why the Nature Conservancy Council was prevented from giving evidence on these matters when they were considered by the Committee.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I do not know, so I am unable to help.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) raises an important issue, but obviously it is to go unanswered in the debate.

Mr. John Garrett: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Nature Conservancy Council was greatly grieved at not having been allowed or invited to give evidence on this matter? To that extent the Opposition are inadequately briefed by the main body interested in nature conservancy in this country. To that extent the debate has been handicapped.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am not surprised at that. I am sure that the council would have wished to make a substantial statement on noise. As I understand it, the Nature Conservancy Council is a statutory body which was set up under the Nature Conservancy Council Act 1973 to have responsibility for the conservation of flora, fauna, geological or physiographical features throughout the United Kingdom. That body would certainly have given evidence about the use of explosives. The council is financed by the Department of the Environment, but, according to information that I have received, it is supposed to be free to express its views. It is either free or it is not free. If it is free, surely it should have been given the opportunity to give evidence to the Select Committee.

12.30 pm

The functions of the Nature Conservancy Council include the establishment, maintenance and management of nature reserves. Therefore, the council must have much experience about those matters, and in particular about the problems that arise from excessive noise in parts of the United Kingdom.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): In view of the comments that we have just heard about the effect of noise pollution, has my hon. Friend any information whether environmental health officers will be increased in local authorities to monitor the excessive noise pollution in that area as a result of the proposals in the Bill?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I did not quite hear all of my hon. Friend's question. There is a lot of noise going on around me at the moment and I am having great difficulty even hearing myself speak.

If I understood my hon. Friend's question correctly, she asked whether local authorities would have additional personnel to deal with noise which might arise as a result of the Bill reaching the statute book. The answer is that no special provision will be made. Local authorities are required to carry out statutory responsibilities without any extra resources.

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

We have heard that the Nature Conservancy Council was denied the opportunity to give evidence on noise to the Committee. The council is also responsible for the provision of advice to the Secretary of State or any other Minister for the development and implementation of policies for and affecting nature conservation in the United Kingdom. Further, it has responsibility for the provision of advice and dissemination of knowledge about nature conservation.

The council is also responsible for the commission or support, whether by financial means or otherwise, of research which, in the opinion of the council, is relevant to these matters. I am sure that, given the opportunity, the council would have wanted to research further into noise pollution. It would certainly have wanted to give evidence to the Committee on that matter.

The Nature Conservancy Council also has a duty, under section 28 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to notify owners, occupiers, the local planning authority and the Secretary of State of any area of land which is

> "of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features."

The council has given notice of its intention so to notify the estuary and inter-tidal land of the River Orwell including the tidal land that is part of the Bill.

It is clear that with those substantial responsibilities to notify, the council would equally want to notify of any dangers that may arise which could endanger the natural assets that exist in the River Orwell area.

The amendment relates to clause 24 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1956. That states:

> "Before any explosive substance is used in exercise of the powers of this Act the Company shall give at least seven days' notice in writing marked Urgent (wich shall be served by posting by registered post) of the intention to use an explosive substance addressed to the engineer and surveyor of the Felixstowe Urban District Council."

The problem is that no urban district councils now exist. That is why the amendment has been introduced. However, it also provides an excellent opportunity to bring the regional officer of the Nature Conservancy Council into the case. In this instance, it is the officer responsible for Suffolk county council. I am sure that he will wish to carry out the responsibilities that I identified in my earlier remarks.

Section 24 of the 1956 Act deals with the use of explosives. The effect of clause 10(*d*) of the Bill is to make Suffolk coastal district council the successor authority to Felixstowe urban and district council, which was phased out in 1973. It would then become responsible for the purposes of section 24 of the 1956 Act.

Sudden loud, percussive noises are very disturbing to birds. One has only to fire a shotgun in the vicinity of the birds now inhabiting Fagbury mud flats — or, indeed, any estuary — to observe the effects that such noises have. In the depths of winter, during very cold weather, the birds must spend every hour of daylight searching for food if they are to remain alive. For that reason, provision is made in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for cold weather orders to be made by the Secretary of State for the Environment banning shooting when conditions are particularly severe. Would it not be thoroughly anomalous if the company were allowed to bang away with explosives while the shooting fraternity was barred from hunting because of the cold weather? The amendment seeks to provide an opportunity for the Nature Conservancy Council to advise the company against explosives if conditions warrant it, but no compulsion would be involved.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has by now probably had the few moments for which he asked earlier in which to confirm whether the Bill's promoters are willing to accept the proposition that he put to the House before. As the hon. Gentleman is nodding, I presume that that is the case. However my hon. Friends may have reservations about what may happen in the Division Lobbies. We have no guarantee that some hon. Members will not once again defeat the recommendations of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and the undertakings given by the promoters.

Mr. McCartney: I took pains in my earlier contribution to tell the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds that it was important to hon. Members such as myself, who are not going to divide the House, that he should give certain assurances about the role of the company and its involvement with the community on the environment and on explosive substances. So far, the hon. Gentleman has studiously avoided making the contribution that was promised.

This is important to all of us who are concerned about the issues that we raised with the hon. Gentleman. He indicated, both by nodding and verbally, that he would try to give us an assurance from the sponsors of the Bill, but he has still not done so. It is essential that, before we reach an appropriate vote, I receive assurances about such matters as noise levels, the duration of working hours, notification of residents in relation to structural and physical damage, the storage of explosives and the repair and storage of vehicles. If we are to make progress on the Bill, and if there is to be a positive contribution from either House, it is incumbent on the hon. Gentleman to come clean and give me some pertinent answers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I know that my hon. Friend has been having that argument with the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, and the hon. Gentleman does not seem to wish to be drawn on the matter, but, for all sorts of reasons, I feel that we must give him the benefit of the doubt.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will take the opportunity of replying to me by intervening as I understand that he cannot speak twice during the debate. The only other way in which he can deal with the matter is by asking the Secretary of State to speak after me. Perhaps he can say which alternative he seeks to take.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I thank the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene for the convenience of the House. I cannot speak for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who is not, as I understand it, directly involved in the amendments.

As I understand the position, for some time there has been a local liaison committee between the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company and the county council, the district council and the parish councils, including Trimley. The committee was set up as long ago as 1977 specifically to ensure regular meetings to discuss all aspects of the interaction between the dock company, local organisations and local people. The committee's most recent meeting was in September.

Within the committee there are lively debates. In so far as the statutory bodies that are responsible for safeguarding the environment and have prosecution powers to deal with nuisance or noise are represented on the committee, and in so far as they also reached agreement with the dock company on the Bill, and in reaching agreement, withdrew their objections to it, I have to say to the House that there are ample powers and statutory bodies capable of ensuring that the types of nuisance that the hon. Gentleman is worried about are prevented or, if they are not, that prosecutions can ensue.

I hope that the House will understand that it is not within my gift to say precisely what the working hours will be, nor can I say precisely what the levels of explosion will be in the rare cases where it may be necessary to use explosions to move large quantities of earth. That is not within my gift. Indeed, I doubt whether it is within anyone's gift to give such guarantees.

All I can say is that it is within the authority of local councils to prosecute and within the powers of the clean air and alkaline inspectorate and others to move in if there is any infringement. That is the best that I can do for the House. I have said that the amendments, which lay upon the company some significant requirements, will be accepted by the House, as I understand it, if hon. Members do not divide.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We must not once again enter the argument about what happens if we do not divide. That conditionality of Division appalls me. It smacks of everything that is anti-democratic. We shall not go down that route again. I am sure that Conservative Members know exactly what I am talking about and that privately they will agree with me. They know that the Division list is the true measure of any Member of Parliament. Any constituent has the right to examine it.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds qualified his substantial statement with the words "as I understand it". In my notes, I always write that as AIUI when I do not want to be held to something. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman does not want to be held to his statement, but we shall have to take what he says as the truth because I feel that he would wish to withdraw that conditionality from his statement.

The people of Trimley in the neighbouring constituency will note what the hon. Gentleman said to Parliament and will know that we have not pressed this matter to a Division because of the hon. Gentleman's undertaking and the threat of defeat. We are acting on the assumption that the hon. Gentleman's word holds. I hope that when the people of Trimley read *Hansard*, as they inevitably will if they are seeking to protect their interests, they will note that we were aware of the environmental damage that would arise in that community. Despite that and despite the concession granted by the promoters, I must say that I would want to vote for this amendment in the event of a Division.

12.45 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I was drawn into this debate only a few minutes ago. *[Interruption.]* I arrived at the Bar of the House and realised what the amendment was about. *[Interruption.]* I readily concede that I am not familiar with the Bill.

When I heard that neither the local people nor the NCC had been consulted on the noise of explosives, I thought that it might be to the advantage of the House, and I hope it will prove to be so, for someone to speak with many years' experience of areas where such explosions take place. I am sure that many Conservative Members, with the best will in the world, do not appreciate the havoc that can be caused.

We in mining areas, especially where there is opencast mining, appreciate that such explosions have caused great problems for many years. Noise is difficult to control, even with as many inspectors as we wish and with many weeks and months being spent defending and proving cases in the courts. In the end, some sort of compromise is probably reached, but that never solves the problem of noise.

Most of the noise happens at night. Children wake up and people find their beds shaking. Often, explosions are set off on a ratio basis and perhaps one will not go off. People get back to sleep and then the delayed explosion goes off a couple of hours later. I ask Conservative Members, and certainly those whose areas will be affected to visit these areas. The environment is devastated. What is left of the hedgerows is covered in dust and there is no greenery to be seen in the immediate vicinity.

On some occasions, houses have fallen down. It has never been possible to prove the cause, but owners allege that heavy shot firing in the area has brought that about. Recently, in my area houses have been built on soil where there have been sand workings and those houses have fallen down.

Many people believe that explosives have contributed to the problem. The wildlife that we all like to see in the countryside is nearly non-existent in such areas. We do not like that. Purely and simply, the problem arises out of what has taken place in local industry.

We who have lived in mining areas for many years have had to accept that the staple industries that provide our local economic wealth create such problems. Everybody, including Conservatives Members, must be aware that, if the development goes ahead, problems will increase. Conservative Members have referred to the amount of control that the Bill will provide, but we must ask whether it can work practically. My experience is that it cannot. The people who live in surrounding regions suffer when explosions occur. I hope that the House will consider the problems.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am sure that, with his wide experience in the House, though not on this Bill, the hon. Gentleman will know that among the original petitoners against the Bill were the county council and the district council. They negotiated with the dock company on a range of issues, including those which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. It was only when the two representative local authorities were satisfied that the dock company had met the reasonable desires of the councils representing the people who were consulted that their objections were withdrawn. Suffolk Coastal district council and Suffolk county council no longer have any objections to the Bill. The matter has been dealt with.

Mr. Lofthouse: I fully accept that point, but I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that the local authorities to which I referred have examined the matter, put safeguards in place and given planning permission. But that does not solve the practical problems. Indeed, people will have experiences similar to those of we who live in mining areas. We can put what we like on bits of paper and

[Mr. Lofthouse]

have whatever agreements we want with local authorities, but, at the end of the day, local residents will suffer because of explosions. People must realise that they will not get away with it.

Mr. McCartney: I was interested in my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) about the overwhelming support from local councils and certain Conservative Members. I refer him to a letter that I received yesterday evening in relation to hospitality. Will my hon. Friend ask the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds whether similar hospitality arrangements were made for the councillors prior to their agreeing to the company's proposals?

Mr. Lofthouse: I note my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It is an important point. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) made an important intervention when he referred to the distinction between the arrangements in local government and those in Parliament. He says that if the arrangements take place at the local level, they could be construed as illegal. The fact that they have taken place in Westminster means that they have somehow managed to get around the local government rules. That is significant. I should like an answer to my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Lofthouse: I intended to refer to the letter in the conclusion of my speech. I have not seen the letter but I have heard about it. I understand that it refers to this place and to hospitality. I am sure that some would think that such organised hospitality could border on corruption. Events of this sort bring the House into disrepute. Those who accepted the offer of hospitality must have had some understanding with individuals in the private sector. I do not know who provided the hospitality but some of my colleagues may have that knowledge. There were those who provided transport backwards and forwards——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will recall that yesterday Mr. Deputy Speaker said:

> "Order. We have covered this course"—

He is referring to this very point of hospitality

> "The House has had a good run and I have been very patient. However, I repeat that it is the job of the Chair to protect the business of the House and there is much business before us. There is nothing that I can add. I have done my utmost to answer all the points of order that have been put to me."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1987; Vol. 122, c. 247.]

Both Mr. Speaker and Mr. Deputy Speaker ruled last night that the matter had been dealt with.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am aware of that. I understand, however, that some hon. Members have not been in the Chamber for every minute throughout the debate.

Mr. McCartney: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The difference between the quotation of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) from yesterday evening's debate and the statement that was made by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), without any prompting, is the involvement of local government officers and members——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not a genuine point of order. I invite the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) to continue.

Mr. Lofthouse: I return to the reason why I intervened in the debate. I wished to bring to the attention of the House that which we in coal mining areas have experienced over many years. It is an experience that I believe will be shared by many others when the Bill is enacted. I hope that all hon. Members will bear that in mind when they make their decisions.

I must say in response to the point of order of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) that my reference to the letter was part of my speech and not the basis of a point of order. It is regrettable that the issue has arisen. I understand that in the end the hospitality was not made available——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We dealt with this issue hours and hours ago. I have listened carefully to the remarks of the hon. Gentleman and I have been extremely tolerant. He should refer now to the amendments and not to any letter.

Mr. Clay: Will my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) press the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney)? We know that hospitality was on offer and that it was then withdrawn. I find it interesting that no reply has been forthcoming to the suggestion that hospitality was offered to and accepted by members and senior officers of the two local authorities involved. The question has not been put directly to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. Bearing in mind——

Mr. David Shaw: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Clay *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand that the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) wishes to raise a point of order.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Is it a point of order?

Mr. David Shaw: Yes, it is a point of order.

Mr. Clay: I was saying, Madam Deputy Speaker——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) was intervening in the speech of the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) when the hon. Member for Dover sought to raise a point of order.

Mr. David Shaw: We have all been advised, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we should treat fellow hon. Members with respect and, by and large, we try to do so, however much the temperature is raised. Occasionally we go over the top with fellow hon. Members, but it is extremely offensive to go over the top with those who are not here to defend themselves. There have been accusations and suggestions that local councillors have acted improperly. The hon. Gentleman should be stopped from saying such things.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am sure that that is not the case.

1 pm

Mr. Clay: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In the light of last night's events it is perfectly reasonable to suggest that my hon. Friend should yet again press the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on this point because the hon. Gentleman has not yet answered the question. What discussions took place, what hospitality was offered and did the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), who is the real pilot of the Bill and who was chairman of the Conservative party, issue any reminders about donating money to Tory party funds?

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds will have heard that remark, and I shall not repeat it.

I understand that the Bill contains no special arrangements for environmental or other appropriate officers to control the explosions. The present regulations are nowhere near sufficient to control explosions, which create havoc in my area and will create havoc in the area covered by the Bill.

Mr. Stott: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I apologise for interrupting this interesting debate. However, I am informed that following pressure put on the Government last night, there is to be a statement at 3.30 pm about the proposed merger between British Caledonian and British Airways. We are grateful for that. May I suggest to the Government Whip that it would be convenient for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to come here this afternoon——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. A point of order can only be addressed to the Chair and it must deal with something for which the Chair can carry responsibility.

Mr. Stott: I shall address my point of order to you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has returned from a very important meeting regarding Britain's future in space. For the past two days, he has been negotiating with other Ministers in Europe. According to press reports this morning it seems that our nation is not to play a significant part in the future development of European space technology. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should come to the House this afternoon to justify the decisions that he has made on our behalf, and to tell us why he made those decisions. May I ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, through you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make a statement regarding the position that he took in Europe.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that I am capable of dealing with that point of order straight away. As the hon. Gentleman will understand, it is not a point of order with which the Chair can deal. The Chair has no responsibility for statements that are made, or not made, by Ministers. The Chair always grants requests to make statements, but so far no request has been made on this matter.

Mr. Forth: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you could assist the House by attempting to find out from the Opposition the subjects on which they seek statements. It seems that they are asking for not just one, but two or three statements or more. Who knows how many statements they will request? It would help us in our deliberations on the Bill—we are trying to make progress, although we are being hindered by the Opposition—if we could find out precisely what they want a statement on, when and by whom as there seems to be a multiplicity of requests.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) has made that clear.

Mr. Frank Cook: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) has identified the nature of the problem. If the Government were open and honest and gave forth the information according to precedent, we should not have to raise difficult points of order and put you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in a difficult position.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Conservative Members want to know what we are asking about. Conservative Members with firms such as Marconi, British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce in their constituencies will find that they are asked to explain our country's role in space following the failure to support the expanded programme agreed by Ministers attending the European Space Agency meeting on 10 and 11 November. Those hon. Members' constituents will want to know what they propose to do about jobs.

We would not necessarily disagree with the attitude of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, but he must explain to the House exactly what role Britain is to play in space because it affects many thousands of jobs. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has described the European space programme as a fraud and Opposition Members agree with him to a certain extent. We agree that projects such as the Hermes project need to be examined in greater depth. However, we maintain that vital decisions need to be made because of our participation in other collaborative ventures. We need a statement from the right hon. and learned Gentleman so that we can reassure our constituents about the exact future of the reorganised British National Space Centre.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. that point was made by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) who raised the original point of order. I have made it abundantly clear that the Chair can do nothing in this matter. We must now proceed with the Bill.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): On a slightly different point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) suggested that it would be unusual, indeed unprecedented, for more than one statement to be made this afternoon. Could you confirm that it is perfectly in order and quite usual for the Government to make more than one statement? Indeed, if the matters involved are sufficiently important, the Government should be making more than one statement.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The House knows that on occasion, more than one statement is made.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Having listened carefully to the points that you have made about your responsibility, will you advise the House whether the Secretary of State for Scotland has sought your permission to make a statement at 4 pm to coincide with the publication of the White Paper on Scottish homes? That is very important to Scottish Members, especially as it is possible that Scottish business will be lost for the month.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No one has sought my permission to make a statement on those matters. We were discussing amendment No. 21.

Amendment agreed to.

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

Amendment made: No. 22, in page 10, line 28, at end insert

'and with the chief executive of Suffolk Coastal District Council'.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Mr. Morley: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 11, line 19, after 'if', insert

'in subsection (1) after "highway", where that word thirdly occurs, were inserted the words "or seeking access to the foreshore for any legitimate purpose,".'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 27, in page 11, line 44, after '(iii)' insert

'in section 14(2), after the word "foreshore" insert "or any right of way" and'.

Mr. Morley: Let me expand on what the amendment seeks to achieve. The amendment relates specifically to clause 10*(h)*. To complicate matters at an early stage, it also refers to section 10 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1968. Altogether, clause 10 appears to be a most complicated affair, because it bears a detailed relationship to other private Acts passed to enable the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company to expand its operations. The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Acts 1956, 1968, 1979 and 1981 were introduced to enable works to be carried out.

The amendment relates to the 1968 Act. Section 10 states:

> "The Company during and for the purpose of the execution of the works may with the consent of the highway authority temporarily stop up and divert and interfere with any highway and may for any reasonable time divert the traffic there from and prevent all persons other than those bona fide going to or from any land, house or building abutting on the highway from passing along and using the same."

The amendment seeks to insert the words:

> "or seeking access to the foreshore for any legitimate purpose."

We simply wish to give those who want access to the foreshore the legitimate means of achieving it. For those who have access to the 1968 Act, the words in the amendment would be inserted after the word "highway" where it occurs the third time in the penultimate line of section 10.

The major construction that will occur at Felixstowe dock will cause diversions to road traffic, but the area is a site of special scientific interest and of outstanding natural beauty. The House will agree that it is important to enable local residents to have access to the foreshore to go about their legitimate business.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Is my hon. Friend talking about pedestrian access only, or about vehicular access to the foreshore?

Mr. Morley: It could be interpreted as including vehicles, but there is no road to the foreshore. The amendment aims to include those who wish to visit the foreshore for recreation, such as taking the dog for a walk, fishing or bird watching—the normal activities that one would associate with an area of outstanding natural beauty which people want to visit. During construction work it is important not to limit access to the foreshore.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: A four-wheel drive vehicle could gain access to the area. Would that be excluded by the amendment? Is my hon. Friend talking only about pedestrian access for people who wish to go bird watching?

Mr. Morley: That is correct. Regulations concerning the ownership of the land control the access of vehicles. The amendment is aimed at those who wish to walk in the area. The Ramblers Association is anxious that such amendments are made to private development Bills so that people's legitimate access is not interfered with. We are aware of the problems caused by ploughing up rights of access across farms and by the diversion of rights of way through new housing developments. Many rights of way have been lost.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): If the amendment is accepted, we shall be protecting [illegible] fundamental freedom to enjoy rights of access to that area. If it is not accepted, people may be denied access for a long time. The time element worries me. We do not know from the Bill how long the construction work will continue.

1.15 pm

Mr. Morley: Some of the previous amendments were designed to deal with the time scale of, and the interference that would be caused by, construction work.

The area is so beautiful that it attracts not only local people but people from all over the country. Some of my constituents regularly visit the area. I know one person—a keen bird watcher—who visited the site some years ago to see a Franklin gull, a rare species of North American gull. The area not only serves local people but is nationally important. It is important, not only to maintain rights of access for local people, who use the area most, but to reserve rights of access for the entire community so that everyone can see such areas of outstanding natural beauty. Although there may be times when the road is blocked, pedestrian access must not be frustrated.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Is my hon. Friend saying that if a rare species of bird, such as the Franklin gull, settled on this estuary and it was the only place in the United Kingdom where keen bird watchers could see it, the Bill would make no provision for access for those who were interested in seeing the bird, or in writing about the history of rare birds visiting Britain?

Mr. Morley: Our major anxiety is the ambiguity of the clause. It is clear that road access can be blocked, but it is not clear whether that will apply to pedestrians. The amendment would make the clause clear, so that there was no doubt about our aim, which is that during construction pedestrians should not be stopped from getting down to the foreshore and going about their legitimate leisure pursuits. Bird watching is one such pursuit. There are many others, such as fishing and the pleasure of walking for its own sake. That is why the amendment is supported by all the countryside organisations, which are worried about access.

Mrs. Mahon: I am not familiar with the Franklin gull, but I wonder whether, during the long-drawn-out passage of the Bill, advice was taken on its protection. Has a guarantee been given that this rare bird will survive after the disturbance of its habitat?

Mr. Morley: I understand from my acquaintance, Mr. Jimmy Morgan, that the bird was seen by many hundreds of people from all over the country.

The site that is threatened by the dock is one of special scientific interest. These sites are not declared that out of the blue. They are designated because of their significance to the local wildfowl. for any bird, whether rare or common, the loss of the mud flats will be catastrophic in the long term. The pressure on our wetlands and estuaries is increasing every year, and that is why we want to amend the Bill. It is an important issue concerning rights of access, and it has national connotations.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): We are talking, not about just one rare bird, but about widgeons, oystercatchers, dunlin, redshank and a whole range of birds. If the facility to watch these birds is removed, those who enjoy such pursuits will be prevented from following their interests.

Mr. Morley: My hon. Friend is correct. We have discussed the problems for wildfowl and bird watchers in great depth, and have noted the numbers of birds that are recorded as visiting that area during winter months. It is at that time of the year and during the migratory period that the site is of particular importance, because many birds, ducks and wildfowl stop there to feed in a secure place. That is why the Ramsar convention identified the site as an important international site. That shows the implications of the scheme for environmental disturbance and damage. We want to ensure that, should the scheme go ahead, we preserve the rights of people both nationally and locally——

Mr. McCartney: Is not this aspect of the Bill rather reminiscent of the cuckoo in the nest? Rather than going through the normal planning procedures, there has been an abuse of the private Bill procedure to foist on an area of outstanding beauty with natural bird and wildlife a scheme where not only the birds, but those who protect them and derive enjoyment from watching them, will be excluded from the area. Is not the Bill even more draconian than the attitude taken by the Ministry of Defence towards rights of way on MOD properties? Perhaps the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) will outline clearly the intention of the Bill's promoters.

Mr. Morley: Indeed, it would help the House if the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) told us whether he is prepared to accept the amendment to defend the rights of local people to enjoy their heritage. It is especially important to ensure that local people can enjoy what is left of their heritage if the scheme goes ahead and irreparable damage is done to the area.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I assure the House that the promoters of the Bill are willing to accept the amendment as it stands—

"or seeking access to the foreshore for any legitimate purpose"—

and include it in the Bill should the House be minded to accept that.

Mr. Morley: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his positive response. Unfortunately, I am reminded of an unfortunate incident earlier this morning when a similar undertaking was given, but when the House divided the Government changed their mind and voted against the amendment——

Mr. Ron Davies: I remind my hon. Friend that that was not a matter for the Government. After all, this is private legislation, as has been made clear throughout the proceedings. The dispute arose from the paternity of the Bill. There was some doubt whether the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) was in charge of the Bill. He said, on behalf of the sponsors, that he would accept a particular amendment. He then deliberately arranged to vote in one Lobby while his hon. Friends voted in the other Lobby. During the Division he denied any responsibility for the Bill. He said that it was not he, but his right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer)—now the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—who was in charge. Therefore, I suggest that when my hon. Friend receives assurances from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, he takes them with a pinch of salt.

Mr. Morley: There is some truth in what my hon. Friend has said. I stand corrected in referring to the Government—I appreciate that it is a private Bill. I tended to think of the Government because the former chairman of the Conservative party—the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer)—has an interest in the Bill. Indeed, the company promoting the Bill donated large sums of money to the Conservative party. That is why I am concerned about the way in which the Bill has come to Parliament. By the use of the private Bill system, normal planning applications are not necessary. People do not have the right to object other than by petition during the Committee stage—and even then the Nature Conservancy Council was prevented from giving evidence. That is deplorable.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Lest there be any misunderstanding, may I point out that we have just debated amendments Nos. 21 and 22? I said that if the House was prepared to accept those amendments the company sponsoring the Bill would be prepared to accept them also. I said that if there were no Division the amendments would be accepted and become part of the Bill. There was no Division, and the amendments are now part of the Bill. I can give the hon. Gentleman the same assurance about this amendment.

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We cannot have an intervention within an intervention. The original intervention must be dealt with first.

Mr. Morley: I accept that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds gives that assurance in good faith. It is unfortunate that we had a bad experience earlier, which tends to make us a little wary now. However, I sincerely hope that there is common ground between us in seeking to protect access, rights of way and the rights of local people to enjoy their area.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): My hon. Friend mentioned that we were now having to be wary. It is important that we protect the natural habitat of wildlife and the rights of people to enjoy that. In my area we had to protect a wildfowl called the smew, which lived only on the Welsh Harp. If it had not been for the vigilance of local organisations, that creature would no longer exist. Obviously, industries are concerned only with their building projects being completed on time, and not with the destruction of the area. In many cases our heritage and rights to enjoy wildlife, as well as the basic rights of those creatures to exist, have been destroyed because we have not been sufficiently vigilant. We must ensure that access to the area is maintained and in particular, that wildlife is protected.

Mr. Morley: I agree with my hon. Friend. There have been too many cases of the obstruction of important rights of way by various developments, sometimes after assurances that they would be reinstated or protected.

In view of the assurances given by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, I shall leave amendment No. 25 and deal with amendment No. 27.

1.30 pm

Mr. McCartney: Let me take my hon. Friend back, not a few hours, but three years. Is it not a fact that in the past three years not one dot or comma has been conceded on the Bill, but that, because of the qualitative and quantitative nature of the Opposition in the past 12 or 15 hours, we have seen the deathbed conversion of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths)? The champagne that was flowing last night is pretty flat now. The hon. Gentleman's concessions have come because he thinks that the measure may fail as a result of the Opposition's brilliant campaign over the past 15 hours.

Mr. Morley: I note my hon. Friend's comments. He makes a fair point. The amendments have been tabled for a long time. These are serious issues. There has been some disruption today because of the nature of the debate and the way in which it has been drawn out, yet the debate could have been shortened considerably if these reasonable amendments had been accepted a long time ago.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Before my hon. Friend leaves amendment No. 25, will he deal with one important word in the amendment, with which he has not yet dealt, and at which I may not have looked so carefully had not the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) intervened earlier. I am referring to the word "legitimate". We are talking about

"access to the foreshore for any legitimate purpose."

If the sponsors of the Bill are willing to accept the amendment, who will define "legitimate purpose"? Will it be the Bill's sponsors, or Members of Parliament?

Mr. Morley: It would be useful if "legitimate" were defined. It must be interpreted in terms of the use of the area in keeping with the area and within any existing regulations or restrictions. For example, "legitimate" would exclude the use of scramble motor cycles, which would damage the area. I know that that would be disapproved of by responsible scramble clubs, which tend to have their own areas. Therefore, we can feel fairly safe about the meaning of the word "legitimate" in the operation of the amendment.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I do not want to press my point too far, but how can my hon. Friend be sure that the Bill's sponsors share our view of the meaning of the word "legitimate"?

Mr. Morley: I cannot speak on the exact interpretation of the word by the Bill's sponsors, but I hope that if they disagree with my interpretation they will give their own.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It would be for the courts to decide. That is the safeguard.

Mr. Morley: That is the final analysis.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is right. It would be for the courts to decide what was legitimate, but the point that is being made is that there is a long process to be gone through before one asks the courts for their interpretation. We are talking about people being turned away by the company on the grounds that at that moment the company does not accept that the activity is legitimate and within the terms of the Bill.

I do not know what can be done about that now. Perhaps a longer statement from the Bill's supporters would give us the assurances that we need. We have talked at some length about the need for access for people who want to see rare and endangered species of birds. My hon. Friend will know that, because of recent storms, many birds which do not usually come to Britain have been blown off their migratory course and have landed here. I understand that there has been a sighting of the lesser spotted African bush creeper. If ornithologists knew that that bird had landed in this area there would be a panic.

Mr. Morley: I can confirm that a lesser spotted African bush creeper would cause a great deal of panic among ornithologists if it were seen in the area. There is no denying that.

I have given my interpretation of the word "legitimate". In the end, as has been pointed out, it will be for the courts to decide, given the custom and use of the area.

Amendment No. 27 is complicated by the fact that it refers to previous Felixstowe Dock and Railway Acts. This time the reference is to section 14(2) of the 1968 Act, which was referred to extensively in the debate on the previous amendment.

Clause 14(2) of the 1968 Act deals with work that has been started, but has been discontinued, for whatever reason. It states:

"Where a work authorised by this Act, and consisting partly of a tidal work and partly of works on or over land above the level of high water, is abandoned or suffered to fall into decay and that part of the work on or over land above the level of high water is in such condition as to interfere or to cause reasonable apprehension that it may interfere with the right of navigation or other public rights over the foreshore, the Board may include that part of the work, or any portion thereof, in any notice under this section."

The board that is referred to is the old Board of Trade.

We are talking about such things as piers and breakwaters. As hon. Members may be aware, there are many examples of various tidal works or works dealing with erosion which have been left to fall into decay and could be a danger to navigation, to people or to children playing on them.

Amendment No. 27 seek to add the words:

"or any right of way".

That gives protection to rights of way that the public use, because they, too, have been known to fall into disrepair or have decayed and become unsafe.

For example, in extending a dock a footbridge may be installed as part of a right of way and, over a period, that footbridge may decay and become dangerous. That would be covered by the addition of the words:

"or any right of way".

That would ensure that a structure such as a footbridge, part of a pier, or pilings which may be part of a coastal path which may fall into disrepair could be repaired by the board to ensure the right of access. Hon. Members can see how the amendment is linked with the previous one to ensure right of access for the reasons that I have already outlined, particularly the nature of the area as a site of outstanding natural beauty and people's legitimate right of access to the foreshore.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has agreed to accept amendment No. 25, and I thank him for his positive response. I hope that he will also consider amendment No. 27, particularly in view of the examples that I have outlined. I am sure that my hon. Friends can think of other examples of other possible difficulties.

The important thing about the Bill and the amendments is to make it absolutely clear at this stage that we are talking about safeguarding access, safety and other issues, so that there will not be any confusion in future years once the Bill has been enacted—if it is enacted—and local people are not let down and access is not denied them. Those issues should be clarified.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Morley: I should like to finish although I would welcome comments from hon. Members on any of the aspects that I have raised.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I should like to give the Government's view of amendment No. 27. As the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) pointed out, it extends the scope of section 14 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1968 in its application to works authorised by the Bill. Section 14 is a normal stock provision to require the company to repair or remove works that are both on land and in the water if they are abandoned or get into bad condition and interfere with navigation or public rights on the foreshore.

The amendment would extend the power to works that interfere with rights of way. It would give the Secretary of State, as successor to the Board of Trade, the power to protect rights of way by requiring the company to repair or remove certain works that are in bad condition or abandoned and thus interfere with rights of way. I know of no rights of way that would be affected at present. On behalf of the Government, I have no objection to the amendment and would be prepared to advise the House to accept it.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: As I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) it might be convenient if I follow my right hon. Friend in saying that amendment No. 27 is equally acceptable to the promoters. If the House is mindful to accept amendments Nos. 25 and 27, they will form part of the Bill.

Mr. McCartney: I support my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley). Amendment No. 25 could be best described as a kind of trespass amendment. It attempts to bring back into the Bill a condition that was fought for in 1926—the right of ramblers and others in free association to cross publicly-owned land. Therefore, it is important that the amendment is part of the Bill, irrespective of its final content.

It is essential that the rights of ramblers and other conservationists are protected in the long-term development of the area that we have been debating for the past 17 hours. Rights of way have taxed the minds of many of us who have been in local government. We can all think of examples from farming or industrial communities in which redevelopment has taken place. The first benefit that is attacked is the right of way of individuals. All too often, local authorities are under considerable pressure to give way to the interests of the developer. Therefore, it is important, even with the assurances that we have been given, that we tell the local authority that we expect the county council concerned to ensure that whatever orders are made will defend public footpaths. In reality, such diversions are worth while and are not simply conveniences to get round this clause and render rights of way meaningless.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does my hon. Friend not agree that no hon. Member has yet dealt with the specific problem that individual members of the public have a right to know what the rights of way are? It is one thing for assurances to be given that rights of way will be maintained and that suitable diversions will be made, but there is the problem of informing people of the fact that they have a right of way across a piece of land. If a lot of work is to take place in one area, many ordinary members of the public may be unaware of their rights. So far, no hon. Member has mentioned any steps that would ensure that the public are aware of their rights in such a situation.

Mr. McCartney: I thank my hon. Friend for bringing that point to my attention. She is absolutely right that this is a constant problem. Even when one wins the right to retain a footpath or bridleway, there remains the job of informing the public of their rights and, more specifically, the areas where they can traverse a piece of land.

1.45 pm

It might be helpful if the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds would state whether the promoters of the Bill are prepared to use their own resources to produce a pamphlet for public consumption in the area concerned and for distribution to the Ramblers' Association stating the locations of the footpaths that have been agreed, and what can be seen from them. Such a document would not only refer to rights, but would promote the environment in the community. My own local authority in Wigan does such things on a regular basis. Every time that a footpath is altered, such a facility is provided and I commend that arrangement to the Bill's promoters.

The public in Suffolk will be interested in what will be at stake if the amendment is not passed. The clause as it stands would affect three areas: one is an area of outstanding natural beauty, another is a site of special scientific interest, and the third is the proposed area of the wetland that is covered by the Ramsar convention, which is internationally accepted. The Bill involves not only the loss of rights of way, but the loss of other rights that are associated with some of the most important ecological parts of the United Kingdom. It is essential that those areas are maintained not only for their bird and plant life, but so that, where appropriate, members of the public can traverse them and make use of them. Therefore, I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds have shown support for this aspect of the Bill.

The problems that we have been discussing highlight the problems of the Bill and the way in which it is being handled. Would it not have been better if, at the outset, the company and the promoters had agreed to an environmental impact assessment? If there had been such an assessment and use of the planning procedures, the issues raised on these amendments would have been dealt with three years ago and a common agreement would have been reached between the planning authorities, the company and the community. We would not have had the hassle of the past 17 hours, or the past three years. The

[Mr. McCartney]

community would have been involved. The tragedy of this debate, whenever it ends, is that the only people who have not been involved have been those in the community to which the Bill refers, whether ramblers, the people who live in the local area, or the villagers who have complained to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) about not being consulted.

I was pleased that the Secretary of State expressed Government support for amendment No. 27. My local authority, Wigan metropolitan council, of whose planning committee I was recently a member, is well-known to the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment for pioneering work in relation to what is set out in clause 10. When giving people rights it is essential that the area is maintained to protect the right of way and the natural habitat. If rights of way such as bridlepaths are not properly maintained, far too often ramblers cannot cross areas of land where the habitat has been destroyed. Therefore, it is important not only for the rights of ramblers, but for the protection of the habitat, that rights of way are maintained to a proper standard.

I congratulate the Secretary of State for Transport and the Department of the Environment because, in conjunction with Wigan metropolitan borough council, they have done considerable work with the British Waterways Board and the Countryside Commission in the north-west. Where public assets are under local authority control, large tracts of public bridleways, footpaths and towpaths are being brought back into public use for the first time in many years. In those areas where such paths are still in use they are being protected for the benefit of the natural environment. That is why I believe that it is important that the Secretary of State supports us, because to do otherwise would oppose Government policy.

I hope that other hon. Members will participate in the debate because it is essential to make it clear to the people of Suffolk that the amendment is a people's amendment. Whatever else happens to the Bill, the proposals in amendments Nos. 25 and 27 are for the people's protection and their maximum use. Therefore, I should be pleased if the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds could suggest whether he and his colleagues in Suffolk would be prepared to have discussions with both the district authority and the county council about ways of upgrading the footpaths in that area and bringing to the public's attention the use of the footpaths and bridlepaths there as well as the use of those areas close to the wetlands.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: May I give the hon. Gentleman two assurances. An arrangement negotiated between the county council and the dock company will mean that more and better footpaths will be provided in the vicinity of the marshes. That is a considerable gain and has been much appreciated by the Suffolk Preservation Society. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman has suggested that my colleagues and I in Suffolk should consult the county council, for example, to see whether ways could be found to draw attention to the rights of access. That is a good suggestion and if the county council is minded to take it up I should be well prepared to assist it in my negotiations with the promoters of the Bill so that the concession that the House has sought and to which the promoters have agreed is made more widely known.

Mr. McCartney: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that contribution and his positive attitude. In an equally positive attitude may I suggest that if such negotiations take place, he should contact Wigan metropolitan borough council which has a countryside planning unit which is nationally known. I am certain that that unit would be prepared to assist the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds and the county council to provide the type of information for which we have been asking.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 25, in page 11, line 19, after 'if', insert

'in subsection (1) after "highway", where that word thirdly occurs, were inserted the words "or seeking access to the foreshore for any legitimate purpose,".'.

No. 27, in page 11, line 44, after '(iii)' insert

'in section 14(2), after the word "foreshore" insert "or any right of way" and'.—*[Sir Eldon Griffiths.]*

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 12, line 2, leave out 'Board' and insert 'the Secretary of State'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 30, in page 12, line 5, leave out 'and the Board'.

No. 31, in page 12, line 6, leave out from 'direct' to end of line 7.

Mr. Bennett: When we have heard what the promoters have to say, it may be possible to have separate Divisions on the amendments. I understand that all the amendments refer to navigation safety as a result of works either being completed or being under construction.

Amendment No. 29 sets out to amend clause 10, which in turn amends sections 12 to 17 of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1968. Amendment No. 29 refers to section 16 of the 1968 Act, which deals with lights on tidal works. Amendments Nos. 30 and 31 refer to section 17, which deals with lights on tidal works during construction. The board mentioned in the 1968 Act was the old Board of Trade, but in the amendment that board is the Harwich harbour board. That may well cause some confusion.

After some discussion with the promoters, they suggested that it would not be possible for Ministers to take on functions which, in this sphere, are private functions. However, it is interesting to note that the 1968 Act is littered with references to functions that would be carried out by the Board of Trade. Therefore, it appears to me that, at least in the 1968 Act, it was possible for the Government to oversee the Felixstowe dock and railway company in the operation of its responsibilities.

The proposed legislation suggests that instead of the safety functions being carried out either by Trinity House or the old Board of Trade that responsibility will be transferred to the Harwich harbour board. Certainly the RSPB is not too happy with the idea that those functions should be carried out by that board. I hope that the promoters can explain why the Harwich harbour board is the appropriate body to carry out those functions rather than either Trinity House or the Department of Transport.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The former Member for Ipswich, who was a strong opponent of the Bill, was, on behalf of Ipswich port authority, anxious to find some way to ensure that Felixstowe would not be able to take Ipswich's water or interfere with the navigation of its waters. Therefore, the two authorities got together and decided that the best arrangement was to have one neutral body, which had an interest in the harbour. It was the agreement between Ipswich and Felixstowe that led to the decision to nominate the Harwich harbour board for this purpose. I should certainly not wish to interfere with a decision that was reached between an authority that was originally opposed to the Bill and a sponsor of the Bill. The arrangement arrived at was good, and both sides are happy with it.

Mr. Bennett: That may explain why the promoters and one of the objectors arrived at that decision, but it does not answer the question that I sought to raise. The RSPB does not feel that it can place a great deal of trust in the Harwich harbour board. What puzzles me is that the hon. Gentleman who is supporting the promoters has not explained why it is necessary to transfer the functions that used to be exercised by the Board of Trade. I understand why we have to modernise and change the name from the old Board of Trade, and I accept that responsibility for that matter should now rest with the Department of Transport, but I cannot understand why we have to take away the Government's function to supervise the safety of either permanent dock features or works undertaken during construction. Secondly, I cannot understand why, if we have to look for a neutral body, we have to take those functions from Trinity House.

Mrs. Mahon: Will my hon. Friend ask the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) how one is elected to the Harwich harbour board and what procedures for accountability are in operation?

Mr. Bennett: I am sure that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) heard that intervention and may well wish to come back to it when he has an opportunity to reply to the amendments.

Anyone who considers the area of development will appreciate that it is taking place at the point where the estuary narrows substantially. It is also at the point where ships coming into some of the port facilities at Harwich must turn in the estuary. If the proposals for the new dock developments at Harwich go ahead—I understand that parliamentary approval has just about been given for them—there will be an even greater possibility of ships coming in and using that part of the estuary that is right opposite the area where the development proposed in the Bill, will take place.

We have already discussed the problems of dredging. It is important that we make sure that any work undertaken to develop the quay is adequately lighted and quite clear to anyone navigating in the area. It is important that the lighting is safe and that it does not mislead people on vessels in the channel. It is important that the site is safe while work takes place.

2 pm

I understand from the Bill that the construction can be spread out over a considerable period. Work can start on reclaiming the land anything up to three years before the main work commences. Once any work is started it is important that there is clear lighting on the site. We have to make sure that the people responsible for the lighting and those who supervise safety are not one and the same. I understand that the Harwich harbour board will be responsible for some of the lighting, certainly up the centre of the channel, and that the Felixstowe dock and railway company will be responsible for the lighting on its side of the river.

Mr. Morley: The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1968 says clearly in section 13:

> "In case of injury to or destruction or decay of a tidal work or any part thereof, the Company shall forthwith notify Trinity House and shall lay down such buoys, exhibit such lights and take such other steps for preventing danger to navigation as Trinity House shall from time to time direct."

The company's responsibility for lighting is made clear. In section 14 it is given the power to

> "repair and restore the work or any part thereof, or to remove the works and restore the site thereof to its former condition, to such an extent and within such limits as the Board think proper"

of tidal works

> "abandoned or suffered to fall into decay".

The authority has similar powers to ensure access.

Mr. Bennett: Because of the way in which the Bill is framed the functions that were carried out by Trinity House, and in one or two other sections by the old Board of Trade, are to be taken away from those bodies and handed over to the Harwich harbour board. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds believes that the board will not be as good a safeguard of the general public as would Trinity House or the Government. It also believes that it would be far better to retain the responsibility of the Minister, who is answerable in the House, for safety, rather than to hand that over to the Harwich harbour board, as there is no indication that it would be accountable to anybody if the safety measures were criticised.

Mr. McCartney: Has the change to the legislation in respect of Trinity House anything to do with the changes in its structure? I understand that its functions will be split in two: that it will deal with lightships, and that the responsibility for pilots will be transferred to the port authority. Is that of significance to what is proposed in the Bill?

Mr. Bennett: I should certainly like some comment on the matter from the promoters. Labour Members want clear assurances that safety will be uppermost in the construction work and in the development, if sadly the Bill goes through and eventually the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company comes up with the money for the development.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Once again I find myself to a great extent in harmony with what has been said. Clause 10 incorporates a number of provisions that were previously contained in the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Act 1968. Those provisions include a number of standard clauses that relate to the statutory duties of the Secretary of State to control tidal works, in that he is obliged to ensure that tidal works shall not become a danger to navigation. I am sure that the whole House, and no one more so than the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), recognises the importance of the Secretary of State having that absolute duty to prevent new works interfering with navigation.

While I would be perfectly happy to accept amendments Nos. 30 and 31, which deal with the board and the promoters, it is not within my authority as a Back-Bench Member to speak to a matter that touches upon the

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

statutory functions of a Minister. Therefore, I think that the House is bound to listen to what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has to say.

Mr. Snape: I am sure that I speak for all my hon. Friends when I say that, given the hon. Gentleman's distinguished service at the Dispatch Box, we would be delighted to hear him, if not speaking as a Minister, bring to bear the normal command of the House that he exercised at the time when he was a Minister. Given the hon. Gentleman's responsibility for the Bill, which he has discharged to the best of his ability, we would accept any assurances from him as coming from the right sort of, perhaps I should say, authentic source. We would rely on those assurances at least as much, I would not say more so, as any assurances that we might receive from his right hon. Friend.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It is essential for the conduct of the business of the House, particularly as we have reached agreement on a number of amendments, that I should in no way go beyond the area that I can deliver. I am unable to say to the House that a private Bill is the right way to change the statutory functions of a Minister of the Crown. Private Bills are designed to achieve the purposes for which the private promoters seek the consent of the House. I can accept amendments Nos. 30 and 31, but amendment No. 29 proposes that a private Bill be used to change the statutory functions of a Minister of the Crown. Having served in the Department of Transport and in other Departments, I am bound to say that it is wrong for a private Bill to seek to alter the functions of a Secretary of State.

Mr. Channon: I naturally listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) and the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) during the debate on the amendments. I share the view of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) about the ability of my hon. Friend in dealing with the amendments, and I congratulate him on the clear way in which he has described and answered questions about them in the course of a long day. I would like to be as helpful as I can.

Mr. Harris: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As we have now passed 2 pm, and as I have been in the House for more than 30 hours, I wonder whether you would confirm, for the convenience of the House, that the business that is scheduled to take place later today is now null and void, and that we shall continue with this Bill? Some of us want to see it on the statute book.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not yet the case. The magic hour in these matters is 2.30 pm.

Mr. Channon: I want to deal first with amendments Nos. 30 and 31. As the House knows, the Bill gives the Harwich Harbour Board a joint say with the Secretary of State in how tidal works shall be lit during their construction. In the case of disagreement, the Secretary of State's decision prevails. The amendments would take out the harbour board and leave the matter entirely to the Secretary of State. In practice, I am sure that any Secretary of State would always seek the advice of the harbour board before deciding what marking or lighting was required, so if the House decides to accept amendments Nos. 30 and 31 I would be happy for it to do so.

However, I have difficulty with amendment No. 29. The Bill requires the promoters to install on the tidal works, after their completion, such permanent lights as Trinity House or the Harwich Harbour Board may, from time to time, direct. The amendment suggests the substitution of the Secretary of State for the harbour board.

Mr. Morley: I have listened carefully, but I confess that I am not absolutely clear about clause 10 (i)(v), which adds the Harwich Harbour Board to Trinity House as an authority with power to direct the company to show lights and marks. I am not sure why the two should be joined together for that purpose.

Mr. Channon: I was just coming to the issue of lighting, which is extremely important in the Harwich area and in all the docks and ports that are open in and around Harwich. They have an extremely good record and have taken a great deal of trouble to install up-to-date equipment in a whole variety of ways. I was impressed when I recently visited the area and discussed safety matters with the ports. The works proposed in the Bill are all within Harwich haven. The Harwich Harbour Board is the local lighthouse authority. It is responsible for navigational safety in the haven.

2.15 pm

The usual practice would be to determine with Trinity House what lights are appropriate so that the Harwich Harbour Board can carry out its safety duties in that area. It is the authority responsible for safe navigation, and as such it must prescribe these lights. Trinity House and the Harwich Harbour Board are, respectively, the statutory general and local lights authorities. If the amendment were accepted, it would remove the Harwich Harbour Board —the local lights authority—and place the responsibility with the Secretary of State. That is not a function that the Secretary of State fulfils in any other port. There is no reason why Felixstowe and Harwich should be treated any differently. Indeed, that would be inadvisable. There is evidence that the Harwich Harbour Board carries out its lighthouse duties efficiently and well, and I therefore advise the House not to accept amendment No. 29. I am however, happy to advise acceptance of amendments Nos. 30 and 31.

Mr. Snape: I am sure that the House is grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, particularly as he has been gracious enough to accept amendments Nos. 30 and 31. Nevertheless, I want to press him for a moment or two on his refusal to accept amendment No. 29.

There is a considerable depth of feeling among lights authorities about the additional financial burden that falls on them because of the installation and maintenance of lights. Their concern — and that of my hon. Friend in whose name the amendment stands — was to alleviate that burden on the Harwich Harbour Board. It seems a little unfair that we are told to accept the Bill because it is good for employment in the area, and because P and O is investing a considerable amount of money in and around Felixstowe——

Mr. Tony Banks: And in the Conservative party.

Mr. Snape: And in the Conservative party, as my hon. Friend reminds me. Yet that commercial organisation will reap the benefit of this investment, both in lights for the area and in their maintenance. That strikes us as unfair. Conservative Members continually lecture us about the need to reduce public expenditure. They lecture us about the wastefulness of local authorities and appear intent on concentrating more and more power in the hands of non-elected bodies. The Harwich Harbour Board will not benefit in any way from the legislation. I hope that, in the spirit of amity that has overcome us, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) will agree with me about that. The board probably feels somewhat aggrieved that it might suffer some additional financial loss if amendment No. 29 is not accepted. It is manifestly unfair that the Government, who are trying to reduce public expenditure on local authorities and organisations such as the Harwich Harbour Board, are not prepared to be more sympathetic to the aims of the amendment.

I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is satisfied with the explanation that he has heard from the Secretary of State. As is customary on these occasions, I shall leave it to my able hon. Friend to decide whether to pursue the matter to a Division. Reasoned and reasonable though the Secretary of State's explanation was, my hon. Friend might feel it necessary to pursue the matter to a Division because of our desire not to impose any financial penalty on the harbour board, for which the benefits of the legislation are nebulous to say the least, and on which the detrimental financial impact of the maintenance of lights and marks in the harbour will primarily fall.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I, like my hon. Friends, accept the Secretary of State's statement about amendments Nos. 30 and 31, but I cannot accept the excuse that he gave for not accepting amendment No. 29, which was not valid. It is not good enough to say that it is not the duty of the Secretary of State to intervene in these matters. Amendment No. 29 relates to clause 10 (i)(v), which would add the Harwich Harbour Board to Trinity House. That is intended to give it the power to direct the company to show lights and marks and to take other measures to prevent danger to navigation. The amendment would make the Secretary of State the additional change to the proposals, in place of the harbour board.

If there is to be a change—and obviously this is the proposal—what excuse does the Secretary of State have to offer that he should not be involved in any changes? To say that this does not happen anywhere else is abysmally inadequate because we can say that about many things—including the poll tax. No one else is to have a poll tax, but we are to have it. The proposition put forward by the Secretary of State—that because it does not happen anywhere else it should not happen here—is not good enough.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting in his amendment and by his rejection of what the Secretary of State said that he is prepared to put the safety of shipping in the hands of a Secretary of State rather than in the hands of the experts? We greatly respect the experts on harbour lighting and control because they have kept our vessels safe since time immemorial. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we should take that function out of the hands of the experts and place it in the hands of the Secretary of State? If that is the case, this would be the only port in Britain to be controlled in that way.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he has no confidence in the Secretary of State? Perhaps there is some merit in what he says. I hope that he will demonstrate his lack of confidence in the vote because the matter will be decided in the Lobbies.

Mr. Snape: It might be unusual for me to seek to defend the Secretary of State, but it is fair to say that since the appalling tragedy earlier this year in Zeebrugge the Secretary of State has demonstrated his determination to put things right in the way that our maritime industries are operated and supervised. The Opposition ought to demonstrate their appreciation of the right hon. Gentleman's concern by defending him from what was, in effect, a scurrilous and disgraceful attack from his hon. Friend.

Mr. O'Brien: The House ought to take note of the contribution that has just been made by my hon. Friend because it is very important. If the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) feels that the Secretary of State is not the person to be in charge of martime matters, he has every right to pursue the matter with the Prime Minister. I shall support any motion which says that the Secretary of State should resign if he does not have the confidence of Conservative Members.

There must be safety at all times and such safety must remain, despite any change that will take place under the proposals in the Bill. It is against that background that amendment No. 29 is proposed. I hope that the Secretary of State will have a rethink on this. To say that he does not have or that he cannot develop the expertise to ensure that safety is always maintained, is a slur on the Department of Transport. I hope that that matter will be cleared up.

We ought to have regard to other organisations in the area. During his speech on the last group of amendments one of my hon. Friends said that a number of organisations must be consulted. They include local authorities, charitable organisations and organisations that have the good of the area and of the nature reserve at heart. They should be consulted about these issues. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not know whether Conservative Members are suffering from champagne withdrawal symptons, but a great deal of conversation is going on. At the very least, it is discourteous to my hon. Friend that Conservative Members are not listening to him.

Mr. Speaker: I agree.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the babble of noise from Conservative Members. I hope that he will continue to look after the interests of Opposition Members who are making contributions. This is an important matter and some of my hon. Friends have been here all night and all yesterday afternoon. It is right that their interests should be safeguarded. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will continue to safeguard our interests. He is our shop steward and I hope that he will continue in that capacity.

[Mr. O'Brien]

There are matters other than safety to be considered, and one of them is oil pollution in the area. The Secretary of State has some responsibility for this matter and has some interest in the issue. It is not good enough to say that his Department is not the one that should monitor oil pollution. The people who live in the area and hon. Members who have contributed to the debate have the right to protection. Changes and manoeuvres that will further involve the harbour board should not be permitted and the Secretary of State should take responsibility if there is a change. The Secretary of State should reconsider his position and his last comment and say that he is prepared to accept amendment No. 29.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend has raised the specific issue of oil pollution. In the short debate on amendment No. 29 we have heard that vessels will be turning in the narrowest part of the estuary and that the Harwich development will considerably increase traffic in that estuary. What arrangements has the Secretary of State for Transport made to ensure that adequate stocks of anti-pollutants are maintained in all three ports against the possibility of a major oil spillage in that estuary?

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his important intervention. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am having great difficulty in hearing what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

Mr. O'Brien: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is difficult to try to convince hon. Members when so much noise is going on.

Following my reference to oil pollution, my hon. Friend made an important intervention. I am sure that the Secretary of State will accept that this matter should be considered seriously and in some depth. It is a problem that creates difficulties around our coasts. We do not want oil pollution in the harbours and such pollution must be taken seriously.

Organisations such as wildlife conservation bodies have little confidence in the harbour board, and their interests should be considered. The Secretary of State should consult those bodies about what the changes will bring. If there is to be a change of responsibility in that area, amendment No. 29, which gives responsibility to the Secretary of State, should be accepted.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division.

2.30 pm

Mr. Dickens *[seated and covered]*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Anticipating that when the House is reassembled after the Division, you will announce to the House that Wednesday's business has been lost, that means that we are still in Tuesday. As Tuesday is normally a day reserved for Prime Minister's questions, and as it is common knowledge that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister does so very well and the public like to listen to her in action, will there be any opportunity for us to have another dose of Prime Minister's Question Time today?

Mr. Speaker: It is a pleasure to see the hon. Gentleman on the Government Front Bench. I am afraid that I cannot give him any comfort in respect of his request for the Prime Minister's return for further questions, and I shall be making no announcement about the loss of today's business. We remain on Tuesday's business for the remainder of today.

The House having divided: Ayes 127, Noes 204.

Division No. 64] **[2.28 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Buckley, George
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Nellist, Dave
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. William O'Brien and
Mr. Tony Banks.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David

Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Faulds, Andrew
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Ward, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendments made: No.30, in page 12, line 5, leave out 'and the Board'.

No. 31, in page 12, line 6, leave out from 'direct' to end of line 7.—*[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.]*

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to return to a matter that has already been raised several times—the need for a statement to the House on the Government's decision on the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian. We understand, through the usual channels, that a statement will be made in the House of Lords by the unelected Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. We were led to believe for a time, through the usual channels, that a statement would be made in this House. We now understand that no statement will be made here, and we regard that as outrageous. We would like the Leader of the House and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to explain this insult to the elected House of Commons.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter of order. I have no idea whether a statement will be made.

2.45 pm

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not the case, when we hold debates in which every hon. Member has a right to participate, that the longer individual hon. Members speak, the more difficult it is for others to get in? More important, we can reach the position that we have reached now. Important Scottish business that we were due to discuss on what is technically tomorrow will not now take place, because we are still on today—which, in some people's minds, was yesterday. We also have the problem of the merger. Dressed as I am, Mr. Speaker, in a kilt, I can claim a clear interest in British Caledonian, which is a very fine Scottish-registered company.

Is it not the case that hon. Members who have made lengthy speeches, many of them lasting well over an hour, and have raised points of order throughout the day, are the reason that we find ourselves in this position? They are responsible.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Important Scottish business has been lost, a loss that will not be understood by the people of Scotland. Is there any provision for the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) — to be brought before the House to make a statement explaining why, one week after he promised a major onslaught against the Government backed by the entire parliamentary Labour party, instead of Scottish business being brought to the fore, we have no Scottish business at all?

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is clear to everyone in Scotland that the irresponsible attitude of the Scottish Labour party last night and this morning is the sole reason for our losing Scottish questions, the so-called Assembly Bill, the statement on Scottish housing and tonight's Adjournment debate. Scotland knows where responsibility lies: it lies with the Conservative party.

Mr. Maxton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise two points. First, is not the business of the House controlled by the Government? The present Session continues until October 1988. There is therefore plenty of time for this piece of legislation to go through the House of Commons. If they had wanted a Scottish Question Time, would not the Government have the power to allow it? The truth is that they do not want it, because the minority rump does not wish to be asked questions by the majority. Would it not have been possible for a Tory Minister to have moved the closure?

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, is it in your power to instruct Opposition Members representing one of the smallest minority sections in the Scottish political scene — the Scottish National party — to cross the Floor? The sole concern of SNP Members is attacking the Labour party, rather than the Government of the day.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. At the time when we would have been having Scottish questions, but for the absurd behaviour of the Marxists opposite——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. and learned Gentleman please withdraw that comment?

Mr. Fairbairn *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Come on.

Mr. Fairbairn: The misbehaviour of the Trotskyists opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is even worse.

Mr. Fairbairn: May I ask you this question, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. and learned Gentleman to start again and leave out those phrases.

Mr. Fairbairn: Indeed, Mr. Speaker. We should be having Scottish questions, all of which will be answered anyway, so we are not deprived of the answers by the Secretary of State, who is present with all his Ministers, when only the shadow Secretary of State is present on Opposition Benches. In the debate this morning the Opposition attempted to pretend to try to reach Scottish questions, but how could we have been protected from their filibustering which was aimed at ensuring that we did not reach them?

Mr. Speaker: Let me deal with the Scottish element first. I confirm what the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) said

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I confirm what the hon. Member for Tayside, North said, that today is yesterday and we have indeed lost today's business. The concern of the Chair throughout the night has been to ensure that the debate has been in order. The fact that it has been long-winded is not a matter for the Chair, but it has been perfectly in order.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not a reflection on the Chair for the hon. Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and for Dumfries (Sir H. Munro) to describe last night's points of order as frivolous as well as not being points of order? Surely if the Chair accepts a point of order, it is indeed a point of order and is in order. Was not the purpose of last night's points of order to bring out the fact that Sir Jeffrey Sterling, the chairman of P and O, is also the chief adviser to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and to refer to the corruption that was going on last night, in a blatant attempt to buy the votes of hon. Members? Is it not the case that if other people holding public office had conducted themselves in the way which some Conservative Members of Parliament conducted themselves last night, they would have been before the courts today? The truth is that there are now no standards in the House and no one has any authority to lecture anyone about standards in the House after what happened last night.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before we have further points of order, may I underline what the hon. Gentleman has said. The points of order that have been put to me so far in these exchanges have not been points of order at all, and whether Sir Jeffrey Sterling happens to be an adviser to anyone is not a matter for the Chair. Points of order put to the Chair should be legitimate points of order that the occupants of the Chair can answer. I can answer none of those questions——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have been able to say that we have lost today's business, but I am not responsible for what goes on outside the Chamber.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that you will be aware that over the past three years there has been considerable opposition from Labour Members to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company on the basis that there was a fundamental erosion of environmental standards in the area. We were entitled to use the parliamentary means at our disposal to try to oppose the Bill and save that area of wetland, and to ensure that the British Government fulfilled their international agreements to protect the wetland.

Quite rightly, the Chairman of Ways and Means tabled that business for 7 o'clock last night, but it was the Government who chose to table the business motion at 10 o'clock, which enabled the business to continue after that time. It was possible for the Government, at any time after 10 o'clock, to suspend the business so that today's business on Scotland and other matters could take place. It is clear that it is the Government who have decided that they wish to put through private business in that way. Any criticism should be levelled at the Government's decision to support the private Bill, not at Opposition Members who have been legitimately exercising their right to oppose it because of the environmental damage that it would cause.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time. I confirm to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that delay is one of the few weapons given to any Opposition, so that was perfectly in order. It was equally in order for the Government to table a suspension motion.

Mr. Harris: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to raise my point of order with you as the recipient of the next issue of "Erskine May" because the introduction is, by tradition, addressed to the right hon.

> "Speaker of the House of Commons, and to The Speakers of the Commonwealth, within whose hands the priceless heritage of Parliament is securely held".

[Interruption.] No, I am not challenging Mr. Speaker at all. I make my point in all sincerity. Some of us have been here throughout the night. I cannot help observing that, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), practically everyone on Opposition Benches who has raised a point of order was not here at all. Some of us were and I have completed over 30 hours in the House without a break.

Observing the events of last night, I believed — I admit that I am probably biased — that there were deliberate attempts to obstruct the proceedings of Parliament. On two occasions during two Divisions during the night, I had cause to raise with Mr. Deputy Speaker the fact that there appeared to be obstruction in one of the Lobbies. On one occasion Mr. Deputy Speaker was kind enough to send the Serjeant at Arms, who flushed out four hon. Members who had been in the Lobby and who were delaying proceedings.

Be that as it may, the point that I put to you in all sincerity, Mr. Speaker, in your capacity as the recipient of the next edition of "Erskine May", is this. We all know that the Clerk of the House is charged with the duty of producing "Erskine May". As there is obviously considerable contention over the events during this parliamentary day, will you charge the editor of "Erskine May" to give an impartial account of the events of the 18 or so hours when the House has been sitting on the Bill? Is it possible to insert that in the next edition of "Erskine May", if only as a means of instruction to the Opposition, who have managed to achieve the almost unattainable in these proceedings, by wiping out their own business by their incompetence and piling chaos on confusion?

Mr. Speaker: The whole House would be better advised——

Mr. Snape: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has raised a point of order about "Erskine May" *[Interruption.]* Will the hon. Gentleman kindly listen to the answer as he raised the point of order with me? He will find in "Eskine May" numerous examples of similar occasions to this. It is nothing new. As I have said, this is a private Bill, so it is not a matter of the Official Opposition seeking to do anything. There are many examples of this happening before. The House should get on with the Bill and bring it to a conclusion.

Mr. Snape: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. For the benefit of hon. Members who have not been at Westminster for as long as the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris)—he spent some time in another capacity in the House — will you confirm that at 10 pm only a Minister of the Crown can move a motion to suspend the Standing Orders of the House and enable our discussions to continue past that time? Will you also confirm that it is virtually unprecedented for a Minister to move such a motion on private business? Furthermore, was that not the second point of order from the hon. Member for St. Ives on exactly the same point? Did he not move the previous one at 10 minutes past 2 o'clock when he said that because the debate was still under way tomorrow's business had been lost? Is it not deplorable that someone who has spent years in this place, albeit as a hack, does not know the rules of the House and delays business by spurious points of order?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order which are not points of order for me contribute to delays. The House will be best advised now to move on to its next group of amendments.

Clause 14

MODIFICATION OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

3 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: I beg to move amendment No. 33, in page 13, line 45, leave out '10' and insert 'five'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 34, in page 14, line 1, leave out from 'Act' to 'and' in line 3.

No. 35, in page 14, line 15, leave out from 'plans' to end of line 17.

Mr. Banks: First, it is not only important Scottish business that has been lost, but my ten-minute Bill on the sale of war toys. I know that the Prime Minister is determined that this Bill will pass and I suspect that her real reason is to thwart my attempt to have these toys prohibited. That is typical of her macho approach to politics and all other matters.

The Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company has not at any time sought to put its plans through the scrutiny of the normal planning process. Had it done so, these plans would have been rejected by the local planning authority, as all hon. Members realise. Indeed, the Suffolk Coastal district council petitioned against the Bill and opposed it vigorously in Committee.

It is worrying for those of us who have been connected with local government for many years to see private Bills being used as a way of getting round normal planning procedures. It is also disturbing that the Government have set up several urban development corporations which have similar powers and do not need to seek planning permission from local authorities. Local communities are extremely worried that their elected representatives, whether sitting on Tory-controlled or Labour-controlled councils, are not allowed to scrutinise development proposals in the interests of the community that will eventually have to endure the development proposal.

Mr Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Is my hon. Friend aware that that not only happens south of the

[Mr Michael J. Martin]

border but that the same happened in Edinburgh when the Tories controlled the regional council? They wanted to drive a road through the centre of Edinburgh and because they knew that they would not get proper planning permission they tried to succeed through a private Bill. They told the Officers of the House lies when they said that the procedure would last only three weeks. It lasted three and a half months. I know because I was the chairman of the inquiry. It is scandalous that public money should be used in such a way to avoid legitimate objections.

Mr. Banks: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's comments. Clearly, this practice has grown up rather disturbingly in recent years and the House should be aware of it. I hope that the Committee looking into the procedures on private Bills will look carefully at private Bills being used as a way of circumventing normal procedures which have been established and accepted for many years.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Does my hon. Friend recall that a few hours ago we received certain assurances from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, (Sir E. Griffiths)? I am sure that the hon. Gentleman gave them in all sincerity and honesty. He said that local authorities would be consulted on footpaths, footpath signing, the identification of footpaths and literature and advertisements about footpaths. If companies have been afraid to go to authorities regarding planning matters, which are assuredly decisions for local authorities, it throws into question whether local authorities will be consulted on these other matters.

Mr. Banks: That is a valid point and it throws into question the worth of assurances from Conservative Members and, indeed, the sincerity of the promoters. There are accepted procedures which protect the rights of local people and they are being circumvented. In this particular case we are talking about an extension of normal planning permission, which is given over a five year period, to 10 years. That is the nub of our objection to the Bill and why we tabled this amendment.

Mr. Fatchett: I welcome my hon. Friend's argument about planning procedures. He referred to the inquiry of the Chairman of Ways and Means into private Bill procedures. If planning matters continue to come before private Bill procedures it will raise two questions. First, does my hon. Friend agree that our procedures should enable hon. Members who wish to speak against amendments to have the opportunity to do so? At about 2.30 am or 3 am I gave notice that I wanted to speak against amendment No. 15 on a crucial planning issue, but I was not allowed to do so, presumably because the Chairman of Ways and Means assumed that there was a party political split and that all Labour Members would vote one way and all Conservative Members another. On a private Bill that is not necessarily the case.

Secondly, if we have private Bill Committee procedures does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that the Chamber should act in a quasi-judicial, objective way on planning matters? In the past 24 hours we have seen a particular company attempt to buy and use influence in this House. That has meant that only Labour Members have been prepared to listen to the arguments. Conservative Members have not listened to crucial planning and environment matters. They have been wheeled in at particular times to cast their vote in favour of the company.

Mr. Banks: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. I am sure that the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure will look carefully at his suggestions. I cannot remember whether it is yesterday, today or tomorrow, but some time during the course of calendar Wednesday Members of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure, of whom I am one, are due to consider further proposals. As you will understand, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to detain the House long as I wish to attend and raise these points in that Committee.

Mr. Ron Davies: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. When he considers the amendment and the private Bill procedure will he bear in mind that those of us who have been present during most of these proceedings have been consistently in difficulty because we are not sure of the precise role of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths)? We have been told on some occasions—those that suit him—that he is in charge of the Bill. On other occasions when it has also suited him, he has told the House that he is not in charge of the Bill. The person in charge of the Bill was described by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds as "that Gummer". I understand "that Gummer" to be the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer). He is not only a Minister of the Crown but the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and, as such, has a direct ministerial involvement.

Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that it is not necessarily or exclusively a matter relating to private Bills? It is a private Bill that is ostensibly in the name of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, but the guiding hand behind it is that of the Minister.

Mr. Banks: That point has been raised on many occasions. It is somewhat confusing for Opposition Members. There have been many occasions on which one has considered that the practice and procedure attached to the Bill have been improper. We have had the example of P and O, or its public relations people, trying to arrange champagne receptions. Indeed, from a quick reading of "Erskine May," one would know that such a procedure is close to a breach of parliamentary privilege. No Conservative Member would like to have been found drunk in possession of the Bill during the proceedings.

I do not know who is in charge of the Bill, but I know one thing, and that is that the presence of the Prime Minister tonight, her consistent voting, and the way in which Ministers—the payroll voters—have been here on a private Bill, look exceedingly suspicious. Quite frankly, if we were to suggest that there was an element of political corruption in respect of the Bill, I am sure that you would rule me out of order, Mr. Speaker. I do not intend to say that, but Opposition Members have our suspicions.

Mr. Fatchett: I did not realise how important my hon. Friend was in serving on the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure. He is obviously a big wheel in the House. It is good that his talents have been recognised. The matter that I put to him relates to planning procedures. My hon. Friend will recall that, at an earlier stage in the proceedings, I raised a point of order about the role of the

Committee that examined the Bill, and particularly about the role of its chairman. I asked whether, if that Committee is supposed to act in a quasi-judicial manner to examine political procedures, it was appropriate for its chairman to be one of the invitees to the champagne and film party that was going on. I considered that that might have been a transgression of the impartiality of that office. I wonder whether my hon. Friend would comment on that matter, in view of his new-found importance in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I should like to comment on it. I cannot relate the remarks made by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) to the amendment, which states:

"Page 13, line 45 leave out '10' and insert 'five'."

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will confine his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. Banks: I am doing my best in that respect, Mr. Speaker. These points arise out of the amendment. The clause in question clearly can be used by the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company to circumvent the normal planning procedures that exist in the region. That is why it is a matter of great concern for those who are interested in the procedure relating to private Bills. On the face of it, it seems to be most unwise, if not improper, for someone who has been involved in a quasi-judicial consideration of development proposals to be involved with the actual development. If that happened in local government, there would be a row in the newspapers and everyone would scream, "Corruption." We would have another scandal on our hands. Fortunately, wiser counsels prevailed. I understand that the champagne reception was called off.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When this point arose earlier, Madam Deputy Speaker repeated your ruling that the subject had been exhaustively discussed and should not be raised again. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman is raising it yet again.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's point of order helps the matter. I have drawn attention to the fact that the party was cancelled. Let us get on with the amendment.

Mr. Ron Davies: Surely it is not possible, Mr. Speaker, for one of your colleagues to rule that a matter that has been properly and legitimately introduced into the House for debate will never be capable of being introduced at a future time. Surely that is an abuse of the position of Deputy Speaker.

3.15 pm

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), who raised the matter, is relatively new here. He inadvertently used the word "ruling". It was certainly not a ruling from the Chair; it was a suggestion, which I repeat. We have heard a great deal about the matter. The whole House wants to get on with the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us return to the amendment. I call Mr. Banks.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is not a point of order. I call Mr. Banks.

Mr. Banks: I am grateful that you confirmed that I was in order, Mr. Speaker. Since it is a significant matter in respect of the procedures of the House, it will not be left untroubled or untried. We shall refer to it from time to time during the course of whatever is left of Tuesday.

Mr. Rogers: Will my hon. Friend enlighten me and other hon. Members in relation to what transpired last night?

Mr. Harris: The hon. Gentleman was not here.

Mr. Rogers: Of course I was not here. That is why I seek enlightenment.

Will my hon. Friend enlighten me as to what exactly transpired last night? Either the sponsors of the Bill or hon. Members who are anxious that the Bill should get on the statute book laid on a drunken champagne spree—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not allege that hon. Members laid on anything for Members that was likely to be drunken. *[Interruption.]*

Several hon. Members *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am dealing with an intervention.

Mr. Rogers: I withdraw that statement, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure whether the intention was that such a state should be achieved, but I am quite sure that it might well have been achieved later on. I understand that it was free.

Is it proper that such an action could take place within the Palace of Westminster, Mr. Speaker? It was mentioned that planning laws have been circumvented by the Bill. It seems that the whole planning proposition has been circumvented, anyhow. We have heard of bribery and corruption outside the House. For bribery and corruption to take place by laying on sprees for people to make— *[Interruption.]* Some Conservative Members are muttering that it was cancelled. That is what brought me to my feet. That is the public image that they would like to create. Then someone said, "No, it was not cancelled, it just fell flat."

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. He may have an opportunity to be called later in the debate. We must get on with the debate.

Mr. Banks: I am able to assist my hon. Friend, but not in the manner in which I should like. I was here in spirit, rather than under the influence of it. I am sure that we shall return to the matter from time to time.

Mr. Grocott: Will my hon. Friend address his remarks to an aspect that, as far as I know, has not yet been discussed—that is the cancellation of the shindig last night? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the amendment, which states:

"leave out '10' and insert 'five'."

I ask the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) kindly to get back to the amendment.

Mr. Grocott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the house continues in this manner, it may be felt that an attempt is being made to delay proceedings. I am anxious that we should get on with the business, and I believe that that feeling is shared by the whole House.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I wish to make a genuine attempt, Mr. Speaker, to assist you and the House. It is obvious that there is considerable confusion surrounding the events of

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

last night, and you have been troubled by some possibly spurious points of order and some unhelpful interventions. Would it be possible for you, Mr. Speaker, to initiate a full investigation into what happened and to make a definitive statement so that we may know whether the charges of corruption and of other things, which I believe have been made wrongly, can be dismissed or substantiated?

Mr. Speaker: I am responsible only for what takes place in the Chamber and for deciding what is in order, not for what happens outside the Chamber. I trust that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will remain in order.

Mr. Banks: Of course, Mr. Speaker. I listen always to what you say, and I do not think that I have strayed out of order. I feel that I have been in order throughout. Some of the interventions may have touched on the margin of order, but that is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, rather than for me. I have delivered only three lines of my speech so far.

Mr. Grocott: I wish to put a serious question to my hon. Friend that is related to the clause. Throughout the night we have been told repeatedly by the supporters of the Bill that we should take account of the fundamental good will and intentions of the Bill's sponsors and supporters more than anything else. If the sponsors and supporters made a promise to a number of hon. Members last night to provide hospitality, an offer that was withdrawn at short notice for reasons that we do not know, what credence can we give to the assurances that the company has given on a range of other matters that are of perhaps greater importance in terms of the Bill than the offer of hospitality? If we cannot give any credence to the promises and assurances that we have been made and given, the assurances that have been given in the Chamber, especially by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), are not worth the *Hansard* pages on which they will appear.

Mr. Banks: A private Member's Bill should not be used as a means to allow developers with enough money to employ parliamentary agents and members of the parliamentary Bar to obtain permissions from Parliament that would not be obtained through the normal democratic planning processes. It has been decided to try to steamroller the Bill through its various stages on the Floor of the House, and it was decided that Conservative Members would be entertained at a reception at which champagne would flow like water and films would be shown. It was reported in the newspapers that when Tory Back Benchers asked what sort of films would be shown, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds replied, "What films do you want?" The mind boggles, knowing the artistic tastes of some Conservative Members.

Mr. McCartney: May I draw the attention of my hon. Friend to the role of the Department of the Environment, or the lack of it? Over the past two years the Department and the Government generally have supported the EEC circular on environmental impact analysis. It is stated that such an analysis should take place before planning procedures and large-scale industrial developments are embarked upon. Only recently has the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, given permission for the local authority with responsibilities in my constituency to initiate such an assessment prior to the implementation of planning procedures.

The two approaches that the Government support are the voluntary procedure and the parliamentary procedure, neither of which has been used in this instance. Indeed, neither of these approaches has been pressed upon the company. Instead, a private Member's Bill has been introduced. With that single act, all the planning procedures and consideration prior to determination to proceed with a major planning application have been lost to the local community, the district council, the county council and all other interested parties. Will my hon. Friend give me an assurance that he will bring this abuse to the notice of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure, bearing in mind that the Government have an obligation, following the EEC circular, to introduce environmental impact analyses?

Mr. Banks: Certainly I shall give my hon. Friend such an assurance. He has raised a serious matter and it is clear that he has extensive knowledge of it. It is an issue that is worthy of a speech in itself rather than a short intervention. A good speech is always worth two airings at least.

Mr. David Marshall: Is my hon. Friend aware that the ill-fated passage of the Bill through the House began when my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) saw that normal planning procedures were being circumvented by the promoters and declined to serve in Committee? Is my hon. Friend aware also that that caused something of a furore? When I was appointed to the Committee, I, too, refused to serve. The establishment of the House then decided to bring the issue to the Floor of the House and to change the rules. All the business that we have had about wining and dining last night has arisen only because we learned of it by accident. I was inadvertently given an invitation to attend, and perhaps that is why everything fell flat. It is possible that, if I had not received the invitation, the function would have gone ahead in secret. We know the throats which the company wanted to water last night within the precincts of the House.

Is my hon. Friend aware that the circumvention of normal planning procedures and abuse of the House had brought the House into disrepute? We must find some way of having our just arguments considered again by the powers that be in the House.

Mr. Banks *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will not be tempted to follow that line, which has nothing to do with the amendment. Perhaps the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) have some merit in them, but they do not relate to the amendment. I ask the hon. Member for Newham, North-West to confine himself to the amendment.

Mr. Banks: I agree, Mr. Speaker, but I am sure that you would admit that it was an exciting intervention and an inviting one for me to follow. However, I understand what you say, Mr. Speaker, and I shall not be taking up my hon. Friend's invitation. Having made rather slow progress with my speech on amendment No. 33, I could murder a bottle of Taittinger 1980.

Suffolk Coastal district council would have opposed the development that now arises in the Bill had it had the opportunity through the normal planning procedures to do just that. It is a serious matter because the district council will achieve benefits of some enormity as a result of the Bill's passage in the form of employment and rate revenue. It is on that basis—*[Interruption.]* There is a buzz in the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, that is not linked to my speech. I should be most grateful if one of my hon. Friends were to intervene to tell me the reason for the excitement. I know that it cannot be my speech that has produced it, for even I am bored with it. However, I shall continue boring myself and perhaps others as well.

As I have said, Suffolk Coastal district council would have opposed the development that is proposed within the Bill. It is improper for a private Member's Bill to be used as a way of circumventing democratic planning machinery. When planning permission is granted, either by the local planning authority or the Secretary of State on appeal, it lasts for only five years. That duration is laid down in section 41 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. I know that that Act is close to the hearts of all hon. Members on both sides of the House and that it is not necessary for me to rehearse all the detailed provisions of the measure. It is a well-established and accepted feature of the planning system, a system that has saved the countryside from many, although not all, ravages since the parent Act was introduced in 1947.

If the development does not begin within the five years laid down by the Act, the permission lapses and a fresh application has to be submitted to the local planning authority. That arrangement allows the local planning authority to respond to changing circumstances and attitudes and it might refuse a second application for a site for which it had previously been minded to grant approval.

I hope that I have the attention of the House on an important matter. I suspect that something is about to happen, even if it is only a trap door that will open beneath me.

3.30 pm

Mr. Gould: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is now six and a half hours since we raised with you a point of order arising out of the fact that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was announcing to a press conference his decision on the important question of the proposed merger of British Airways and British Caledonian but that no Minister from his Department was prepared to come to the House to give an explanation of that decision. We felt that that was a slight and an insult to the House, but we understand your view on that occasion that there was no action that you could take to compel a Minister to come to the House.

I wish now, Mr. Speaker, to draw to your attention a further development. I understand that the Secretary of State is even now responding to a private notice question on this very topic in another place. That adds insult to injury. There can be no doubt that this is an important matter. It goes to the heart of the Government's competition policy and aviation policy. It is of prime importance to the 25,000 jobs that will be affected. Information has been given to a press conference and has been widely debated in the media, and answers are now being given by the Secretary of State in another place.

We understand why the Secretary of State cannot come to this House. We regret that. However, we see no reason why the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who has taken his place, should not be prepared to make the same statement to the House and be subjected to questions on it. I understand that the Government maintain that there is no precedent for such a statement. It is the Government who have put us in this unprecedented position by voting against the motion to adjourn Tuesday's business so that we could proceed to Wednesday's business. We understand the Government's embarrassment and the reluctance of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to be taken to account for the Government's decision.

It is bad enough that the Secretary of State should be making the statement in another place; but it beggars belief that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should remain determined not to subject himself to questions from hon. Members. I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to prevail upon the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to honour his obligations to the House and to make the statement that is urgently required.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a point of order. It is a matter for the Government; it is not a matter of order. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is here, but I cannot compel him to rise.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Opposition have placed themselves in a certain difficulty. They appear to have taken a somewhat excessive interest in a Bill to develop Felixstowe docks and have extended the debate to such a length that they are unable to invite you to consider a private notice question or any of the other procedures that might have been open to them.

Having returned from a conference abroad, I came to the House this morning to find out what the arrangements were for a statement that I intended to make this afternoon on space policy, only to find the Opposition engaged in discussing the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. I have been here ever since.

I listened to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) explaining that he has ruled himself out of trying to get a private notice question in this House to match the private notice question which has been asked in another place. If the Opposition wreck the procedures of the House, they cannot expect their Lordships in another place to miss hearing a statement about British Caledonian.

However, I am always willing to help facilitate the business of the House. The hon. Member for Dagenham is an ingenious man. He could find ways of raising the matters that he wishes within the rules of order of the House. If he thinks a little harder, I have no doubt that he will find them. He has raised a point of order for you, Mr. Speaker. He will have to ponder the problem with which he and his hon. Friends have faced themselves.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that it is entirely in order for the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to seek the leave of the House to make a statement similar to the statement that is being made in the House of Lords by the Secretary of State? Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster now take the opportunity to do that which is in order and which does not bring the House into disrepute or treat it with disdain, as he proposes at present?

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have been asked a question which I shall answer. It would be in order, but at the end of business, to ask for a statement. It is not possible to obtain a statement in the middle of a debate. As the hon. Member knows, there are procedures which would enable him to overcome the difficulty. It is not for me to advise him on tactics. At the end of the debate on the Bill it would be possible for the Minister to make a statement.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. As the customs of the House have been called into question with you, Mr. Speaker, it is certainly the custom of the House that statements should be made on the same day in the two Houses. I am glad to see the Opposition Front Bench agreeing. But we are not in the same parliamentary day as the other place. If the House had adjourned before 2.30 pm, we would have been in the same parliamentary day as the other place. We are now in the parliamentary day that commenced at 2.30 pm in the afternoon of 10 November. Therefore, the same parliamentary day as the 11th does not commence until after the present proceedings have terminated.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I confirm what the hon. Member has said. That is our dilemma.

Mr. Dobson: We acknowledge the peculiar procedural point that the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) has made. It would bring the House into further disrepute if anyone were to suggest that such preposterous points of order should prevent the elected House of Commons from having the opportunity to question the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on an important matter affecting the future of the British aviation industry and the jobs of 25,000 people.

Although at times it may be customary for Ministers to make statements at the end of a debate, it is within your recollection, Mr. Speaker, mine and that of other hon. Members that sometimes Ministers have thought it appropriate to intervene in the middle of business, provided that they have the leave of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. It is not customary to intervene in the middle of a debate, unless it is a matter of national emergency or something of that sort. This is not such a matter.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. On Friday mornings, Ministers often intervene to make statements at 11 o'clock. It is arrogant of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to sit laughing on the Government Front Bench instead of carrying out his responsibilities to the House.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Gentleman is correct to say that, on Fridays, the time for statements is 11 o'clock. That is because it is in the Standing Orders.

Mr. McLoughlin: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it not be a gross discourtesy to the House and to all those hon. Members who have been present for the debate on the Bill if the Opposition, who have filibustered throughout the day, were allowed to continue to filibuster, so that it would be even later before we concluded the business before the House? It appears that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has offered the Opposition a statement when the business is finished. It would be grossly discourteous to those hon. Members who have been here for a long time not to complete their business and then hear the statement. Perhaps Opposition Members want to get home to their beds again, but we are willing to stay.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you saying that it is possible for Ministers to make statements only at the end of business? If the Minister asked for permission, would it be possible for him to make a statement before then?

Mr. Speaker: Our normal practice is that an emergency statement would be made at the end of business.

Mr. Gould: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you confirm that if the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster sought your permission to make a statement now, you would grant that permission? Would it be perfectly in order for him to do so?

Mr. Speaker: If there was another motion before the House to set aside the business, I would do that. But that is not the case. We are in the middle of discussing a Bill.

Dr. Moonie: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for Ministers to come here and deliberately mislead the House into thinking—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] Of course, I withdraw the suggestion that he could possibly deliberately mislead the House. However, yesterday evening, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) overheard the Prime Minister saying to the Leader of the House in the Corridor, "That is it, then. We carry on and lose tomorrow's business." Is it in order for Conservative Members to suggest that Opposition Members were responsible for losing Wednesday's business?

Mr. Speaker: Once we began to discuss in this place what may have been said privately elsewhere in the building, we would be in a lot of trouble.

Mr. Dewar: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that my hon. Friends have been pressing hard for a statement on the British Caledonian-British Airways merger. May I ask for your guidance on the possibility of a statement on the White Paper on Scottish housing, which has just been published today? May I put on record again the reason why that statement has not been given? When we moved the adjournment of the debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, the Secretary of State for Scotland and all his hon. Friends went into the Lobby to vote against it, to ensure that Scottish business would not be discussed.

3.45 pm

Some of us take a poor view of the fact that the Secretary of State is now appearing on every media outlet that he can lamenting the fact that he cannot give a statement or answer questions. Perhaps we can do nothing about question time today, but if there was good will, and if the Secretary of State lived up to his protestations that he wants to make a statement on Scottish housing, could he not come, with the consent of the House, and make that statement? It is bad for the parliamentary process that a Minister, having voted to gag himself and destroy his business, should then parade the idea that he had been prevented from making a statement. I want to help the right hon. and learned Gentleman out of his difficulties, and I ask for your assistance, Mr. Speaker. Could not the

Secretary of State make the statement that he alleges he wants to give, but which he has connived at ensuring is impossible under our normal rules of business?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter of order. It it a matter for the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Harris: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Presumably with your permission, I understand that it has become the practice that, at the start of a new Parliament, the Clerks are kind enough to give some instructions on basic procedure to new Members. The House is in some difficulty because of the lack of knowledge of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. We understand that it is a new Front Bench, and we have had two examples of that during the past few minutes. The point of order made by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) in relation to the British Caledonian-British Airways merger was based on completely wrong information and a complete lack of grasp of the procedures of the House. We have now heard a point of order from the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, who has made a fool of himself twice during the past few hours.

For the sake of the efficiency and smooth running of the House, which we all want, perhaps the Clerks could give a crash course on procedure and the workings of the House to the members of the shadow Cabinet, especially its new members.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I always try to remind the Leader of the House of his responsibilities. Would it help you if, to clarify the position in terms of ministerial statements at the close of business, the Leader of the House discharged some of his responsibilities and told the House when we could expect a statement on trade and industry, and especially a statement on Scottish homes?

The Secretary of State is appearing on the media belabouring the point about who lost the business and what happened earlier today. He is bemoaning the fact that he could not make a statement in the House because the business was lost. But he voted for the loss of that business. I appeal through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the House to tell us when a statement will be made. Hon. Members have responsibilities to Committees and would wish to be available to hear statements that may be made at the appropriate time. Will you use your good offices to tell the right hon. Gentleman that that approach would benefit hon. Members on both sides of the House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. A serious point has been raised, but it is not a matter for the Chair. The Leader of the House will have heard what has been said. For reasons that I have already stated, it is not possible to have a statement in the middle of this debate. Surely the sensible course for the House would be to continue with the debate and to bring it to a conclusion, so that many of the possibilities now being canvassed could come about. It is difficult to envisage how that could happen in any other way.

Mr. Hoyle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Members had to go to another place to hear a very important statement—*[Interruption.]* I know of at least one hon. Member who had to do that. Surely that is to be deplored.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to seek your advice. I have been here since the start of business some 25 hours ago. More than 120 of my hon. Friends have been here throughout the night, while at times only 20 Opposition Members have been present. There are now many more Opposition Members in the Chamber. We are becoming confused because, at two or three minute intervals, the shadow Leader of the House, the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland and the shadow Secretary of State for Trade and Industry have all asked for statements. If the debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill were to be concluded rapidly — for example, by the Opposition desisting from the filibustering tactics that they have employed for the past 25 hours— we could then hear the important statements — [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I will not withdraw. Opposition Members do not like to admit that debating wildlife for two hours at a time is filibustering. They do not recognise the meaning of the word.

Would it be in order for talks to take place between the usual channels? Could not the Opposition agree a programme with the Government — and then get their Members to stick to it — so that we could rapidly conclude the debate and hear the important statements?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Many of our problems — and this is a problem—could be resolved through the usual channels. That would be the sensible way to proceed, and I hope that that will happen.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, requested a statement on Scottish homes. During the weekend, the Minister with responsibility for housing in Scotland said publicly on television that a statement would be given to Parliament. From his television statement, I understood that the proposals were ready to be submitted to the House—[HON. MEMBERS: "They are."] Hon. Members may say that, but many of my constituents are in Scottish Special Housing Association or in Housing Corporation units allocated through the community-based housing associations. Any proposals would affect their livelihoods. If information is available, surely the Leader of the House could make arrangements for the appropriate Minister to make a statement.

On the question of British Caledonian, the Minister constantly tells us that the Scots complain about unemployment and that he is doing his best for employment prospects. Surely he knows that many employees of British Caledonian and British Airways are worried about what will happen. Therefore, would it not help the House if both statements were made now?

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance and personal protection. As you know, I was most fortunate in drawing the Adjournment debate for tonight — or last night, or tomorrow, whichever it is. The Minister responsible for sport and I have an important engagement on the Floor of the House, and we are entitled to fulfil that engagement — important though British Caledonian and Scottish affairs may be.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman is patient, he may get his Adjournment debate — I hope.

Mr. Norman Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Do we not operate in this House both under Standing

[Mr. Norman Hogg]

Orders and precedent? Indeed, some Opposition Members believe that we were sent here to create precedent. Is it not reasonable, therefore, that the Ministers responsible for the two statements for which we have called should come to the Chamber? Given the sort of Bill with which we are dealing—and we clearly have the time to deal with it—statements could be taken either now or later this afternoon, but not at the end of business. That is a perfectly reasonable proposition, and I appeal to you as a most reasonable man.

Mr. Speaker: Order. There is a way out of this difficulty. Although it is not for me to suggest it to the House, the House would be wise to take it.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of your wish that the whole problem should be sorted out through the usual channels—and we believe that that would be best, rather than interminable alleged points of order—would it not help if you suspended the sitting for a quarter of an hour to enable the usual channels to consider the matter?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a very wise suggestion, and I think that it would be equally wise for the usual channels to get together while I call an hon. Member to speak to the Bill. In that way we could proceed with the business. I therefore call Sir Eldon Griffiths.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a Front-Bench spokesman and should set an example to other hon. Members.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not want to be forced to take further action on this matter. I call Sir Eldon Griffiths.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to take further points of order. I agree with what was said by the shadow Leader of the House—it is a matter for the usual channels to resolve.

Mr. Rogers: *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I order the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Rogers: I am raising a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that if he does not obey the Chair, I shall have to take further action that I would very much regret.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I repeat, I would very much regret having to take further action.

Mr. Rogers: Do what you like Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a Front-Bench spokesman. I know that we are all in an excited state, but the shadow Leader of the House has made a sensible and wise suggestion, with which I agree. Indeed, I hope it will come about. While discussions are taking place, we should get on with the debate and I call Sir Eldon Griffiths again.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I order the hon. Gentleman to resume his seat. I say to him again——

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say to the hon. Gentleman again that if he disobeys the Chair he will have to withdraw from the House for the remainder of today's business.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It might be for the convenience of the House——

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not taking any more points of order on this matter.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have said that I am not taking any more points of order.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No. I call Sir Eldon Griffiths.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: In order that the House may make some progress, it might be advantageous for me to reply briefly——

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I want briefly to respond to the points made by the movers of the amendments.

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: The effect of amendment No. 33 would be to extend the period.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am referring to the period of time during which the company could construct——

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must tell—*[Interruption.]* I call Sir Eldon Griffiths.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It would be unreasonable to ask the company to accept the amendment because the project has a long lead time——

Mr. Heffer (*approaching the Mace*): On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: It would be unreasonable to ask the company——

Mr. Heffer (*standing by the Mace*): On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman get back to his place?

Mr. Heffer: Perhaps I can have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Yes. I will give the hon. Gentleman a point of order, but I must say to him before he begins that he is a Member of long standing in this place and it is an absolute abuse to behave in this way.

Sir Eldon Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Sit down, for God's sake.

4 pm

Mr. Heffer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was about to say that, since the House has now reached high emotional levels, some of which I have witnessed many times over the years, it is up to you, Mr. Speaker, to solve the problem. On each previous occasion, the then Mr. Speaker suspended the sitting of the House for a brief period. I am asking you, Mr. Speaker, in the interests of the House; the nation and the reports that go out of the House, to suspend this sitting for a quarter of an hour.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to do that, for the very reason that I mentioned. The only reason for suspending the House is if things get so out of order that we cannot continue. It is absolutely disgraceful that Members of the House should behave in this way when their own Front Bench has suggested that the matter can be resolved through the usual channels. There is no need, against that background, to have a suspension of the House.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to take a point of order from the hon. Gentleman. Sit down, please.

Mr. Rogers: Why will you not, Mr. Speaker, take a point of order from me when you are prepared to take them from other hon. Members? I have been sent here by my constituents, the same as everyone else. Members of my Front Bench have told me to sit down, but all I want from you is a reasonable response and the courtesy that you extend to other hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must say to the hon. Gentleman again that if he rises and talks to me that way, he will be out of the Chamber for the rest of today's sitting. If he does it again, he will be named.

Mr. Gould: I beg to move,

That further consideration of the Bill be now adjourned.

I move the motion because it would be very much for the convenience of the House if we were to have a statement from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, not only because the House is entitled to a statement but because it gives the lie to the line that I believe that the Minister has been peddling on the media throughout the day to the effect that he is somehow prevented from making that statement. I believe that, Mr. Speaker, as you yourself have confirmed, by that device we can now ensure that no obstacle can be argued to have been placed in the Minister's way in meeting his obligations to the House.

Of course we need this important matter, which has now been explained to the press, to the parties to the merger bid, to another place, and, indeed, to everybody in the country other than to the House, to be explained by the Minister in circumstances in which he will be subjected to questions from the House.

The reason we need that statement is not only that the matter involved is extremely important, but that the statement, so far as we understand it, and the decision made by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, is an extremely muddled statement which leaves substantial parts of Government's policy in disarray—notably the Government's competition and aviation policies.

We need to know from the Minister whether there remains any shred or tatter of the previously applying competition policy. Is it still the case that competition remains the only criterion which lies at the base of competition policy? Is not that now manifestly not the case since competition has so clearly been set aside in this instance? Are we not entitled to reach the conclusion that the only basis on which we can now predict where the Government will go on takeover bids of this sort is on the basis that we identify who and where are the Government's political friends?

Is not aviation policy also left in a state of considerable confusion? Does not the present situation arise because the Government have completely abandoned their own aviation policy set out clearly as recently as 1984 in their own White Paper and committed to the strategy of a major second carrier? Has not the Government's anxiety to fatten up British Airways in preparation for privatisation destroyed that strategy by cutting the ground from beneath British Caledonian? The fact is that British Caledonian is no longer viable. It no longer has an independent future. It would be disastrous for the British aviation industry if it were taken over by a foreign airline. The only option, the irresistible logic, is that one should accept the merger with British Airways. But that reflects no credit on the Government. It reflects solely the confusion and inconsistency of their own policies.

Given that competition policy has been so clearly laid aside in reaching this decision, is it not right that the Opposition should ask what account has been taken of the consumer interest and what consumer protection now subsists? What has the Minister to say about the level of consumer services, which until so recently he said depended on the level of competition, when he has now so clearly extinguished the competition that would provide that better level of service?

What account has been taken of article 86 of the treaty of Rome? What reference has been made to the European Commission about competition policy? Will the Minister confirm that British Airways, although voluntarily giving up some of its licences and slots, is nevertheless committed to apply for those licences and slots again? What view will the Civil Aviation Authority and the Government take when that application is made? If the application succeeds, does that not reinforce the point that no competition is built into the solution? If the application fails and those routes, licences and slots are passed to other operators, what is left of the logic of the merger which, surely, could only proceed on the basis that the combined operations of British Caledonian and British Airways would enable the merged British Airways to operate as a megacarrier in the world international market?

If the reversal of Government policy which lies behind this decision is not to be the consequence of a muddle which involves competition and aviation policies, the Minister had an obligation to respond and to explain the difficulties and confusions. That explanation is required not least because it has been given elsewhere. It is required by the House and by all those whose jobs and livelihoods depend upon the continued viability of this airline.

[Mr. Gould]

Unless the Minister can explain how the decision has been reached and how it is meant to secure the objectives of Government policy and the jobs of 25,000 people, Labour Members will believe that he has deliberately resisted his obligations to explain that policy because he knows that he cannot do so.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It might be for the convenience of the House, before I call the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, if I say that it is legitimate in a debate of this kind to canvass what the Front Bench has questioned the Chancellor about. In order that as many hon. Members as possible may be called, I ask for brief contributions, please. It might be for the advantage of the House if I say that the debate should not continue beyond 5·15 pm, when we can resume the other business.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The House was plainly in difficulty a few moments ago and, as you so sensibly suggested, Mr. Speaker, the usual channels may have helped us find the means of resolving that.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has spoken on this motion to adjourn to raise the question of the British Airways and British Caledonian merger. I do not want to go back over the difficulties that were raised in the House a few moments ago or to raise them again, but I should like to make it clear that there was no question of the Government avoiding making statements this afternoon. We were in a procedural difficulty. The other House has not had a statement. It has seen an answer to a private notice question.

As I said earlier, when I arrived this morning, anticipating that we would be embarking on Wednesday's business, I had hoped to make arrangements to make a statement to the House on space policy and the results of the European Space Agency meeting. Had you, Mr. Speaker, granted a private notice question in this House, I should have expected to have replied to that. However, we got into the procedural difficulties of a few moments ago which, perhaps, can be satisfactorily resolved. I should make it clear that that means that, unlike a statement, I shall not be getting up and down to answer the responses of those hon. Members taking part in what, in effect, will now be a small debate within the rules of order as you, Mr. Speaker, have decreed.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Corporate and Consumer Affairs the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) has been closely involved in the decision and if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the debate, he will seek to answer the various queries that will, no doubt, arise during the debate.

With the assistance of the House, perhaps I might proceed to give the House a factual description of the current position. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the proposed merger between British Airways plc and British Caledonian plc was published at nine o'clock this morning. First, I congratulate the MMC on completing its report on this complex issue within three months.

After assessing the balance between advantages and disadvantages of the merger proposals as finally developed, the commission concluded that the merger may be expected not to operate against the public interest. In the absence of an adverse public interest finding by the commission, there are no powers for my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take action on the report.

As is clear to all right hon. and hon. Members who read the report, the commission bore very much in mind proposals that British Airways developed during the course of the inquiry to answer the anxieties of the commission. The proposals finally put forward to the commission by British Airways are much more extensive than the proposals that were on the table before the reference was made. I will set out the key points in British Airways' ultimate proposals because they go to the heart of what the hon. Member for Dagenham was talking about a few moments ago when he expressed anxieties about competition policy and even the application of the treaty of Rome and the powers of the commission.

4.15 pm

British Airways considerably developed its proposals during the course of the commission's consideration. In its final proposals, first on licences, British Airways will return within a month of merger all British Caledonian's licences on domestic routes, and British Caledonian's licences to operate 10 European routes. Other routes, currently operated by British Caledonian, will be submitted to a review by the Civil Aviation Authority. Although British Airways may reapply to the CAA for reissue of licences, British Airways undertakes not to rely on its rights as an incumbent in reapplying. It also undertakes not to oppose applications from other airlines for licences on the great majority of routes, especially on all domestic routes, all European routes—except those to Italy, and perhaps Portugal—and all routes to the United States and Canada. British Airways will withdraw in the same time scale all British Caledonian's pending appeals against Air Europe licences on eight European routes.

On the other problem of the so-called slots especially at Gatwick, British Airways will surrender a minimum of 5,000 slots at Gatwick. Slots associated with licenses returned by and not reissued to British Airways will be surrendered. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission estimated that this could release as many as 20,000 slots at Gatwick if none of the licences returned is reissued to British Airways.

So far as airport services are concerned, British Airways will continue to make these available without discrimination to other airlines currently served by British Caledonian. The commission considered those proposals and that the effect of the merger on competition would be reduced considerably by them, especially through the return of licences and slots. The position of the merged airline at Gatwick will be modified considerably, and opportunities for the growth and development of other airlines will be correspondingly increased.

For our part, the Government have made it clear that, in the event of a successful offer by British Airways for British Caledonian, we expect British Airways' proposals to be implemented in full. If, at any future time, concerns arise about the competitive situation in the airline industry, we have powers available under the competition legislation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority also have powers for the regulation of the civil aviation industry. If the merger goes ahead, the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority has undertaken to report to the Secretary of State for Transport a year later about its implementation on the basis proposed.

As I explained earlier, at this stage my right hon. and noble Friend has no legal powers to intervene as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is satisfied that, on the basis now proposed, the merger may not be expected to operate against the public interest. I hope that the House will agree that, from the point of view of the consumer—as the hon. Member for Dagenham has just reminded us, that is our prime concern in all our policy statements and it remains so—and from the point of view of competition policy, we are now faced with a different situation, compared with the original proposal. Things have moved on a long way since my right hon. and noble Friend acted on the advice of the Director General of Fair Trading to refer this matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission three months ago. The commission has satisfied itself about the fears of a potential threat to charter operators at Gatwick and of an over-powerful position in the market and of its other anxieties. The Government have no legal powers to intervene and see no need to do so. The next steps are now for the companies themselves to decide upon.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I know from using airports, especially Glasgow, that many of BCal's staff are worried about being swallowed up by British Airways staff. I should like to know whether the Minister has looked into the job prospects for the smaller company's employees.

Services from Glasgow and Edinburgh consist of British Midland Airways Ltd. going to Heathrow, a British Airways shuttle also going to Heathrow, and British Caledonian going to Gatwick. The advantages are obvious because travellers in Glasgow and Edinburgh—I am not familiar with Aberdeen—have a good choice of ways of travelling to London. Those who are involved in international travel can proceed to other destinations. Will the Minister assure us that those services will be improved rather than curtailed? Will he consider the possibility of expanding the excellent service that BCal provides to enable the business community—I declare an interest—to get to Gatwick and catch a direct train from Gatwick to Victoria? Good connections make a big difference to those who travel long distances.

It is scandalous that international travellers should be packed like sardines on the underground service when going to Heathrow from the centre of London. That applies not only at busy tourist times, but even at this time of the year. It is deplorable that international travellers are expected to travel in cramped conditions, shoulder to shoulder, from the centre of London out to Heathrow. Such travel does not help British Airways or British Caledonian and it certainly does not encourage the tourist industry.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I remind the House that this is a dilatory motion. I hope that it does not become a precedent for Government statements on dilatory motions. That would be entirely contrary to what has happened before. It would be bad if, every time we wanted a Government statement, the Opposition could move such a motion. I hope that it will be made clear that this is not a precedent because that would be disadvantageous to both sides of the House.

Having said that, I wish to ask two questions about the report. It appears that we no longer have two international airlines, but a single British carrier. What will happen about air service agreements concerning dual entry negotiated with foreign nations on the assumption of two British airlines and two foreign airlines coming in and out of Britain? Will it mean that British Airways will be asked to relinquish routes held by British Caledonian so that they can be given to a second British airline? The routes may be to Hong Kong, Tokyo or Los Angeles. Will those routes now be made available to Virgin or to any other company which appeals to the Government? That is of importance, but it is not made clear in the report.

Secondly, does the report mean that British Airways and British Caledonian, now combined as a single British Airways, will be able to change slots and routes as they wish? Does it mean that British Airways can move some of its international flights from Heathrow to Gatwick or from Gatwick to Heathrow? That might have considerable effect on the arrangements made with other international airlines coming into Gatwick. If those airlines saw that their competition was being moved from Gatwick to London, they might also ask to be moved to London. That international aspect is not dealt with, either in the statement or in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. I hope that the Minister can deal with those two matters, if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, before 5.15. It would be useful because that information does not now exist.

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): The Minister's statement is yet another example of a fudged decision by a British Government. In the last 20 years, the British airline industry has suffered from successive Governments who, instead of making definite decisions, have fudged them.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn, (Mr. Martin), I am interested in what will happen to air travellers from the north of England and from Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh. I always thought that British Airways was a British airline. Now it is a London airline, dealing with international passengers and serving London, and London alone.

The Minister said that the merger was in the public interest. It is not. It is in the interests of British Airways shareholders, Lord King and people who stay in the London area. The rest of us have been thrown to the wolves for so-called private competition.

This morning, listening to the radio, I heard that silly gentleman, the noble Lord, Lord Young——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not cast reflections of that kind on a Member of the other House, who is also a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Lambie: I apologise. I was just speaking from the heart and sometimes one can get into trouble when one does that here.

This morning I heard the noble Lord, Lord Young, state that because of competition he had been able to take breakfast on the shuttle from Glasgow to London. After having said that we were to have competition between British Airways, British Midland Airways and British Caledonian, all that Lord Young could say today was that he was able to have breakfast on the Glasgow shuttle.

I do not want breakfast on the Glasgow shuttle. I do not want a meal on any short journey between Glasgow

[Mr. Lambie]

or Edinburgh and London. What I want is a cheaper fare. Competition has not reduced the fare from Glasgow to London. British Caledonian loses £7 million on the Glasgow route. British Midland Airways and British Airways are supposed to compete. They are like the petrol companies — they compete on anything but price. Air travellers want a reduction in price, but competition has not led to any reductions in the cost of travel between Glasgow or Edinburgh and London. Fares have gone up every year, in spite of competition.

Government Members are always talking about competition, but after an initial burst the entrepreneurs reach a cosy agreement so there can be no competition. The merger is a disaster for the Scottish people. We are being left to the entrepreneurs.

When I met Air Europe representatives, I asked whether that company would be willing to take up the British Caledonian routes from London to Scotland. They made it clear that they certainly would not take up those routes. So who will get the routes?

This is another disaster for Scotland. We lost Scottish Question Time today. We do not matter in this House, although the Scots form the major group in the House. The sooner Scottish Members revolt in the House — because they will never get proper treatment here — the sooner they will have a Government in Scotland for the Scottish people who can debate their own airline instead of British Airways, which is an airline for London.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): I congratulate the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on making such a speedy decision. I hope that it will set an example for the future. The outcome is interesting and exciting, particularly for the independent airlines. It seems from the statement that British Airways is not only to relinquish some routes but to put other routes on the table for review by the Civil Aviation Authority. That is the fairest possible way of behaving. I am amazed that British Airways has agreed to it because the CAA is keen on competition policy. None of the independent companies could criticise the deal.

4.30 pm

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is satisfied as far as competition is concerned, which means that it is satisfied as far as consumers are concerned. We have to wait and see what BCal and British Airways say about the deal going ahead, as there are commercial as well as competition considerations, but I have one question that I hope the Minister does not say should be directed to the Department of Transport. In the statement it was suggested that a number of slots would be given away at Gatwick. At the moment it seems that those slots could well be taken up by the airlines that take the scheduled routes that BCal or BA are to shed.

A major charter operator that operates out of Gatwick is Britannia Airways which is one of my constituency companies. Charter operators schedule regular charters and I want to ensure that that airline and others like it are also looked after. That is extremely important because the charter work within the airline business is as important as the scheduled work. It is through charters that many people fly for the first time. When people go on holiday, it is sometimes the only time they fly. With the opportunity we have with this major reorganisation at Gatwick, I want to ensure that there is some protection for charter operators. In terms of what the statement offers for competition and opportunities for the independent airlines, it is the best possible deal that could have been worked out.

Mr. Hoyle: Unlike the Conservative Members who have spoken, I congratulate the House on getting around its procedures to have a debate on an industry in which at least 25,000 people work. Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank you for the help that you have given us to secure the debate. Having said that, I wish that we were having the debate about a publicly owned British Airways instead of a privately owned one. As such, I welcome what has happened, although, as has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), it does leave the Government's policy in a bit of a shambles.

When the Minister replies, will he tell us the position of the routes that are to be given up within a month? There is no way within a month that operators can be allocated those routes. It will take at least six months. Domestic routes, Paris, Brussels and Nice flights are all to be given up immediately. What operator will replace them? I hope that the Minister will be able to inform [illegible] about that.

Another important consideration in the air transport industry is the order for the A320 airbus. When the Back Bench aviation committee discussed the matter agreement was more or less reached with British Airways that, provided that it did not lose all its European routes, it would go ahead with the airbus order. A lot of jobs depend on that, so I hope that the Minister will reply to that important point. Having seen so many of our manufacturing industries decimated, I am pleased that we still have a strong national carrier that will be able to meet the competition from the megacarriers over the Atlantic — I am pleased about that — who will immediately take up the routes that are to be given up within a month.

Mr. Bill Walker: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is to be congratulated, as this was no easy problem. It was a complex problem. As it concerns international and domestic carriers and the European situation, it would have been extremely difficult for anyone to come up with a package that would satisfy all the demands and all the pressures. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has produced a package that may just be satisfactory and viable to most of the interested parties. That surely must be unique. In all the years that I have been following aviation debates, I cannot remember when an outside body such as the commission has come forward with a proposal such as that contained in its report, which it seems will be accepted by British Airways and British Caledonian. We do not know for sure, however, because there are commercial details to be resolved if the bid goes ahead. Having listened to a number of the independent operators today, and in particular to Michael Bishop, who spoke on radio earlier today, I believe that he and the other independent carriers also believe that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has produced a proposal that is viable and that will work.

I would like the Minister to comment on the situation at Gatwick to which my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) referred. It is important that the airlines that were first in Gatwick will have their granny rights to slots protected in the proposed changes. Our independent airlines must not feel that they will be squeezed out. At the same time, we must ensure that British Airways, or British Airways and British Caledonian, if they merge, are not disadvantaged because, as Labour Members said, it will become our important flag carrier.

I am pleased about that, because British Caledonian's greatest asset is its staff. It was right that Labour Members should draw attention to the concerns of its staff. All the staff I have spoken to at British Caledonian, contrary to what has been suggested, have said quite clearly that they are in favour of the merger. The trade unions have also made their position quite clear. The announced arrangement will guarantee that the bulk of British Caledonian staff will end up with British Airways if the merger goes ahead.

I fully agree with the suggestion from the Opposition Benches that something must be done in future about the tube from central London to Heathrow. There is no doubt that the air service from Scotland to Heathrow is superb. There is no other way to describe it. There may be complaints about some of the details, but one cannot complain about the frequency of services or how well it runs. Regardless of how awful the weather is at times, it is surprising how often services arrive on time. The only impediment to the service is that one is put off by having to board a tube. I heartily agree with the suggestion that something should be done about the tube at an early date.

Mr. Bruce: I am pleased with the unusual departure from the debate because we have had a statement from the Government. It is unfortunate that it could not have been coherently timetabled, but I believe we all know the reason for that. Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you for allowing this important issue to be aired in the House.

I shall depart from the sentiments that have been expressed by other hon. Members because my view is that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission made the wrong decision. Notwithstanding the carefully considered caveats that the commission has proposed, I do not believe that it has come down on the right side. The first consequence is that the Government's stated airlines competition policy is in tatters.

It is right and proper for us to ask the Government to come to the House at an early opportunity and state what they believe should be the future of airline competition now that the merger is going ahead. The fact that certain routes are being removed from the new airline and offered to independent airlines does not alter the fundamental fact that we shall have one super, mega-airline dominating the scene, and a fragmented group of small fry competing for the crumbs that the mega-airline deigns to leave on or below the table. The Minister and the Government cannot sit back and allow such a situation to develop.

Do the Government have any idea about the possibility of all the routes being bid for by one United Kingdom airline? Would the Government favour that? The issue whether we have a significant second-ranking airline in the United Kingdom or one dominant airline and a few minnows is crucial. If the answer is that, in future, there will be no second-ranking airline of substance, the Government must acknowledge that that wholly contradicts their stated policy hitherto. So they must give us clear guidance about the future.

What if some of the routes are not bid for? There is some evidence that, given the imbalance of commercial competition that will exist, some of the routes will revert to the new airline because of the commercial weakness of the competitors. If that happens, the position as outlined today by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will not resemble that in 12 months, two years or five years' time.

The new airline's role at Gatwick causes real concern. I accept that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has addressed itself to that issue, and that giving up some of the 5,000 slots will release routes. I am not satisfied, however, that the assurances that have been given mean that the competitive airlines will get the slots that they need, not only at the time of year when they need them, as the report mentions, but at the time of day. That factor makes the difference between who does and does not obtain the cream of the traffic.

Too many things are left to trust in the report aspects that a dominant carrier cannot be trusted with. The statement in the report that facilities for maintenance and repair will continue to be offered without discrimination at Gatwick is made without qualification or explanation of how it can be guaranteed. Although the commission has considered the arguments, it has been subjected to external pressures — I do not mean improper pressures — that have made it difficult for the commission to detach itself from the emerging British Caledonian role. Of course, no one wants the demise of British Caledonian.

What has been recommended in the report should have been done three years ago. If it had been, the merger would not have been necessary and British Caledonian would have been a valid, competitive airline in the world market place. We have created the biggest single airline in the world by adding a small percentage to its size; and if we accept the argument for that — the emergence of super-carriers on the other side of the Atlantic — the logical conclusion is that in a short time British Airways will be telling us that it wants a new super-carrier consisting of British Airways, British Caledonian, Alitalia, Air France and SAS. That would be a super-European airline to compete with the mega-airlines in the United States. If that is the likely development, we in the United Kingdom and the European Community had better consider what we are doing here today.

Regrettably, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has come down on the wrong side of the argument. The Government will have to consider whether the legislation at their disposal is adequate. I should have liked the Secretary of State to overturn the MMC report, but unfortunately I am advised that the Government do not have the power to do that. In future, such power should exist.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for making it possible to have a discussion on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report, which has been submitted to and accepted by my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry this morning.

One must bear in mind that civil aviation is a rapidly growing industry operating in fast-changing circumstances. References to second-force airlines — the Edwards report, and CAP 500, which was the civil aviation policy that was thrown on one side — are immaterial in today's circumstances because we have moved on since then. One has only to go to the United States of America to see how that country's captive domestic market, in

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

which more than half of the civil airliners in the world travel, has changed dramatically since the President deregulated it there at a stroke. Today, there is a new breed of megacarriers in the United States. People are beginning —perhaps reluctantly—to accept that they exist. It is difficult for such carriers to grow within the American domestic market other than by gobbling each other up, in which case they have to face the problems of anti-trust legislation. They can only grow overseas. So that is where they will go and that is why we must be in a position—as United Kingdom Limited—to compete effectively with them.

4.45 pm

In the end, I welcomed the Secretary of State's decision to refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, having initially been against it. I thought it would have been far better for my noble Friend to accept the initial bid by British Airways for British Caledonian. I knew that a great deal of flak would be flying for a fortnight and then it would stop, and the company could get on with creating the sort of main flag carrier that we wanted.

Interestingly, the recommendation made by the MMC was surely not created by it. It has come about because the initial bid by British Airways was not considered by the MMC as being in the public interest. The MMC went back to British Airways and said that it just would not do. British Airways took another look at what it could offer and came up with a different formula. The so-called conditions for the merger, which the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) thinks are the creation of the MMC, are nothing of the sort. They are merely the British Airways revised bid. The genius from British Airways who thought up the formula that seems to have succeeded in being readily accepted by the MMC and hon. Members on both sides of the House—with the sole exception of the hon. Member for Gordon—deserves a medal.

I accept what hon. Members have said about the fears of the smaller operators. However, many of those fears have been dealt with in the proposals. The issue of slots at airports may still persist, however. The relinquishment of 5,000 slots at Gatwick will certainly help. If certain routes are disposed of by the merged airline, other slots will become available.

A point that I have picked up from the recommendations is the suggestion that British Airways and British Caledonian should operate as one company. What about British Air Tours and British Caledonian's tour operations? At present, those are essentially two other companies. I want them all to be embraced in one company, so that that company can be treated as one unit when it comes to allocation of slots at airports.

When we were fishing around for information about how the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry might respond to what the MMC recommended, I picked up a copy of his objectives for the Department since he took office. I noticed that he said:

> "Business flourishes in a competitive and open economy and we aim to secure this both at home and abroad".

But civil aviation does not operate in those sorts of conditions. Today has seen the possibility of Britain taking the first steps to creating the type of market conditions in which that operation can take place. Internationally, that does not happen. This is a vastly over-regulated business in which national pride and prestige seek to prevail over the needs of the fare-paying passenger. That is to be deplored. Hopefully, now that Britain has taken the lead, we will see rapid change and reform in the European sphere and will be in a better state to take on and beat the Americans.

In its objectives the Department of Trade and Industry also says:

> "We seek to produce a more competitive market by encouraging competition and tackling restrictive practices, cartels and monopolies".

Nothing could apply more clearly than that to the civil aviation industry. Generally speaking, this is a good report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. This is one of the most complex problems that the commission has had to face for a long time. It solved the problem in three months and five days. Why on earth has it taken six months on every other matter that has been referred to it?

Mr. Douglas: I had an Adjournment debate on this matter just before the recess but I do not propose to cover that ground other than in one or two sentences. When the Minister replies to the debate on this technical motion, will he tell us what has happened to the Government's competition policy? I refer him to what a former right hon. Member, Mr. Enoch Powell, said about the control of public corporations. He said—and I paraphrase—that the House had managed to devise ways of controlling public corporations but what happened to the vast private corporations that are directly related to public utilities?

What happens to our control of British Telecom, British Gas and the newfangled body that will be created under whatever name and that will be a megacarrier? What organisations within the House will be responsible? Perhaps a Select Committee will look at it. We have no direct control, like the control held by the American Congress in relation to competition policy. To set up megacarriers here because they are suitable for operations in the United States is to fly in the face of or to ignore the huge background of legislation that the United States has devised and that goes back to the Sherman Anti-Trust Act 1890 to control such organisations within their economic framework.

It is unsatisfactory to argue that this merger gives the United Kingdom the ability to compete in international air traffic markets. We have a responsibility to consumers. However, my constituents will be much more attentively engaged in looking at the neglect of the House by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Today he issued a White Paper called, "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland". This is a great illustration of a newfangled newspeak. It is noticeable that there is not a Scottish Minister on the Government Front Bench, although they have been parading themselves on the media in Scotland. Not one Scottish Nationalist is presently in the House to examine this issue.

We have pressed the Secretary of State for Scotland to come to the House and make a statement on this issue. I shall not detain the House very long on it. Thousands of my constituents who are tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association have protested to me about the Government's proposals. This White Paper unites two disparate bodies, the Scottish Special Housing Association and the Housing Corporation, and is trying to create an organisation to force up rents. I know that time is short but I should like to quote this newspeak. Paragraph 1.25 says:

"Policies founded on the Government's objectives will inevitably result in a more diverse pattern of rents."

What the hell does that mean in real terms? It mean that rents will go up and that our folk will be forced to buy or forced to indicate to the public that they are among the poorest sections of the population.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) made a powerful plea about how Scottish Members are treated in the House. We made a great mistake in our treatment of hon. Members on both sides from Northern Ireland. I tell the House that we will not be treated that way. If Conservative Members believe that this is a United Kingdom Parliament and if they are interested in keeping the United Kingdom united, they will need to have a care about how they treat Scottish parliamentary business and Scottish Members. *[Interruption.]* There is no point in Conservative Members howling at me from sedentary positions. If they want to interrupt me they should get up. We will not wear this trickery and manipulation.

We know that a Government with a majority of 100 can win the votes in the House, but if the Government want to respect the United Kingdom they will have to have a care about how they treat hon. Members in all parts of the House. If the Government are really concerned about that, they should not have a repetition of what has happened today. They should not have advised you, Mr. Speaker, in the way that they did, because we had to use flexibility to get out of the situation. I tell Conservative Members that this must be the last time that this type of procedure is used, otherwise Conservative Members will carry the responsibility for the break-up of the United Kingdom.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Despite what I said some time ago, I judge it would be helpful to the House if I allowed Back Benchers to go on until 5.15 pm, at which time I will call the Front Benches. May I make a plea for very brief contributions?

Mr. David Marshall: I shall be brief. I want to make two points. I support my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) who welcomed this report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The MMC made the right decision and one that is in the best interests of British airlines and the jobs in the British airline industry.

Despite what some hon. Members have said, it is necessary for Britain to have a megacarrier to compete in the hard, real world of airline business. The one criticism that I have about the decision is that I regret that it was necessary to go to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the first place. On page 73 of the report, paragraph 8.70 says:

"Before the reference was made, BA offered to the Office of Fair Trading conditional undertakings:

(a) to give up 5,000 slots at Gatwick;

(b) not to oppose any application made to the CAA by any other airline seeking a licence to operate on routes already operated by BA and/or BCAL where the existing services of BA and BCAL would not be artificially constrained; and

(c) to submit to any examination conducted by the CAA of routes currently operated by BCA for the purpose of identifying those where further British competition would be desirable."

If that is the case, was it really necessary to refer the matter to the MMC? I hope that the Minister will answer that question. Would it not have been far more in the public interest to allow the merger to go ahead? All that has been achieved is a delay of three months and the writing-off of millions of pounds in the value of British Caledonian. There has also been a detrimental effect on shareholders, many of whom are pensioners who have no other income on which to depend. The delay caused unnecessary worry to British Caledonian employees who wondered what their future would be, and had an adverse effect on future bookings for British Caledonian flights. I would far rather that the referral had not taken place and would have preferred that the merger had gone ahead when it was first proposed. I think that that is the view of most of the employees in the industry. In an ideal world both airlines could have continued independently and would have been able to survive. However, it is not an ideal world and this is the best deal that could possibly have been made.

The speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) contained an inaccuracy. British Caledonian does not lose £7 million a year on the Glasgow to Gatwick route. It loses £7 million on all its United Kingdom domestic flights and benefits to the tune of £25 million as a result of the inter-lining that these flights provide for its other services. My hon. Friend should get his facts right.

Mr. Lambie: What about the workers in Glasgow?

Mr. Marshall: I shall come to that point. It is not often that I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, South, but I agree with him and with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) about future services provided by British Airways, British Caledonian and British Midland on Scottish-English routes. What guarantee will the Minister give that there will be no deterioration in these services and that jobs will be secure?

5 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I listened with great interest to the dissenting voice of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce). His proposition is perfectly respectable, but does he agree that, in the circumstances in which British Caledonian finds itself, the only alternative policy which the hon. Gentleman could pursue would be a take-over, either by an American or a European airline? In an ideal world, presumably neither he nor I would wish to see that, but, following his logic, it may be the only alternative. It may be instructive, therefore, to know whether the Liberals would prefer to dispose of British Caledonian, not to British Airways, which is after all a British company, but to a company in the United States or Europe.

Like many other hon. Members, I am impressed by the speed with which the MMC produced this report, particularly because the report is good for many of the parties involved. It is good for British Airways because it helps it to compete with the large American international airlines. It is undoubtedly good for the independent airlines because, although there is no guarantee that they will be allowed to take over some of the services relinquished by British Airways and British Caledonian, they have been given a new opportunity. In this vale of tears, there are few guarantees. It is an expensive exercise to start up an airline service, but this is a good report because it gives independent airlines a new opportunity.

[Mr. Robert McCrindle]

Most hon. Members know that for some years I have acted as an adviser to British Caledonian. The report is also good for British Caledonian. In the ideal world, it would have been preferable if it had not had to relinquish those routes which the joint airline will have to give up. In the circumstances, it is probably a good deal for BCal. It is a good start for an MMC report to be good for British Airways, BCal and independent airlines, but, most important of all, it is good for competition and, therefore, the consumer. That is the principal point with which we should have expected the report to deal. The hon. Member for Gordon indicates dissent, but I must remind him that, in addition to the considerable competition from many foreign airlines against British Airways—and which will continue to face the joint BA-BCal company—there is also an opportunity for new British airlines to compete over a wide area. As many hon. Members have said, this is a good report, which should be pursued at a commercial level. I hope very much that we shall be able to take the matter further.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), I wish to congratulate the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and, through him, the MMC, which rejected the original proposal made by British Airways to take over British Caledonian. Clearly, that was not in the interests of the consumer or of competition policy in this country. However, these revised proposals most certainly are in the interests of the consumer and of competition.

Effectively, most of the route structure that was British Caledonian and still is will now be the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. It will have to consider the various applications from British Airways and from the other independent airlines which over the past few weeks have expressed an interest in these routes and possibly an interest in taking over British Caledonian.

In a way, that enhances the Government's competition policy. It allows the Civil Aviation Authority to reconsider many domestic routes into Europe and come up with some proposals which will put the consumer first. I also want to mention the fact that over the next year or so there is the possibility of the deregulation of air fares in Europe. I see that, coupled with the reallocation of routes, as a very positive step.

Having said that, I believe that various Opposition Members have mistaken the very intricate way in which competition policy operates within the airline environment. On the one hand, there is international competition between one British carrier — in the main, British Airways—and various other foreign carriers, and on the other hand there is domestic and European competition essentially between a number of British airlines and continental operators.

The best aspect of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report is that it recognises the interests of the independents which operate charter services, domestic flights and flights to Europe. At the same time, the report appreciates the needs of British Airways into the 1990s to ensure that this country has a premier carrier that can compete effectively with other international carriers and most specifically with the American megacarriers. I commend the report as being a very good compromise.

Mr. Ingram: I have been following the merger issue with deep interest because I have a particular constituency interest. When the merger proposals were first mooted, the Rolls-Royce workers at the East Kilbride plant were fearful for their jobs. They were afraid for a specific reason, because the biggest civil contract on the repair and renewal side of the Rolls-Royce plant at East Kilbride relates to the British Caledonian engines. The workers were afraid that, if the merger went ahead, they would lose that contract and consequently lose jobs.

Only last week the joint trade unions were assured by the management that they had nothing to fear from the merger. They were told that British Caledonian engines would continue to be maintained at Rolls-Royce East Kilbride because British Airways could not handle the extra capacity which the merger would place upon that company in view of British Airways' current work load.

I have read a statement that has been issued about the merger. I found that the merger proposals now mean that, within one month of its acquiring a controlling interest in British Caledonian Group, British Airways will return all British Caledonian licences to operate domestic routes, including routes to the Channel Islands and routes between Gatwick and Paris, Brussels, Nice, Stockholm and Stuttgart. That can only mean one thing. There is panic among the trade unionists in East Kilbride because of today's statement. The trade unionists have interpreted the statement to mean that there will be fewer routes, fewer aircraft and fewer engines to maintain. Therefore, I want the Minister to give us a guarantee that no jobs will be lost in Rolls-Royce East Kilbride as a consequence of the merger. The Government have already caused job losses through the privatisation of Rolls-Royce. Please do not give us any more redundancies as a result of the merger.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I must confess that when the merger arose, I would have numbered myself among those who would have been sceptical about finding any sense in today's report. For that reason, several of my hon. Friends and I tabled an early-day motion. We were convinced that the whole cornerstone which gives the customer the best service at the best price would in some way be compromised. However, against that background, I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on having taken the decision to refer the issue to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Against that sceptical background, I must admit that the report makes an enormous amount of sense given that if we are sensible and fair-minded on both sides of the House—as we are occasionally—it was always going to be difficult to provide a report which made sense to all of the interests involved. It is also worth reinforcing the case that has already been made, that British Airways was extremely sensible in moving away from its original position to its final stance, which made it a great deal easier to achieve the rapprochement which the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has produced at the end of the day.

British Airways may win or lose over the slots issue at Gatwick and the question of the reallocation of routes. I believe that it is up to the independent airlines to state their cases clearly and get into the ring and put their money where their mouths are. I fully expect that the independents will do that.

From being a sceptic, I now believe that the report is extremely good. It is good for competition, for the customer and above all — and this will be recognised sooner or later by the smaller airlines — for the smaller airlines as well.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I feel slightly out of place as I am the first non-Caledonian Member on the Opposition Benches to be called in the debate. I am well aware that it is laid out in "Erskine May" that when we are discussing the takeover of British Caledonian, hon. Members must at least have some Caledonian blood.

We have heard reference to the fact that the merger has been a great success for the Government's competition policy. However, if the merger had been mentioned at the time of the privatisation of British Airways, I do not believe that it would have gone ahead. The idea was to encourage competition, not to swallow it up within less than two years of that takeover.

However, that is not the matter that I want to draw to the attention of the House in the short time remaining to me. I want to raise the matter of the unprecedented and certainly unorthodox way in which the takeover has proceeded, to the extent that Ministers have not been able to take their own decisions. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has pre-empted that decision and British Airways has pre-empted it by a process of plea bargaining.

We have heard that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was minded to reject the original takeover bid. British Airways then appeared to have sliced away elements of its takeover until it had reached the percentage of British Caledonian that it was to take over which the Monopolies and Mergers Commission regarded as acceptable. That is not the MMC's job. That is the job of Government Ministers responsible to the House. The MMC's job is to discuss takeover bids, not to discuss competition policy in the airline industry. That is the job of this House. The only increase in competition that we have seen as a result of the report and the decision announed today is the increase in competition between the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in another place as to who is really responsible for competition in the airline industry.

Paragraph 8.71 of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report states:

> "In response to the objections of various parties, and to anxieties which we expressed ourselves, BA also developed further its proposals for the merger."

That is plea bargaining and that is not a suitable way for us to decide what level of competition we require in the airline industry. For the airline attempting the takeover to slice away bits of the attempted takeover when it realises that things are going against it initially simply usurps the functions of Ministers and this House to discuss competition policy on the Floor of the House. It would make far more sense if the Monopolies and Mergers Commission said that it did not like a takeover bid, and Ministers could either overturn or agree with its recommendation. But if the MMC must agree the merger, that leaves Ministers with no function at all. We have had a nonsensical discussion today over a takeover bid that Ministers ultimately could not discuss, because the MMC had already agreed it on a plea bargaining basis with British Airways.

5.15 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I shall be very brief. I should like to say how much I agree with the conclusions of the MMC's report. I congratulate my right hon. Friends on deciding, against a background of controversy, to refer the bid to the commission. I find it remarkable that a number of Opposition Members spoke out against the decision to refer the bid. If we bear in mind that the Opposition Front Bench called for a referral, that shows the lack of an Opposition competition policy. Nevertheless, although there were elements of controversy and doubt, it was absolutely right to refer the bid to the commission.

I welcome the report's conclusions. It strikes the right balance between ensuring that there is competition in the aviation industry and, at the same time, preserving for the country a national airline in which we can all take pride.

Mr. Blair: I should like to ask the Minister certain specific questions.

First, does the Minister agree with British Caledonian's statement that the ultimate cause of the present position is the Government's inconsistent airline policy — in particular, the failure to transfer routes as recommended by the CAA in 1984? Does he agree that the concept of a second-force airline is now effectively dead? Does he regret that and does he feel that his Department bears any responsibility?

Does the Minister agree with the view of many hon. Members on both sides of the House that the most that can be said for the report is that it makes the best of a bad job? Is he aware of the views of the MMC on the issue of market dominance? Is he aware that the MMC believes that if the merger had gone through without conditions, it would have severely restricted competition, that the conditions will reduce the dangers of a restriction in competition, but that those dangers still remain? Could he quantify those dangers?

How likely is it that the availability of competition will be taken up by other airlines? Is it not the case that British Caledonian domestic licences are to be returned? There are 10 European licences to be returned. The merged airline has said that it will not oppose applications on the transnational routes. That is the theoretical framework, but can the Minister tell us what practical assumptions we can make that competition will occur as a result of the availability of licences to other airlines? Has the Department a view on that; and, if so, what is it?

Let me take up a point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan). I understand that British Airways has put certain proposals to the commission, and there has been negotiation about those proposals. Effectively, the report accepts them. I would turn the point round from the way in which it was put by Conservative Members. If the commission report states what British Airways wanted as its negotiating position, should that not give us even greater concern about competition, as British Airways has, in effect, determined the terms of the commission's report?

Will the Minister also deal with the number of slots at Gatwick airport? I understand that 5,000 slots must be returned and 20,000 may be returned. Am I right in believing that over 13,000 slots, now held by British Caledonian, will be held by the merged airline?

Dr. Reid: During his comments to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, will my hon. Friend make references not only to the substance of his remarks this afternoon, but to their form? I am not sure whether it was a statement.

[Dr. Reid]

a semi-statement or a thought for the day. I raise the matter because the form of the statement, or lack of statement, is a cover under which later today the Secretary of State for Scotland will deny the House a statement on the Government's proposals on Scottish housing. Through my hon. Friend, can I put the position to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster? The argument seems to be that he cannot make an official statement to the House today. No doubt the Secretary of State for Scotland cannot either, because today is Tuesday here. Such a statement is appropriate in the other place, because it is Wednesday there. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and I——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is intervening in his hon. Friend's speech.

Dr. Reid: I will be very brief.

Mr. Speaker: That is not fair. The hon. Member must put a question to his hon. Friend.

Dr. Reid: In that case, Mr. Speaker, will my hon. Friend ask the Minister whether there is not a contradiction? Today, the three people whom I have mentioned have been sitting in a Select Committee on the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Bill. As it is a hybrid Bill Committee, it is Wednesday for them. The Secretary of State for Scotland cannot make a statement to the House because he is in a different time zone—namely, Tuesday. Will he make the statement to me? I am here on Wednesday, and I promise not to tell my friends.

Mr. Blair: My hon. Friend has made his point very well. If he is confused by Government statements, he has that in common with the rest of us.

Does the Minister agree that what will concern people most following the publication of the report is the position of consumers? What guarantees can he give on prices and fares after the merger, and what will be the effect on jobs?

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) said that the Government's competition policy was intricate. Those of us who remember their refusal to send the purchase of the *Today* newspaper by Mr. Rupert Murdoch to the MMC find it anything but intricate or subtle. We were told at the time when British Airways was privatised that privatisation would result in greater competition for the consumer. Where does that leave not only the Government's competition policy, but their privatisation policy?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Francis Maude): Perhaps I can initially help the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who raised a complex issue to do with time warps. He was not certain of the nature of the event in which we are participating. Perhaps I can make that clear to him: this is what we call a debate.

It has been a useful debate, and a number of hon. Members have raised interesting points on the report of the MMC, which was produced, I believe, in record time. I should also like to join others who have congratulated the chairman and members of the commission on their achievement.

Dr. Reid: As this is a debate, perhaps you could answer a question. If you cannot make a statement here today

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should not refer to me.

Dr. Reid: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister cannot make a statement to the rest of the House because it is Tuesday, can he make a statement to the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) and myself? All day we have been working on Wednesday's business. Can the Minister give me an answer during the debate?

Mr. Maude: I had better steer clear of the metaphysics and get on with answering some of the points in the debate.

I must congratulate the MMC. Its achievement in completing the inquiry within three months is very remarkable, and I hope that it sets a precedent. It will enable more matters to be referred to the commission where appropriate, because it will not be possible for target companies to argue that the urgency of the financial position prevents a referral.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) raised a few points. I apologise if I cannot deal with all the detailed points that were raised because many of them were about aviation. I slightly regret that at this time of day we cannot participate in an aviation debate because, as I understand it, the business for the day was supposed to be a debate on transport, in which all those matters could have been raised in greater detail and at great length, and dealt with by a Transport Minister. If the Opposition had not suddenly started to take an interest in the wildlife of Felixstowe, we could have had that debate. It is entirely their fault.

With that caveat, I shall do my best to answer some of the points that have been raised. The hon. Member for Dagenham seemed to be in favour of the outcome of the inquiry. He accepted that there is an irresistible logic in the conclusion reached by the MMC. If I can summarise the feelings of most of those who have spoken in the debate, it seems to be the view that, given a difficult competition problem, broadly, the MMC has reached a sensible, practical conclusion, which enables competition to be retained, but also enables the undoubted benefits of the merger to be achieved.

Mr. Gould: Let me ask the Minister a question that falls squarely within the responsibilities of his Department and has little to do with the Department of Transport. As it is a matter of competition policy, can the Minister now restate the oft-repeated statement by his senior colleagues, including the current Secretary of State, that the essence, indeed the only criterion, of the Government's policy is competition?

Mr. Maude: I can do no more than refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement that has been made and repeated by my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State, that when a merger or a bid is referred to the MMC, the principal criterion will be competition, but not solely competition. In some cases, there may be a wider public interest, but I am not revealing anything that the hon. Gentleman does not know full well. There is still a wider public interest in some cases, but competition is the principal consideration that will be met.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) was concerned about employment. Of course, the MMC would have taken evidence and made a judgment on the overall public interest involved, taking into account not just competition but employment and other issues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) raised two principal points, the first of which is important. It concerns routes where two airlines are designated and whether the new merged airline will occupy both those routes. The answer is that BA proposes that the merged airline will operate as a single airline for designation purposes. Any airline wishing to take advantage of the bilateral opportunities must first have a licence from the CAA. I cannot speculate on who may apply for licences surrendered by BA or on who should get them. That is for the CAA and, on appeal, for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Some hon. Members were concerned about whether there is likely to be competition to take the licences that are returned. All that I can say is that the independent airlines have said repeatedly that they believe that they can run those services more cheaply than at present. I should be astonished if they did not come forward to take those licences, but I cannot make them apply. All that can be done — as will be done — is that the licences will be surrendered and it will be open for others to apply for them. It opens up an area of competition to the independent airlines which, at present, is not open to them. That must be a benefit for competition and the consumers. I am sure that the opportunity will be taken.

Mr. Blair: Does the Minister agree that the concept of a second force airline is now dead?

Mr. Maude: We shall have to see what emerges when the other airlines apply for the slots and the licences that will be available. I cannot speculate on who will apply, and it would not be proper for me to do so. But I have no doubt that successful independent airlines will take advantage of the competitive opportunities and make full use of them.

Mr. Blair: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

5.30 pm

Mr. Maude: I am sorry, but I shall not give way any more as it has been a short debate and Mr. Speaker properly said that we want to get back to the other business. I must press on.

The second point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton was about the transfer by BA of scheduled services to Gatwick or vice versa. The MMC considered the point that a merged BA and BCal might transfer its scheduled services to Gatwick, making it more difficult for its competitors to establish effective and profitable services at the airport. However, the MMC considered that it would not necessarily be more difficult for airlines operating from Gatwick to compete with BA operating from both airports than with BA operating from Heathrow and BCal from Gatwick. The commission also considered that the BA proposals to surrender slots will modify considerably the position of the merged airline at Gatwick and the possibility of it taking unfair advantage of its strength, to the detriment of other operators.

I understand that slots surrendered by BA will be reallocated by the Gatwick scheduling committee, in accordance with its usual procedures. I share the opinion expressed of the charter airlines by some of my hon. Friends. Those airlines have fully supported that system. My hon. Friend's point is met and will be safeguarded. Because the MMC made no adverse public interest finding, my right hon. Friend——

Mr. Ingram: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: I shall not give way any more.

Mr. Lambie: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Maude: I shall not give way any more, I am afraid.

Mr. Lambie: There are points to be made about Glasgow.

Mr. Maude: Any detailed points on aviation matters that have been raised——

Mr. Lambie *rose*——

Mr. Maude: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that if his hon. Friends had enabled the business to proceed as scheduled, all those matters could have been dealt with——

Mr. Ingram: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order.

Mr. Ingram: I understood that the Minister told my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) that this was a debate. If it is a debate, let him debate with us.

Mr. Maude: It is a short debate, principally on the MMC, not on aviation in general. I am here to reply on the competition aspects of the commission's report for which my Department is responsible.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hesitate to interrupt the Minister, but he keeps repeating that he is dealing with competition. The repository of competition in relation to aviation is the CAA. If the Minister cannot answer for the CAA, can a Minister responsible for transport come here to do that?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know what the Minister has in mind, but the truth is that the debate is on the motion that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr. Maude: You rightly correct me, Mr. Speaker.

I should like to deal with the broad competition aspects that were raised. Because of the public interest finding by the commission, my right hon. and noble Friend had no power to do anything other than publish the report. That was done at 9 o'clock this morning.

Mr. Lambie: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it correct that the Minister should not answer the specific points made by Scottish Members about the airlines flying from Edinburgh and Glasgow to London, and back? Surely the Minister can deal with that. You always remind me, Mr. Speaker, that this is a United Kingdom Parliament. If it is, surely Scottish Members are entitled to an answer. We do not accept an English Minister dealing with the report solely as English business. I am interested in jobs in Glasgow and Edinburgh. I am not too worried about jobs in Gatwick.

Mr. Speaker: The Minister must have an opportunity to reply in his own way. It is not for me to dictate to him.

Mr. Maude: If the hon. Gentleman wants me to reply to his specific point, I shall try to do so. He was concerned that competition on the Glasgow routes had resulted only in airlines offering breakfast where they had not done so before, and that it had had no significant effect on fares. He is wrong—it has had a significant effect on fares and the fares structure. There have been several other benefits in an improvement in the quality of service. If he does not want breakfast on the aeroplane, no one shall make him have it.

[Mr. Maude]

Some of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues made the reverse point. I was asked to give a binding guarantee that the service on that route would not be impaired in any way. I shall have to sort it out. I have no doubt that competition will continue to operate for the benefit of the consumer as it has — spectacularly — on that route. If anyone has any doubt about the beneficial effect of competition on airline routes, they need only consider the route across the Atlantic, for which fares have been dramatically reduced. I have no doubt that increased competition on domestic and European routes resulting from the proposals which the MMC has found not to be against the public interest will continue to be beneficial to the consumers.

Mr. Bruce: I pressed for an answer and would be interested to know who would take the decision if one airline applied for all the routes that are being shed. What would the Government's reaction be, and who would decide if such a bid were acceptable?

Mr. Maude: It has been made clear on many occasions that it is the CAA which decides who gets licences on any routes, whether they are returned by British Airways as in this case, or arise for the first time. The CAA makes the allocations. There is a right of appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but the CAA makes allocations on the basis it thinks proper. The CAA regards the merits of competition very highly and will have that very much in mind. My right hon. and noble Friend had no power to do other than publish the report. We have done that, and the report has broadly been welcomed.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) mentioned the form in which the proposals were made. We have made it absolutely clear to British Airways that we expect the proposals to be implemented within the time scale which has been set out. We have the power to make a full monopoly reference in future. Nothing I say can bind the Secretary of State's discretion in future, but we regard competition as crucial. My right hon. and noble Friend would not hesitate to use those powers in an appropriate case.

This has been a helpful debate. I am sorry that we could not have a full debate on the aviation aspect, but we have aired the issues. If there are any detailed points that I have not been able to deal with, my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for aviation and shipping will write to hon. Members. I advise my hon. Friends to join me in voting against the motion.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 266.

Division No. 65] **[5.40 pm**

AYES

Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Ray Powell.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony

Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Richard Ryder and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): We now resume the debate on amendment No. 33.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that during the small hours several of us had to draw your attention to the fact that several Conservative Members were in what appeared to be a comatose state. Some of my hon. Friends were so unkind as to suggest that perhaps they had been drinking. I rapidly disabused them of that idea because it would be improper for anyone to suggest that hon. Members came into the Chamber under the influence of alcohol.

That particular point has some substance on this occasion because, as you will recall, the issue of the champagne party that never was has run throughout the debate. During a Division when I was walking into the Aye Lobby I had to walk through the Conservative Benches. At the back I found a paper cup. Not only was there one paper cup, but there was a pile of them. I have a fairly acute nose and, while I do not have the ability to differentiate one wine from another, I certainly can smell and recognise alcohol. I can assure you that in the very spot where last night there were several comatose Conservative Members there is a pile of paper cups which smell of alcohol.

[Mr. Ron Davies]

I am not by nature a suspicious man, but I am inclined to put two and two together in this case. It dawns slowly on me that some Conservative Members who last night were obviously in a comatose state had been drinking. Can you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, give some guidance to the House, first, whether it is in order for hon. Members to bring in paper cups and, secondly, if it is in order, whether you can suggest that they restrict their bedtime drinks to cocoa rather than alcohol?

Mr. Harry Ewing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a related matter and perhaps you can deal with both points at the same time. I heard some complaints from Conservative Members that last night when the party was going on Tory Members who went to the beanfeast first got more than their fair whack of drink and food at the expense of P and O and that those who went last had to satisfy themselves with the leftovers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can deal with these points. We have been round this course many times before. These are not matters for me. I am sure that the whole House will agree that if we continue having points of order like this, we shall all be comatose. I call Sir Eldon Griffiths.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Before the events of the past two hours——

Mr. Allen McKay: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall speak to amendments Nos. 34 and 35 which are linked with amendment No. 33. Would it be better for the hon. Gentleman to answer questions on all three amendments together or would he prefer to deal with amendment No. 33 and then the others?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As we have had an intervening debate, perhaps I should have made it clear to the House that we are discussing amendment No. 33, which is being discussed together with amendments Nos. 34 and 35.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am sure that it is right that I should speak briefly to these amendments because they are all related to each other. The first would reduce the length of time during which the port authority would be required to complete all the works that are authorised by the Bill from 10 years to five years.

I have discussed the matter in some detail with the promoters of the Bill, contractors, and those who are skilled in the construction of large-scale works of this type. Their unanimous view is that a lead time of only five years is insufficient to enable the totality of the job to be done right. Of course, as the House would expect, there has been a good deal of pre-planning and preparation. But when one considers the long lead times that are involved in projects of such a large scale and the requirements that the House has rightly placed upon the promoters to have regard to environmental matters—that is, to wildlife and so on — the proposition that the matter could be planned, constructed and opened to meet all the requirements of the port and the legislation within a five-year period, with respect to the movers, is unreasonable. Therefore, the 10-year period should remain in the Bill.

Amendment No. 34 would delete the words that enable the Secretary of State, in his judgment, to extend that period of time. That is a fairly normal provision in such legislation. Of course, there can be many changes in the total economic and financial circumstances of the company and the country. Only recently, we saw some of the vagaries of the financial system. We have all gone through periods when, for one reason or another, there have been balance of payments crises when the country has been more prosperous or less prosperous. In such circumstances, it is right that the Secretary of State, having regard to the totality of ports policy and the country's general economic situation, should not be denied the option, if he judged it right — of course, being accountable to the House — to give some extension beyond that time if it seems appropriate.

Amendment No. 35 deals with what I call planning arrangements. It has properly been said that the Bill provides the authority with some planning powers that arise from the legislation. Clause 14(b), which amendment No. 35 would affect, was the result of an agreement reached between the dock company and the Suffolk county council when our colleagues were examining the Bill in great detail. Of course, the Suffolk county council is the planning authority. It originally objected to the scheme and was not prepared to withdraw its objections, and, indeed, its potential petition against the Bill, unless it was satisfied, across a whole range of planning matters, that the county planning committee and the county planners quite properly wanted to have settled. Therefore, the arrangement is that the clause as it stands will prevent the dock company from erecting any sort of structure, including stacks of cargo, above a height of 17 m, which I assume to be a good deal short of the height of the Chamber. The company is not permitted to erect such a structure without going through the normal planning procedures with the local authority.

However, for what the House will recognise to be quite obvious reasons, there are some items that any port must have, such as gantries, cranes, jibs, lighting towers and booms, which, by definition, cannot fall within such limits. The Bill provides that those items would be installed by the port without the specific planning consent that is required for other items.

6 pm

As I was aware of the concern of many right hon. and hon. Members about the impact of bright lights shining from some height in a rural area, I discussed with the promoters the possibilities of ensuring that any lights that are positioned at a considerable height above the ground are shaded and pointed downwards to help dockers in the course of loading and unloading cargo. I was aware of the concern that such lights should not shine outwards across the estuary or the countryside. I am advised that it is possible to provide shading of a sort that will reduce the environmental impact. It is not possible, of course, to eliminate that impact.

If we are trying to build a modern port that is able to compete with ports in the rest of the world, it is necessary that the port authority should be able to use the implements of its business. The full planning requirements apply to any structure over 40ft above the ground save for specific items that cannot, in modern times, be kept below that height. I hope that the House will not press the amendments to a Division. If they were accepted, they would abort the ability of the company to create a modern port to compete with the entire world.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) has put his finger on the issues that are causing us concern. First, I accept what he has said about 10 years and five years. It would be a massive construction to complete within five years. Discussion on amendment No. 33 has made it clear that the port authority decided to bypass the local authority because it knew that the local authority would not grant it planning permission. Instead, it decided to use the parliamentary system, which means that a local, democratically elected authority need not be involved in the granting of planning permission. I hope that the House will address itself to the implications of the parliamentary system in due course. A local authority that is elected through the ballot box by the public can be placed in a position in which it is unable to express the public's opinion. That is why amendments Nos. 33, 34 and 35 should be accepted by the House.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend has expressed the dissatisfaction that is felt by many with the parliamentary system, as he has described it. He knows as a former member of a local authority that an application that is refused by a local planning authority can be sent ultimately to the Secretary of State for determination. Does he accept that the parliamentary system has no realistic role if it enables local authorities to be bypassed?

Mr. McKay: My hon. Friend is right. Bills of the sort that we are discussing make Parliament the planning authority. In this instance the issue has come directly to the Secretary of State, and he will make a decision. This means that the Secretary of State is involved politically from the beginning in a planning application. Surely that is not right.

Part of clause 14(1)*(a)* reads:

"or at the end of such extended period as the Secretary of State may, on the application of the Company, allow".

Again, the Secretary of State is involved politically. If money is available to use the parliamentary system it will be used, but that does not make the system right. Indeed, it makes it wrong. It will be possible for the Secretary of State to be approached and for an application to be made to extend the 10-year provision. There will be no need to make submissions to the local authority. There is not even provision for consultation. It is not necessary to obtain the local authority's views, which are the people's views. The matter can be determined between the Secretary of State and the board.

History is littered with those who have determined planning applications and run foul of the law. I am not saying that that will happen in this instance, but it is clear that it could when we have regard to what has happened in the past. That should be noted carefully at a time when we are involving the House as a planning authority and the Secretary of State is using his political powers, the local authority being unable to use the powers that rightly belong to it.

In speaking to amendment No. 35, the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds said that the overhead lights could be pointed downwards, which I accept. However, if lights are positioned 60, 70 or 80 ft above the ground, the surrounding area will be illuminated to some extent irrespective of any shading that is provided. The amendment would remove the following words:

"other than lights and lighting towers, cranes, trolleys, gantries, jibs or booms".

In other words, it would bear on everything in the docks. The worrying feature is that these items can be built without having to engage in consultation or make planning applications. The powers that the Secretary of State will give the board will make it a free entity and it will be able to do virtually what it wants. These are matters that should concern the whole House. There is every danger that the visual amenities of an area will be destroyed without recourse to the local authority, which represents the people. It is clear that there need be no consultation. Too much power will be in the board's hands.

Mr. McCartney: I listened intently to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), as I have done for the past 22 hours. I am more than worried by the concept he is promoting within the Bill and the use of the private Member's Bill procedure to circumvent planning regulations.

An attempt is being made to bypass planning regulations by using the general development order provisions of 1977, whereby a development that is authorised by a private Act of Parliament is deemed to have planning consent. Therefore, this House is being used as a planning authority, and the democratic controls that apply in local authority planning are absent from the parliamentary system.

The Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Energy take a rather dim view of deemed consent when it comes to negotiating with local authorities about the way in which they proceed with issues such as opencast developments. It is less than three years ago when the deemed consent regulations were scrapped and the opencast authority was made, by changes in regulations, to go through appropriate planning procedures and come under the control of local planning authorities, with the safeguard of a right of appeal to the Secretary of State if a planning application was not determined or was determined against the applicant. In part, the Bill is an attempt to reimpose the deemed consent procedure at a time when the Government are beginning in many ways to get rid of it. They regard it as undemocratic. It works against local planning regulations and the county structure plans that the Department of the Environment implemented under the Local Government Act 1972. On two occasions since then the county councils have renewed the plans. In the end the Secretary of State has to approve them as the general plans for the whole county.

The Secretary of State also has control over local district council plans. It is nonsense to suggest that the amendments would reduce the power of the Secretary of State. They would enable the Secretary of State to be involved in every part of the planning process; more important, they would give local authorities, local organisations and ratepayers an opportunity to be involved in the planning process. In regard to this port development the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds wants to have his cake and eat it. He wants the port authority to be able to develop the land over the next 10 years, with only certain restrictions. At the end of that time the port authority could go back to the Secretary of State to ask for an extension of the arrangement. That is unacceptable and undemocratic.

Under present planning regulations if, at the end of the five years, the harbour board has not completed its redevelopment proposals it should have to submit further proposals under the proper planning procedures. The local authority could consider those proposals in conjunction with the local and county structure plans already approved by the Secretary of State.

[Mr. McCartney]

The promoters are attempting to get 10 years of unfettered development. After that they want a further period of unfettered development, cutting out the role of the local authority. If the Secretary of State for the Environment allowed an engineering company or any other company in the private sector to take advantage of the same arrangements for major development instead of going through the normal planning procedures, the House would have to deal with so many private Bills that there would be no room for any other business.

The Bill is an expensive and wasteful way of dealing with planning. It is expensive not only in its use of the time of the House but of the time of councillors who want to oppose the procedures. Such a procedure usually ends with a compromise whereby local authorities are beaten down to the lowest common denominator and whereby the promoters of the Bill are left virtually unscathed. That cannot be acceptable to the House or to the Department of the Environment which wants good planning concepts.

6.15 pm

Specific items in the Bill have not been considered in conjunction with the county structure plan already approved by the Secretary of State. The dock extension has not been properly considered locally. The land reclamation resources of the scheme have not been tested against the local plan or the county structure plan. The county council authority responsible for land reclamation resources and the distribution of development land has had no say on how this prime piece of land should be utilised over the next 10-15 years or on the effect that that will have on the economy of the locality either because of the immediate dock proposals or the industries that may be attracted to the hinterland.

The Bill does not deal with the effect of land use on the county plan or the local plan. The local authorities and communities may feel that the land use proposed in the Bill is irrelevant and may not fit in with plans already approved. That is evident from the contributions of hon. Members over the last 22 hours.

Nor does the Bill address the problems of areas of outstanding beauty. It is here that the most glaring omissions appear. Given that the Secretary of State for the Environment has already approved the county structure plan, which includes areas of special scientific interest and protected wetlands, the proposals in the Bill will not be acceptable to the local authorities, to any subsequent inquiry or to the Secretary of State.

The Government have been in collusion with the promoters of the Bill on avoiding the planning procedures. They have actually side-stepped their own Department of the Environment which rightly has the responsibility of ensuring that county structure plans are not fundamentally undermined. The Government believe in central Government control of planning procedures, but when it comes to the private interests of friends in the City, such as P and O, they are prepared to waste the time of the House, to undermine the rights of the House and to undermine their own planning procedures and the role of the Secretary of State for the Environment. That is astonishing. During the last 22 hours not one Minister has come to the Dispatch Box to protect the policies of his or her Department.

Further, the Bill does not deal with the effects of tidal movements. Within the county structure plan there has been agreement about the effect of tidal movements on the shore and on wildlife habitats. The county council will have a wildlife strategy. Because of the private Bill procedure there has been no consideration whether the development will be detrimental to the environment. In the debate hon. Member after hon. Member has quoted report after report, indicating the terrible effects that the Bill will have not just in the short term but in the long term on the ecology of the area.

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds has been driven to accept amendments. But the acceptance of amendments at this late hour will not prevent the damage that the Bill will do to the local and county structure plans. Through those plans the community is attempting to protect the social environment and the development of the economic base for the benefit of other ports in the vicinity. That is another reason why the Bill is a bad piece of legislation. The county structure plan covers the integral development of industry for the county as a whole. Yet only a few miles down the road and across the river other ports will be affected dramatically by the Bill. The Bill ignores completely how the economy will be affected, because it is a short-term measure for short-term capital gains by the company.

The role of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Trade and Industry has been undermined. If we are to believe the Government's policy of promoting industry in the regions and developing a co-ordinated approach to industry, its infrastructure and transport, Ministers should not have voted as they did tonight in support of a Bill which undermines the concept of industrial strategy and the planning of industrial resources.

We have not given enough consideration to environmental pollution during our debates; I am as much to blame for that as anyone. This estuary lies within the area of two other ports, at one of which — Harwich — major developments will take place. There will be increasing traffic, and ships will have to turn round in the estuary. Yet the Bill does not mention environmental pollution, especially accidents resulting from oil spillage. But had we gone through the proper planning procedures in the county structure, we could have developed an environmental pollution policy and related it to major industrial development such as the dock proposal. But not one Minister from the Department of Energy or the Department of the Environment has come to the Dispatch Box and given adequate answers about our protection in cases of environmental pollution if something went wrong because of the extension of the ports in the vicinity.

Agreed democratic local and county structure plans will be totally ignored because of the short-term gains of the Bill. But if we have learnt anything from the past 22 hours, it is this: that private Bill procedures are a gross intrusion into the House and give people the ability to find their way through the planning procedure and to brush aside, because of their ability to purchase in the market place, the concept of community involvement in the environment.

That is the most worrying aspect, not the fact that the Bill might become law. In becoming law, it will set a precedent. Departments involved in the planning process, in the process of protecting the environment and in protecting us from environmental pollution, have not only sat on their hands and said nothing, but when it has come to the vote Ministers have trooped through the Lobby to promote the interests of a company that has paid £30,000 to Tory party funds. If that is not abuse of the House, I do not know what is.

I commend the amendments to the House in general, and, even at this late stage, to Conservative Members. I give them an opportunity to regain their credibility so that the public can see that they are not interested only in the private greed of individuals.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 115, Noes 245.

Division No. 66] **[6.25 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Buckley, George
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Ingram, Adam
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bottomley, Peter
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartwright, John
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick

Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Michael Brown.

Question accordingly negatived.

6.30 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I call amendment No. 36.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Could the House settle down please? The hon. Gentleman is attempting to move his amendment.

Mr. Lloyd: Once again, Conservative Members are in a lively mood. It must be the after effects of last night.

In moving the amendment, may I make the point that it is technically deficient? For that reason we have no desire to push the matter to a vote. I am sure that that will relieve the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) who need not make any comments unless he so wishes.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Gentleman seeking to withdraw the amendment?

Mr. Lloyd: I have not moved it.

Madam Deputy Speaker: If it has not been moved, we move on——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): May I just say that the amendment, which has been moved——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment has not been moved—*[Interruption.]* As the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said that he was not moving the amendment, it cannot be debated.

Clause 16

RESTRICTION ON DEVELOPMENT OF TRIMLEY MARSHES

Mr. Morley: I beg to move amendment No. 37, in page 14, line 44, at end insert 'and'.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this we will discuss the following amendments: No. 38, in page 14, line 45, leave out from 'work' to end of line 3 on page 15.

No. 39, in page 15, line 3, at end insert—

'(1A) Neither the Company nor the owner of Trimley Marshes or any part thereof for the time being shall have power to promote a Bill in Parliament for amending or repealing this section.'.

No. 40, in page 15, line 20, at end insert—

'"The Company" means the Company or any subsidiary of the Company, any company of which the Company is a subsidiary, and any successor in title to the undertaking;

"owner" means any owner or occupier;

"subsidiary" has the meaning given to it by section 736 of the Companies Act 1985.'.

Mr. Morley: This is the final batch of amendments in a debate that, by my reckoning, has lasted 23 hours and 35 minutes. I wish briefly to pay tribute to all those who have taken part in the debate, which has in no way been frivolous or trivial. I intend to explain why we want the amendments incorporated in the Bill, but before doing so I want to thank all hon. Members who have participated in the debate over such a long time. It is obviously because they care so passionately about the environmental, commercial and long-term consequences of the development.

Amendment No. 37 states, "at end insert 'and'." It is simply a drafting amendment that would make the clause read better—

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You will appreciate the considerable concern among Opposition Members who wish to expedite the proceedings without undue delay. It is obvious that the Government Whips have taken it upon themselves to bring in Government supporters, who are sitting idly chattering. It is of no concern to me whether they enter the Chamber, but is there not a responsibility on them to conduct themselves in a way that allows my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) to make his speech and permits all those interested to hear what he has to say?

Mr. Morley: I thank my hon. Friend. I have not been a Member of the House very long, but, coming from local government, I have been surprised by the ignorance and rudeness of some Conservative Members. Those who have been here longer than I should try to set an example by their manners and standards.

Amendment No. 38 seeks to deal with the fact that at the moment the construction of agricultural buildings is allowed on the marshes to the north of the docks that are being offered in compensation as a nature reserve. Many environmental groups, rambler groups and local people do not wish to see a site that is being offered as a compensatory nature reserve spoilt by any kind of agricultural buildings.

Amendment No. 39 tests the good faith of the Bill's promoters in their commitment to the environment. It seeks a guarantee that the company, although offering Trimley marshes by way of compensation for the environmental destruction that will go with the building of the dock, will not at some later date seek to do exactly what it has done in this Parliament — move a private Bill to expand the dock, this time on the marshes that are being offered as a nature reserve.

Amendment No. 40, which is linked with amendment No. 39, makes it clear that, should there be a change in the ownership of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Company, the new owners cannot come to Parliament and seek a private Bill in order to expand upon Trimley marshes, the area that is being offered for a nature reserve.

I do not want to keep the House too long. Much of what I want to say has already been said in this 23-hour debate. However, there has been reference to the fact that the Nature Conservancy Council was not allowed to give evidence on the environmental damage and consequences of the dock.

Mr. Ron Davies: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the Government have had a rethink and that if the Bill were to be re-presented, the NCC would now be allowed to petition? That is the direct result of the circumstances that the original procedure illustrated. Therefore, it would now be possible for the NCC to voice its opposition fully.

Mr. Morley: I cannot give my hon. Friend a definite answer, but, as I understand it, there is that possibility.

However, I have managed to obtain a copy of the NCC's report, which contains details of what it would have told the Committee had it been allowed to do so. Apart from emphasising the NCC's duties, the report goes into the effects of the proposed developments on the nature conservation interest and deals with the inter-tidal area, Fagbury flats, and the River Stour. It says:

> "The Nature Conservancy Council note that the Bill would result in the destruction of nature conservation interests in an area identified as a proposed Site of Special Scientific Interest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and as a site which qualifies for protection under international agreements to which the United Kingdom is a party. This destruction would represent a further loss of habitat following the loss of approximately 10 per cent. of the saltmarsh which, together with adjacent mudflats, was covered by the present docks and industrial developments."

It has also been pointed out that the site was identified by the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance, to which the Government are a signatory. The Government seem to be ratting on Ramsar by refusing to recognise an agreement that they entered into, simply for the short-term gain of the company concerned, so destroying a wetland of international importance.

6.45 pm

The report also contains in great detail the work done by the NCC on the species in the area. It might interest hon. Members to know that, when we talk about the international context of this important site, ringing studies of birds in the area have shown that individuals using the Suffolk and Essex coastal sites, as well as many other parts of Britain also use, at other seasons, Canada, Greenland, Iceland, USSR, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal and Congo Brazzaville.

To save going through the whole detailed report, let me read the concluding paragraph of what would have been put before the Committee had the NCC been allowed to appear. It says:

> "In view of all I have said, the Nature Conservancy Council has advised that the passage of this Bill would lead

[Mr. Morley]

> to serious damage to nature conservation interests and the national and international status of the Orwell Estuary. The Nature Conservancy Council consider that the interests of nature conservation would best be served if the Bill is not enacted."

That is a detailed independent scientific examination of the situation.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Will the hon. Gentleman give the date of that statement by the NCC?

Mr. Morley: It is dated 24 May 1985. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman thinks that there is some significance in that.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: During the course of the Standing Committee that examined the Bill and the negotiations between the county council and other parties, many changes have been made to the Bill—some, indeed, in the House, but particularly in Committee and in negotiations with the county planning authority—which I am sure would change the view that the NCC had at that time.

Mr. Morley: I am not in a position to speak for the NCC. It can speak for itself. However, I do know something of its research techniques and I should be extremely surprised if, having made such a detailed study as this, it would have changed its findings or recommendations in any way.

Mr. Ron Davies: Let us be clear about this, because the point raised by the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is important. My hon. Friend has recognised that he does not speak for the NCC, nor is he qualified to do so. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds is not qualified or capable of speaking for the NCC on this matter either. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the NCC is the statutory body established by the Government and charged with the duty of advising them on nature conservation matters so that we can be clear about its function and role?

Mr. Morley: I shall be glad to do so. Let me summarise the NCC's functions. They are:

> "the establishment, maintenance and management of Nature Reserves; the provision of advice for the Secretary of State"—

who does not seem to be taking it on this occasion—

> "or any other Minister for the development and implementation of policies for and affecting nature conservation in Great Britain; the provision of advice and dissemination of knowledge about nature conservation"—

again, that is not going very far here—

> "the commission or support (whether by financial means or otherwise) of research which in the opinion of the Council is relevant to these matters.
>
> The Nature Conservancy Council has a duty under Section 48 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to notify owners, occupiers, the local planning authority and the Secretary of State of any area of land which is of special interest by reason of its flora, fauna or geological or physiographical interest. The Nature Conservancy Council has given notice of its intention so to notify the estuary and intertidal land of the river Orwell including the intertidal land which is the subject of the present Bill."

That could not be any clearer in terms of what the NCC, an independent professional body, thinks about the development of the River Stour.

I turn briefly to the objections to the replacement of the mud flats by Trimley marshes, which is agricultural arable land of low-grade quality. The NCC study points out:

> "Intertidal areas represent one of the most natural habitats, little affected by man, remaining in Britain. Artificial creation of such areas has not been achieved, despite investigation of the feasibility of this elsewhere in the country. Even if such attempts were made, several years would be required, firstly, to acquire, design, construct and maintain such sites, secondly, to allow sediments to settle and stabilise, thirdly to enable small mud-dwelling animals to establish themselves, and fourthly to allow time for these to grow to sufficient size and density to provide for most bird species. Until this time had elapsed it will be impossible to test whether such creation of habitat is feasible."

That deals with some of the points made earlier in relation to the offer of Trimley marshes for the area that will be destroyed.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has tried during the past few hours to correlate the connection between the company, the Bill and the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the Minister of State, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Although there has been a denial of any involvement with either group, I have just watched the right hon. Member in deep conversation with the company. That is a sign of the arrangements that have been going on behind the scenes. It is absolutely disgraceful that a Minister responsible for agriculture and its protection has been acting behind the scenes. It shows what has been happening.

Mr. Morley: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is amazing that after all the things that I have told the House and the wealth of detailed evidence that we have about the impact of the development on our environment and on the international environment, Ministers with responsibility for the environment have not taken part in the debate. Although I accept that this is a private Bill, I am surprised that when a Government body, the NCC, advises Ministers, those Ministers, who are party to international conventions, have chosen not to take that advice or to consider the consequences of the development.

Mr. McCartney: I try your patience, Madam Deputy Speaker, but could you not call back the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) to give us an explanation of the discussions that have taken place? That might throw some light on what has been happening behind the scenes for the past 23 hours. Where is the right hon. Gentleman? He has rushed out of the House—and that says everything.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have no jurisdiction to require any right hon. or hon. Member in the House to speak.

Mr. Morley: I do not wish to say much more, but having put forward my views on these four linked amendments, and bearing in mind that they are designed as friendly amendments to strengthen the Bill and to give some confidence to local people, especially to conservationists, I ask that we ensure that the company is serious when it says that it is prepared to accept the environmental consequences and to recognise that there has been environmental damage. We are asking for an undertaking that Trimley marshes will be protected and will not be vulnerable to any future expansion or development of the dock. It would be outrageous if, having given the undertaking to provide Trimley marshes as a substitute—presumably some money will be spent on it and it will be laid out as a nature reserve—the company reneged on that at a later date. That might be done by another company. We do not know, because we are talking about years from now and we have no idea what would happen in the circumstances.

I respectfully ask the Minister for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), as a sponsor of the Bill, whether he is willing to accept the four amendments.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I hope that the House will accept that I am anxious to help hon. Members, especially on environmental matters. As a result of our discussions the Bill has been improved on the environmental side in several ways. I should like to suggest one or two other ways in which further environmental protection could be achieved. However, I shall deal first with the amendments.

Clause 16, which the amendments would change, was included in the Bill at the Committee stage wholly at the insistence of the Select Committee—that is to say, our colleagues. In effect, they imposed a clause on the promoters to meet points of concern that had been put to them, primarily by local residents who expressed fears that once the proposed works were completed, additional dock development might take place further along the Orwell. Clause 16 was put in the Bill specifically to create a buffer zone against extending the limits of the Felixstowe dock. It achieves that by prohibiting any further developments in the adjoining Trimley marshes.

However, there are three exceptions and, in fairness, I must tell the House what they are. The further developments that could take place in Trimley marshes, given the general prohibition of clause 16, are, first, developments that are connected with the nature reserve that is to be provided for public benefit by Trinity college and the dock company. The Committee wanted that provision so that the new nature reserve could be created there. I am sure that the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) would welcome that. He would probably like it to be bigger, and perhaps I would, too. However, surely that is a correct exception to the general bar on any further development at Trimley.

The second exception relates to landscaping to ameliorate the effect of the proposed works. The Committee was absolutely right to say that that should be a proper exception to the general bar on any development. The third exception to that general bar is certain developments for farming purposes. As the hon. Gentleman said, that land is not particularly good arable land. Perhaps I could best describe it as modest.

However, there are several farmers, who are tenants of Trinity college. During the passage of the Bill, the fellows of Trinity and especially its enlightened bursar, Mr. John Bradfield, have been at pains to say that they would not be party to a Bill that caused any environmental damage that was not more than compensated for by environmental enhancements. Trinity college has been in the lead in achieving the new nature reserve that is to be placed on Trimley marshes. However, the college has a number of tenant farmers and unfortunately one of them will be required to lose 176 acres of his land because it is needed for the proposed nature reserve. Trinity insisted, and the farmer agreed, that the land should be used for a nature reserve. I am sure that the House, while sympathising with the farmer, will welcome that.

7 pm

I understand the object behind amendments Nos. 37 and 38, but they remove the exemption from the general ban on any kind of development in respect of tenant farmers. Under the amendments, such farmers could not put up even medium-sized agricultural buildings without going through normal planning procedures. No other farmer has to do that. The House might not agree, but farmers have a right to erect agricultural buildings without planning consent. Perhaps the law should be changed, but it cannot be right that the only farmers who need to have planning consent are the tenant farmers on Trimley marshes.

Mr. Morley: People are worried because of that problem. Farmers do not need to have permission to erect buildings on their land and that has led to problems in many rural constituencies. Perhaps the law should be examined at some future date.

The tenant farmers have been around for a considerable time. I should have thought that they already had the buildings that they need. If we are to develop a nature reserve the last thing we want is for a large and ugly structure, such as a barn or crop drier, to disfigure the landscape.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I understand that, but a private Bill is not the instrument for solving a general problem. The suggestion discriminates against farmers who live in a particular area. Tens of thousands of buildings erected by farmers might cause offence but it cannot be right to pick on a particular group.

I have been involved in farming and I know that it is changing rapidly. Changes have been made in the common agricultural policy and in the uses of land. It would be unfair to sterilise a particular group of farmers who, being Trinity's tenants, will have to take account of Trinity's view of the type of buildings that they can erect. Trinity's own reputation is at stake and it will not want to be seen as desecrator of the environment.

Amendments Nos. 39 and 40 would prevent for all time the dock company, or any owner of Trimley marshes, from applying to Parliament for amendment to or appeal against the provisions of clause 16. It is a constitutional problem. Hon. Members who have been in the House for some years will see the difficulty of binding a future Parliament so that it cannot amend the clause. If the Labour party happened to have a majority in the House and it wanted to do something about clause 16 it would be prevented from doing so. That would wrongly and unconstitutionally fetter a future House of Commons.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman cannot have his cake and eat it. The Bill makes normal planning procedures unnecessary, yet the Bill's promoters use its technicalities for their own ends. The hon. Gentleman says that the amendments are unconstitutional and that they will fetter Parliament, but he cannot have it both ways. He must accept that some people will want to curtail his efforts.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I understand the hon. Gentleman. For my sins, I was a Minister responsible for planning. One thing that I came to understand was that a number of statutory bodies have no other place to go for planning consent but the House of Commons. For example, the British Railways Board has to come to the House every year with a British Rail Bill because only this House can deal with a statutory body's planning requests. The same applies to the CEGB. Felixstowe is a statutory company.

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

set up by Parliament. Its access to planning is through this place. It has no other place to go. That became apparent to the Committee when it studied the Bill.

The Bill does not give Felixstowe the ability to evade the planning law. As a statutory body it has to come to Parliament for planning agreement. That is my answer to the hon. Gentleman. I am not able to accept the amendments but I understand the concern behind them. I want to help if I can.

I respect the Nature Conservancy Council. As a Minister, I dealt with that organisation frequently. But during negotiations on the Bill enormous numbers of environmental additions were agreed. For example, 176 acres of land are to go into the new wetlands. There will be two or three huge new lagoons particularly suited to various kinds of water bird. Significant changes have been made to improve landscaping. About 500,000 new trees are to be planted — not all the kind that I like. As a result of debates in the House, new powers have been given to the Secretary of State to assist in the protection of navigation. That is important, not only to the big ships but to the small dinghies.

Mr. Morley: While the changes to the wetlands and the lagoons are beneficial, they will not support the same species of bird to be displaced. The fresh lagoons will attract some waders but the habitat for other waders will be destroyed. A habitat will be found for a different range of species but it will not compensate the species that loses its habitat.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: One of the more agreeable features of proceedings on the Bill, despite the length of time that we have spent on it, has been learning to respect one's colleagues whom one has not known well before. The hon. Gentleman's contributions about wildlife last night were fascinating. I learned a lot from him. I hope that he will take that as a sincere compliment.

Of course I recognise that the new provision will not entirely meet that which was available before, but it strikes a balance. When I agreed to promote the Bill I told the company that I would not do so unless I was satisfied that, on balance, the environmental disbenefits — there are bound to be disbenefits — were more than matched by the overall environment enhancements. I believe that we are achieving an improved balance overall.

I conclude with a suggestion to the hon. Member for Wentworth, (Mr. Hardy). In the Felixstowe area there is a liaison committee between the dock company, the county council planners, the local Suffolk Coastal planning authority and the parish council that meets two or three times a year to discuss the interaction of dock company activities on the local community and on the environment. I would be delighted if the hon. Member for Wentworth and his hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe would attend a meeting of the liaison group and openly express their concerns. They would find that they would receive a sympathetic reception and that perhaps some good would come from it.

It is regrettable that in the course of last night's votes some of the amendments that I proposed were lost. We need not recriminate about that. When the Bill goes to another place it might be useful for there to be discussions with the promoters of the Bill to see — I cannot make any promises — whether they would be able to accommodate further amendments. I hope that hon. Gentlemen will not feel obliged to press the amendments and that we can move on to Third Reading.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): If I read the position of my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) correctly, it is that, given the encouragement from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir Eldon Griffiths), that will probably go some way to satisfying us, as there are obvious possibilities of speaking to Members in another place. For that reason, it is not the intention of my hon. Friends to pursue the amendments to a vote. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Motion and Question proposed, That Standing Order No. 205 (Notice of Third Reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: I think it is incumbent upon me to remind the House that this is a private Bill and explain that this is a single motion, the effect of which, if agreed to, is that the Bill will be read the Third time. There is no separate Question or Division on Third Reading. The Bill is now open for Third Reading. I call Sir Eldon Griffiths.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am willing to listen to what other hon. Members have to say before I intervene, and I prefer so to do.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I was paying the hon. Member a tribute by giving him the first call. I call Mr. Peter Hardy.

7.15 pm

Mr. Hardy: Some hon. Members believe that we opposed the Bill to protect the mud flats, the coastal ecology, and the fauna and flora. I emphasise that our opposition to the Bill was based on the fact that the Government appear to have accepted, with an apparent eager and uniform readiness, that a firm, clear and specific international commitment should be disdained. That sad reality, above all, was the basis of our long hours of sustained, consistent commitment today.

7.16 pm

Mr. McCartney: I will not prolong proceedings. We have already been going over 24 hours. On behalf of Labour Members who have participated in the debate, I place on record our rejection of any suggestion that the debate has been anything other than serious. We have been accused of being frivolous and of deploying delaying tactics. No hon. Members who sat through the long debate with a genuine concern to see the best piece of legislation possible could say that we were anything but constructive, both in terms of the amendments that have been made and in what has been said in trying to extract concessions from the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir Eldon Griffiths).

We will be watching with interest what happens in another place. Through colleagues in another place, we will seek to improve the Bill even further. As the hon. Gentleman has demonstrated in the last few hours, hopefully there will be a genuine concern to ensure the best possible Bill, albeit there is a fundamental difference as to whether it should be passed.

7.17 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): Some 24 per cent. of the work force of the Felixstowe dock live in Ipswich. It may interest hon. Gentlemen opposite to learn that my Ipswich constituents who work at the Felixstowe dock are all members of the Transport and General Workers Union. What is more, they all support the Bill. They have told me so in no uncertain terms.

Mr. Morley: Where has the hon. Member been?

Mr. Hardy: Where has the hon. Member been?

Mr. Irvine: The hon. Gentlemen ask where I have been during the past 24 hours. I spent a good many of them in the Chamber. If my constituents who work in the Felixstowe dock had heard some of the incessant points of order, some of the crass meanderings and some of the filibustering that took place, they would have been not merely angry but aghast. I am glad to have seen in the most recent hours of the debate a much better spirit—the spirit of greater co-operation. That is very much to the good. I am glad to see it and I know that my constituents who work in the Felixstowe dock would agree.

Mr. Morley: The Ipswich dock.

Mr. Irvine: Before the hon. Gentleman goes any further about the Ipswich dock, I would remind him that just as the port of Felixstowe has expanded and prospered over the past years, so has the port of Ipswich. It has done so by good management, by good labour relations and by turning ships around rapidly. Ipswich has its own plans for further expansion.

On behalf of my constituents who work in the port of Felixstowe, I extend their considerable thanks to those of my right hon. and hon. Friends who saw the Bill through the late and long hours of last night at considerable inconvenience to themselves.

7.19 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I briefly congratulate my hon. Friends who, after a number of years, have succeeded in getting through a Bill that is of extreme importance to my constituents in the east Midlands. We shall look forward to Felixstowe becoming a great success. It will help our continental trade and, from visits I made to projects describing how much land was needed and other matters a couple of years or so ago, my constituents, industrialists and myself came to the conclusion that we had to get the Bill on the statute book.

It was deplorable how time was wasted last night. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) spoke for over an hour, and I do not know why he took the view that he did. Perhaps he is an NUM-sponsored Member. Certainly, he has a constituency near the coalfields. But the consistent time-wasting last night by the hon. Member for Rother Valley——

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly) *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It appears that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to give way.

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is there not a well-established and reasonable precedent in the House that if an hon. Member wishes to make a personal attack on another, he will at least have the courtesy to notify the other hon. Member so that the latter can be present in the Chamber to defend himself? The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) well knows that my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is a former member of the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. We all know why my hon. Friend made his comments about birds. I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure that the hon. Member for Harborough restricts himself to the normal courtesies of the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had a good and constructive debate in the past few hours, and I hope that it will remain at the same high standard at which it has been held for the past two or three hours.

Mr. Lofthouse: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not true that when an hon. Member refers to another hon. Member he should get his constituency right? The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) mentioned the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), meaning my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy). He also said that my hon. Friend was a member of the NUM. That is not true.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Boundary Commission often plays tricks on us.

Mr. Hardy: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. To establish the record, the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), as an official in the all-party conservation committee, should share the interests and commitments that some of us have demonstrated. This is not the first time that the hon. Gentleman has contradicted his position outside the Chamber in a conservation debate. I am not a member of the National Union of Mineworkers, but I am a member of the council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Sir John Farr: Of course, I accept unreservedly what the hon. Gentleman says, and I am sorry that he thought that I was being rude or insulting if I suggested that he might be a member of the NUM. However, it was difficult to understand why he and his hon. Friends spent so much time last night on trivia and Divisions——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This debate is very restrictive. The scope of the debate on the motion includes only the arguments for and against Third Reading, and I would appreciate it at this stage if the hon. Member restricted his remarks to the scope of the debate.

Sir John Farr: Possibly one says these things because one has been through the night and is short of sleep, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was merely trying to point out that the behaviour of some hon. Members had been outrageous——

Mr. Ron Davies: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman is now trying to undermine the competence of the Chair. I sat through most of the debate and on no occasion did I hear trivia debated or see any outrageous behaviour exhibited by my hon. Friends. If the hon. Gentleman makes these accusations, he must specify what they are and say why he is not prepared to recognise the dignity of the Chair.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman should not worry about that—the Chair is pretty tough and can take care of itself.

7.25 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I wish to place on record our strong disapproval of the comments made by the hon. Member

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), who, as far as I am aware, played a sedentary role in our debate, as he did in previous debates. He certainly did not play a remarkably active role. The hon. Gentleman has tapped the rich vein of the subject of those whose contributions were or were not worth while.

I also want to place on record the warmth of feeling felt by my hon. Friends for the work of Ken Weetch, the former hon. Member for Ipswich, who did a great deal of work over a period of many years to expose the faults in the Bill. We have continued to try to highlight those faults in the past 24 hours. Ken Weetch takes considerable credit for the fact that the Bill has taken so long to get through.

We have received a degree of co-operation on some aspects during the past 24 hours, but the Bill is fundamentally flawed because, by its very nature, the process by which it has come through the House provides no acceptable way for allowing planning permission and the planning system to act. That should be possible, given that the Bill affects huge communities and will have a national impact on industry and conservation.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that I agree that this procedure is not acceptable for local authority planning decisions? Does he also accept that one of the beneficial offshoots of the Bill's passage has been that the media are looking with fresh eyes at lobbying procedures and the suborning of hon. Members, which was brought into sharp focus by the proposed champagne party? People outside the House are looking afresh at the lobbying interests, because they have brought the House into disrepute.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course, my hon. Friend has raised an important point. One of the problems of this planning process is that it leaves us open to the lobbyists, who are virtually unaccountable, save that they have considerably greater amounts of money to spread out on largesse and information than those who are trying to protect their own local interests. So the planning process, as pursued by the private Bill mechanism, is severely flawed. My hon. Friends and I welcome the fact that there is to be a review of the entire process, and we look forward to the prospect of proper local control over planning with the fallback position of the Secretary of State for the Environment, which already applies to the bulk of planning applications that are not put through by those who are very rich.

The Bill is inadequate in a number of ways. The promoters say that it is effectively about the port of Felixstowe, and see it, therefore, as a transport Bill. Opposition Members are concerned about a form of unregulated planning for the private sector, because the Government are prepared to reward their friends in the private sector in a way that does not occur in other ports around the country. Felixstowe has always enjoyed a privileged position. It is privileged in any case because of its geographical location. That is an accident of geography, but it is ironic that the Bill is being promoted at a time when the amount of traffic through the ports of this country is beginning to stabilise. Indeed, some would say that it is on the point of decline. We have the prospect of the Channel tunnel—I oppose it—in the not-too-distant future. That will affect Felixstowe as a port and render some of the changes sought by the Bill's promoters less than useful.

We also condemn the Bill because the Government's ports policy fails to be rational. It consists of a piecemeal approach whereby some are rewarded and some find themselves disadvantaged. We also criticise the Bill because it begins the process of erosion of the national dock labour scheme. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members must know that their own Government are not in a position, and do not want, to begin to take out the scheme, because, although they know one of the benefits of eroding the whole scheme, they also know two of the difficulties. They want to do it piecemeal, sneakily, through back-door methods in the way that the Government always work, in a low-key, underhand, shifty way.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As my hon. Friend knows, I have been in Brussels until now discussing with some of the European Commissioners the transport implications of the Felixstowe development. Given that we are to have a Channel tunnel, the Commissioners can see no reason why there should be such a demand for extra container capacity—a point that the Opposition have been making all along. The points that my hon. Friend is making so lucidly are underlined by the fact that we have now set up a Joint Committee of the two Houses to review private Bill procedures. That is because of the exploitation of the system that has been revealed in this exercise.

Mr. Lloyd: I gave way to my hon. Friend for two reasons. One was because of her role in ably pursuing certain issues on behalf of the members of the trade union by which she is sponsored, the Transport and General Workers Union. My hon. Friend played a great role in trying to expose the unsatisfactory nature of the private Bill procedure.

Mr. Rogers: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a great deal of indignation about this Bill because of the connection between its promoters and, probably, the financers of the champagne party and the Department of Trade and Industry and the Conservative party. I noticed that one of the main beneficiaries may be P and O. I do not know whether my hon. Friend has put that on record. The chairman of that company is Sir Jeffrey Sterling who, since 1983, has been a special adviser to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Not only that, but P and O is a substantial contributor to the Conservative party and Sir Jeffrey is a close friend of the Prime Minister. Does my hon. Friend find it extremely disturbing that the Government are operating what is, in effect, a three-line Whip? The Prime Minister was brought in at odd hours of the night. What was the reason for that? Perhaps my hon. Friend can tell me.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend touches on a rich seam when he draws attention to the close personal relationships that exist between senior personnel in P and O, now the sponsoring company, and members of the Government.

Mr. Fallon: I know that the hon. Gentleman wishes to be fair to the House on this point. He draws attention to the close personal relationship that may or may not exist between Sir Jeffrey Sterling and the Prime Minister. Will he also draw the attention of the House to the similar relationship that must exist between Sir Jeffrey Sterling and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), who appointed him to the board of British Airways?

Mr. Lloyd: At the moment we are discussing P and O and the relationship that exists between that company and the legislation now before the House. That is massively different from any relationship to which the hon. Gentleman alludes. His intervention points to the sensitivity of Conservative Members on these issues. They feel vulnerable because they know that this system of planning allows for graft and for a degree of familiarity that ought to be unacceptable.

The Bill goes back many years. But for the sterling work of our colleague, the former hon. Member for Ipswich, Ken Weetch, this Bill would probably have shot through its various stages. The fact that it did not was a source of great annoyance to the promoters and to their friends in Parliament. Many of us did not know until fairly recently just how high those friends in Parliament were. One of my hon. Friends discovered in the Division Lobby the other day that the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) is really the cat and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) is merely the cat's paw. We found that the voice and the vote were separated on at least one occasion.

It is possible to go a little deeper because last year P and O spent about £30,000 of its shareholders' money in this new shareholding democracy. As far as we are aware, there was no ballot about that and no thought of the political levy being introduced. From the point of view of P and O, that money is a reasonable investment because we are nearly at the final stage in the passage of the Bill. We know that the P and O return from Felixstowe will be very high.

Some people say that P and O no longer wants to develop Felixstowe because it knows that Felixstowe may not have quite the future that it appeared to have some years ago. However, the company wants outline planning permission so that, if it wants to sell the area its capital value, its asset value, will be increased. The House is transforming an asset into an item of considerably greater value and we are performing a useful role for the private sector. Conservative Members may want to do that, but the Opposition do not.

We have spent a considerable time looking at the Bill with deep suspicion because we do not think that it is satisfactory. We know about its defects in terms of ports policy and my hon. Friends have given sterling service over the last 24 hours, and before, by drawing attention to the environmental damage that the Bill will cause.

We have received some help, and in that respect I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. However, the help was on nothing like the scale that we wanted. The Bill is defective on environmental grounds and nothing that we have seen at its various stages satisfies us. We are grateful for what we have got, because it ameliorates the worst consequences, but it does not transform a basically bad Bill into a good one. That makes all the more galling the eventually-to-be-cancelled Jubilee Room party to which Conservative Members were invited. Those who had a late night and perhaps succumbed to the temptation of whatever was on offer——

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: We did not get it.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman insists that he did not get it. He will have to speak for himself about what that means. We know that the party was cancelled because of the massive publicity generated by my hon. Friends. They drew attention to what was going on and to an unacceptable system. That system adds a further level of graft to the already defective planning system of private Bills. The House must take that seriously because it is an unacceptable kind of lobbying.

Conservative Members know that, and they made great efforts to deny that the whole thing was taking place until they were found almost with their fingers in the till. We think that they were just quick enough to pull out their fingers, but the better interpretation is that P and O said, "We have already got these people for our mugs. We will not deliver the goods." P and O must have wondered whether Conservative Members would squeal and say, "They bought us but they refused to pay." Conservative Members know that they were duped and taken for a ride at very little cost.

We know that the Prime Minister was overheard saying to the Leader of the House that she did not care if the Government lost Wednesday's business. Perhaps the Leader of the House will confirm or deny that. The Prime Minister did not care about losing Wednesday's business because she does not care about Scottish Question Time. She did not care about the Opposition day, although she did care about the Bill, her friends in P and O and the £30,000 pay-off to the Conservative party from the company, which, because of its terrible publicity this year, as a result of events at Zeebrugge — which will eventually come before this House — is seeking rehabilitation.

The patronage system operates throughout the House. Opposition Members believe that this planning system is corrupt. It allows corruption to take place within these walls. That is a very serious charge to make, but it must be made. The private Bill system stinks to high heaven and it is time to we got rid of it.

7.40 pm

Mr. Malcolm Thornton (Crosby): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on his handling of the Bill during the last 24 hours. I very much appreciated the comments made by Opposition Members who know and care a great deal about the conservation elements in the Bill. I served for five months with my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) dealing with this Bill in Committee. We concluded that we had committed to the House a balanced Bill which matched the national interests of ports with a healthy respect for the environment in the area. The debate during the last 24 hours has shown that this concern is shared by the House.

We have a good, though perhaps not perfect, Bill, but Bills never are perfect. I commend it to the House, and I particularly commend the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds. We have tried to meet the points that have been raised. The Bill is worthy of support.

7.41 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It would be appropriate if I spoke before my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths). He paid graceful tributes to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), and some of his colleagues, for their comments on environmental matters. Clearly, the Bill has examined industrial interests, port policy and environmental interests. Some tributes have

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

been earned during the debate, although some things may have been said of which, in the light of day, some hon. Members may not feel so proud.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds has guided this Bill through. It has been more exhaustingly considered, both in Committee and on the Floor of the House, than many other private Bills. My hon. Friend has guided it with courtesy, good humour and, as hon. Members will accept, tolerance in the face of provocation. I also want to pay tribute to all Committee Members because the Committees took a good deal of time and people recognise that serious efforts were put into the Bill at those stages. I recognise also that, if my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) had not been barred, he would have been able to do in the House what he does in his constituency—promote the interests of his constituents.

I ought to declare an interest in the matter. I was lobbied two years ago by shop stewards at Felixstowe. On Second Reading, on 13 May 1985, Ken Weetch, to whom tribute has been paid, said that Felixstowe had earned its expansion and that there had been associated improvements for Ipswich, although the good fortune of Ipswich was not linked solely to Felixstowe. On Second Reading, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Mr. Mitchell), the Minister of Public Transport, talked about environmental interests. I want to repeat the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds when he pledged that he would be a party to the Bill going on to the statute book only if the disbenefits it may bring to the environment are outweighed by the environmental benefits.

The Government's well established transport and ports policy is not to interfere with or influence port investment decisions. We believe that port capacity should be provided to satisfy those who use ports—shippers, shipowners and members of the Transport and General Workers Union working, for example, at Felixstowe. Those who want to provide ports should be free to do so provided that they obtain any necessary statutory powers and do not look to the taxpayer to finance the development.

Clearly, users have wanted to see Felixstowe expand. Its container and ferry business has trebled since 1975 and it is now the leading container port in the United Kingdom and fifth in Europe. It has won a worldwide reputation. On my visits around the world promoting British business in connection with transport, the consultants from Felixstowe are well regarded and are doing a good deal of work for British manufacturers as well as for their own reputations.

There has been enormous investment in Felixstowe and it is one of the most modern ports in the world. The developments proposed in the Bill raised questions about the safety of navigation in Harwich harbour. Those are important questions and I am glad that they have been satisfactorily resolved during the progress of the Bill.

The Government also have an interest in the impact of the proposed extension of the port on the local environment and wildlife. Those questions have been debated extensively. No one can deny that the port development would have an adverse impact. The promoters have been very willing to accept many provisions in the Bill to minimise that impact and give real protection to environmental interests. The Committee considered very carefully the petitions that were brought on those points and made strong and positive proposals for strengthening the Bill, especially in connection with the protection of Trimley marshes and the landscaping of the new port development.

I want to deal briefly and relatively lightly with some of the comments that have been made during the debate. The involvement of P and O with Felixstowe began after the Second Reading of the Bill on 13 May 1985. All hon. Members, ranging from the Chairman of Ways and Means to Back Benchers, wanted to see the issue resolved rather than have the House continue with debate after debate which merely showed that the debate had become stuck. For that reason there was a motion to lift the Ten o'clock rule.

I do not believe that comments picked up outside the Chamber in relation to whether people were prepared to lose Wednesday's business stem only from hon. Members of one party. People entered the debate today with their eyes open. Indeed, those who contributed most to the debate may want to take most of the credit for losing Wednesday's business.

The Bill has been a classic example of what can often be a real and difficult conflict between industrial and environmental interests. The arguments have been fully rehearsed and considered in depth. The Bill has had a very good run in the House and the Government recommend that it should receive a Third Reading.

7.47 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths: This is not the time for crowing or sniping. It is the time to go home after a very long sitting. No hon. Member who has served on any Committee in connection with the Bill at any stage will ever forget it. The Bill has been before the House for four years. By present estimates, it has been debated for 189 hours and it received a record consideration in Committee under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). Tonight it has probably received the most vigorously contested Report stage for a long time.

Mr. Grocott: With regard to the precise point about the length of time that the Bill has been debated and the period during which it has been debated, will the hon. Gentleman concede that it would be wrong for those hon. Members who did not have the privilege of being hon. Members of the House during most of the time that the Bill was being considered—in total about 140 hon. Members, including 70 of the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends who are clearly baffled by the Bill as none of them has spoken or contributed to the debate—and did not have the benefit of listening to the four years of debate, to vote tonight? Does he agree that the proper course would be for them to abstain?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I repeat what I said at the beginning of my comments—that there will be no crowing or sniping at this stage.

The Bill has received record consideration by the House. I am sure that it will lead to some reconsideration of the private Bill procedure and I need say no more about it than that.

I want to say a word about my colleagues who have been involved with the Bill. The Bill has made it possible for me to get to know many Opposition Members whom I did not know so well before. I have enjoyed getting to know them and have appreciated their knowledge of birds and the environment. Opposition Members may not always have been at their best, but they have not always been at their worst. I want to thank them for their contributions to the improvements of the Bill.

Finally, I want to thank my hon. Friends on the Conservative Benches. There are too many for me to thank personally. Perhaps I may just say that I have the fortune — or the misfortune — of being the neighbour of my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Felixstowe and Sizewell are in my right hon. Friend's constituency and somehow or other, because my right hon. Friend is a Minister, I always seem to get stuck with dealing with my right hon. Friend's constituency affairs. That is a pleasure and I am glad that my right hon. Friend is present in the Chamber tonight.

I have been particularly grateful to receive the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant). I am also grateful to so many of my hon. Friends who remained in the House when it was inconvenient to be here. I believe that we have achieved something which is good for the dockers of Felixstowe, for the shippers, the business people, the merchants of the area, for East Anglia and for our country. I wish the Bill well.

7.51 pm

Mr. Dobson: This may be a rather unusual procedure, but this has also been a rather unusual Bill. As has already been reported to the House, it is intended that both Houses of Parliament should consider the future of private Bill procedures.

We have faced a curious situation over recent days and nights. Faced with a Bill that was putting forward a somewhat anarchic ports policy, removing the national dock labour scheme, advocating a policy likely to inflict environmental damage on the area, an area of outstanding natural beauty and of special scientific interest, it seems that the Bill was substituting the judgment and procedures of the House for the normal planning control procedures that apply in most parts of the country. That means that the outcome of the Bill is a substantial financial advantage for the promoters. They might have achieved many of those things simply by seeking planning permission like anyone else who cannot afford to promote a private Bill and who did not have friends in high places to help get the Bill through.

We have heard much from my hon. Friends about redshanks and greenshanks. However, the blueshanks have been the most important birds in this matter. Why has there been an iron determination on the Government's part to get the Bill through to the extent of involving the personal intervention of the Prime Minister exhorting people to vote and join her in voting?

There is nothing special about the Bill. It has nothing to commend it to hon. Members from all parts of the country. The Opposition believe that the only thing which demands special attention is the nature of the Bill's promoters. In those circumstances, it behoves us and you too, Mr. Speaker, as guardian of the reputation of the House, to consider what restraints and restrictions would have been placed on the members of district and county planning committees had they been making similar decisions to those made by the House tonight.

If we examine the report of the Salmon committee on the standards of conduct in public life, we see that many requirements that would normally be applied to a member of a county or district planning authority have certainly not been met. Had the members of a planning authority been promised wining and dining so that they could sustain their attention and come and vote, that would have been a criminal offence on the part of both those offering and those taking.

When we know, as we do, that P and O is a major contributor to Conservative party funds, we accept that as a generality — just as Conservative Members tend to accept that trade unions make substantial contributions to the Labour party. They do so because they believe that the generality of Labour's policies will suit them. Similarly, those in private industry tends to support the Conservative party on the ground that the generality of the policies of that party will suit them.

You, Mr. Speaker, are bound to exercise your influence on the procedures to be followed in future on private Bills. When the future is discussed, you will draw on your experience. Surely we move into an entirely different area when a private company puts money into the funds of a party while promoting a private Bill at the same time, and receives the sort of response that has been received from the Government.

We know that the former chairman of the Tory party, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), is the local Member of Parliament and has been a prominent member of the Tory party. We also know that the chairman of the company has been heavily involved with the Tory party, and in giving industrial advice to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. We know that even some Conservative Members were embarrassed by the ludicrous lobbying procedures that were attempted yesterday, until the company and its advisers were persuaded by bad publicity to drop them.

If the House is to retain a good reputation in future, we should not be faced with the squalid financially and politically motivated manoeuvres that today led to Scottish Questions not being reached, and to a debate on transport covering the whole country not being reached. All that has been sacrificed so that Conservative Members can continue to benefit from financial contributions from the Bill's promoters.

Question put, That Standing Order No. 205 (Notice of Third Reading) be suspended and that the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 230, Noes 101.

Division No. 67] **[8 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Alton, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John

Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Anthony Grant and
Mr. Jerry Hayes.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Faulds, Andrew
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McLeish, Henry
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Walters, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allan Rogers and
Mr. Ian McCartney.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Points of Order

8.9 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), to impugn the honour of the Prime Minister and Conservative Members who supported the Bill? Is it not cant and hypocrisy of the highest order when we all know that the reason why Labour Members opposed the Bill is that the Labour party is in the pocket of the Transport and General Workers Union and—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Some pretty nasty things have been said about the Bill. Let us leave it at that.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The 30,000 pieces of silver having been satisfactorily earned, I should like to draw your attention to an item on the tapes this evening under the heading:

"Labour Chief Whip Quizzed on 'Tea Room Punch-up'."

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Did it occur in here?

Mr. Wilson: Is it in order for, as I read from the tapes, the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), whom I should have great difficulty identifying among the serried ranks on the Conservative Benches, to produce an item of news for public dissemination on the tapes, on the basis of an alleged incident which, I understand, has no substance in fact? I am a relatively new Member of the House, but I am old enough in life to despise McCarthyism, and the principle of McCarthyism is that one spreads a smear and then challenges others to deny it——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the point of order that has been put to me has anything to do with me, but carry on.

Mr. Wilson: If the tactic of Conservative Members is to impugn the honour of the Opposition by smear without a scintilla of evidence and then challenge others to deny it, the principles of free communications and free movement in the House are under severe challenge.

It is claimed in the communication on the wires that one of the 50 Scottish Labour Members of the House was involved in a punch-up. Within that claim there is guilt by association. Is it in order for individual Members to seek to create publicity by smear, to disseminate lies and fabrications about events that did not take place, in order to gain cheap publicity and diversion? I suggest—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not know anything about that incident. The hon. Gentleman showed me that extract from the tapes. I am not responsible for anything that may or may not happen outside the Chamber of the House. I have no knowledge of it at all, and it is not a matter of order anyway.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. A few moments ago the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) made two allegations against Labour Members. It is one thing for any of us in the House to be accused of hypocrisy. I am not sure whether it is parliamentary, but I shall leave that to you, Mr. Speaker. However, I must say, as a member of the National Union of Railwaymen, that for any member of the NUR to be accused of being in the pockets of the TGWU is little short of scandalous; I hope that you will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw that disgraceful allegation.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that that did not touch upon the hon. Member's honour.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. That statement should be withdrawn. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I was here all last night and I do not believe that it is possible for there to be a row in the House and me not know about it. It is the only place I go apart from here, and I never saw any altercations. I saw somebody hippity-hoppiting along, but that is another story. It has obviously been a fabrication from start to finish. However, I have another point of order that is also serious.

Last night we were trying to save those birds on the salt marshes of Felixstowe. We were supporting the Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and the rest. While Conservative Members were trying to make money out Felixstowe, we were trying to save the redshanks, the greenshanks, the ringed plover and the Brent geese. To help us with our researches, along with my right hon. Friend. the Chief Whip, we were using the "Book of Birds", a valuable book that might be needed in future, and it has gone missing. Now that is serious. When we clean these Benches we must look for the book. It does not belong to me. My hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) got it, but I think he got it from somebody else. That is the matter to concentrate on today.

Mr. Speaker: I will look into it.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: If it is a point of order, it is more likely to be for the Leader of the House than for me.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a matter for the Leader of the House, or for me?

Mr. Douglas: It is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker.

It is not my style to raise matters of frivolity. I have listened attentively to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I know we all have good fun in this place. *[Interruption.]* I am not going to rise to that. This is a matter involving procedures outside the Chamber. I know from my relatively long experience of this place that there are certain matters of etiquette in regard to behaviour in the House and outside, which revolve around good manners of all hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) has made assertions about behaviour in the Tea Room. I recognise that that is not within your province, Mr. Speaker, but I appeal through you, to the usual channels, which I know you do not recognise, to examine what has been said. I respectfully ask you to reflect on what has been said, and through your good offices to put a stop to this type of klyping, as we say in Scotland, because all sides can play this game, but if that happens it will be to the detriment of good behaviour and understanding among hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I can bring this matter to some form of conclusion by saying that I am concerned about the reputation of the House and hon. Members. It is important for us to set a good example in the Chamber. We resolve our disagreements by argument, but we should never resolve them by any other form of anger or fisticuffs elsewhere. I hope that private conversations or what happens in or around this building should never go outside this community.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I think that is enough.

Later—

Mr. Maxton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In reply to the earlier point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas), you rightly said that you did not believe it right that hon. Members should tell stories of events that went on in the Tea Room. It must be made clear to you and the House that this is not a story about something that happened in the Tea Room; it is a complete and utter fabrication. It is a lie. There is no truth whatever in the story. Whether we like it or not, there are specific Scottish media and press and that is exactly the sort of story that they will pick up. Because no names are mentioned, the honour of every Scottish Member is being impugned by another hon. Member. I know that you do not have responsibility for that, but perhaps you should make an appeal to the hon. Gentleman, who has impugned the character of every Scottish Member, to come to the House and make a full apology.

Mr. Speaker: I say again that I am aware of the standards that we should maintain in this place.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is very unfair after a day like this, but I shall have to take it.

Mr. Foulkes: I ask this because I know that what you have just said is true and that you are aware of the position of the House and hon. Members. Would it not be in order for you to arrange for the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) to make a personal statement to the House? There is a procedure for that. Fifty Scottish Labour Members are extremely worried about this, and that is a large proportion of hon. Members of the House. Surely it is in order for you and within your power, Mr. Speaker, to get that man to the Bar of the House to tell the truth. He has no information. He has made statements based on total fabrication. He is casting slurs upon 50 hon. Members. If you do not have the power to bring that man to the House to make a personal statement, it will be a sad state of affairs.

Mr. Speaker: The whole House knows that I am responsible for what goes on in the Chamber. It cannot possibly be right for the Speaker to be responsible for what goes on in private rooms in this place.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that there are two sides in the press report, not just the Scottish side. Therefore, the matter concerns the whole House. If that man is proved to have lied and the matter gets into the press, as it will tomorrow, the House needs an apology from him. Therefore, is it in order for you to demand that, if he is proved to have lied to get publicity, he comes to the House to apologise?

Mr. Speaker: Again, I have to say that many things will be said in private rooms, such as dining rooms, in this place. I cannot be held responsible for comments that are made outside the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman will doubtless have heard what has been said about the matter. If he is a man of honour, I am sure that he will take the appropriate action himself.

Business of the House

8.19 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a short business statement. The business for tomorrow will now be as follows:

THURSDAY 12 NOVEMBER — Motions on Social Security Orders and Regulations. Details are in the *Official Report*.

That will be followed by a debate on a motion on the Supplementary Estimate on the purchase and sale of shares in BP.

The Consolidated Fund Bill, already announced for the beginning tomorrow, will now be taken at the beginning on Monday 16 November.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I wonder whether, instead of that business tomorrow, my right hon. Friend will have a short debate on the astonishing refusal in a written answer this afternoon of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to give an assurance that the Bank of England will not use its funds to buy shares in Eurotunnel, as any such move would drive a coach and horses through repeated assurances given about the Bill? Will my right hon. Friend suggest that we have a debate or statement on this issue tomorrow, instead of what is planned?

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir. I cannot change the business for tomorrow.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Can the Leader of the House give an assurance that the desultory exchanges this afternoon on the subject of the British Airways-British Caledonian merger will not be a substitute for a full statement and or debate later on aviation policy? If no such debate takes place, the public will be left with the impression that the Government look after the owners, the Labour Opposition look after the unions and no one looks after the customers. Can we have a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strength of what the right hon. Gentleman says and I think that this is best pursued through the usual channels.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Can the Leader of the House persuade the Secretary of State for Scotland to find time tomorrow for a statement about the White Paper on Scottish homes? As the Leader of the House will know, a statement should have been made today. In view of the damaging effects of this White Paper and the concern now being caused in Scotland because of the fears of rent rises and changes in conditions for tenants, will he arrange for time to be made available tomorrow for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement so that we can ask questions, as befits such a major measure?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not be provocative now. I shall refer that matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): My right hon. Friend seemed rather cursory in his dismissal of the important point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor). Could he please give some more serious attention to this important departure from all the previous assurances and be ready to answer questions on this tomorrow afternoon? Is he aware that the only previous occasions when the Bank of England has bought shares in companies were in the cases of Johnson Matthey and Slater Walker? Are we now to have the great Eurotunnel gravy train following those doubtful precedents? More serious attention must be given to this worrying matter.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) asked whether I would change tomorrow's business, and I said I would not. That remains the position. If my hon. Friends wish to pursue the matter at business questions tomorrow, there will be more time to give a more considered answer.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): In view of the debate that we have just had on lobbying in this place, including lobbying all-party groups, is the Leader of the House aware that, as a result of the background to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, with its dubious business of champagne parties cancelled because of criticism, refreshments in the Jubilee Room and fake Whips sent out with refreshments to offer as a direct inducement to hon. Members to stay and vote, the media are waking up to the fact that a large army of people are making money from lobbying in this place and persuading Members of Parliament to vote one way or another? If we do not take action and do something about it, the media will push and push until something is done from the outside inside, as happened on the last occasion, which involved a series of scandals about a gentleman called Poulson.

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman raises a point to which we shall return from time to time, but we shall certainly not have a debate about that tomorrow, or a statement. The hon. Gentleman can find other ways of pursuing the matter if he wants to. The suggestion that a few glasses of champagne will change the votes of any hon. Member on either side of the House is an insult to the House and certainly to me, as I did not get any of it either.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I apologise, Mr. Speaker, for keeping you and me from your excellent table for a moment longer. May I stress to the Leader of the House, as somebody who must unfortunately be away tomorrow on pressing constituency business, that I share the concern of my colleagues that we should have a full statement tomorrow on the Government's attitude to the Bank of England departing from past pledges and precedents in possibly funding part of the Eurotunnel issue?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly note what my hon. Friend says and I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): May I correct the Leader of the House in his answer to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), in which he said that he could not change tomorrow's business? He has come to the House this evening precisely to make a statement about a change in tomorrow's business.

I have an axe to grind. Why is tomorrow not given over to a debate or statement on the disgraceful answer to a written question from the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled that workers who lose their jobs will be denied up to 26 weeks unemployment benefit — double the existing period, which itself is double what it was a few months ago? Is not that a mechanism by which

[Mr. Dave Nellist]

unscrupulous employers will exercise a whip hand, particularly over non-unionised workers, so that they do not complain about wages and conditions, knowing that if they are sacked they lose the right to six months unemployment benefit? Why are we not having a debate or a statement on that, instead of the proposed business?

Mr. Wakeham: The hon. Gentleman, with a little of his customary ingenuity, may find that the points he wishes to make will be in order tomorrow.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Further to the points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), may I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to my constituents' anxiety at any suggestion of the Bank of England being prepared to finance Eurotunnel in any way, shape or form? That will be directly contrary to all the assurances and promises that have been given to date and it would present unfair competition when the principle of the whole Bill is fair competition.

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything more to what I have already said. I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I am absolutely certain that none of the Government's undertakings will be broken.

Sport and Recreation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

8.30 pm

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): It is at least two years since I last sought to raise matters on the Adjournment debate procedure. On the last occasion, the hour was late. This time, I have been in and around the Chamber for almost 39 hours. I fear that the Speaker's Office is trying to tell me something. However, the future policy on sport and recreation is important. The long wait only adds to my resolve to raise the topic on the Floor of the House.

For many years—I intend no disrespect to previous holders of my hon. Friend's Ministerial office—sport and recreation were Cinderella responsibilities tacked on to the main tasks of previous Under-Secretaries of State. In this new Parliament, with an additional Minister with prime responsibility for sport and recreation being appointed to the Department of the Environment, I hope that the topic will lose the Cinderella fringe image and take its proper place. That the additional Minister is my hon. Friend the for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) seems to indicate that the Government now hold out a great future for sport and recreation. The Prime Minister could not have entrusted the portfolio to a more distinguished rowing colleague.

To put the subject in perspective, it should be noted that sport and recreation are estimated to employ 180,000 people directly and another 200,000 indirectly. The statistics are a little elastic, because it is not an easy industry to calculate, but it is said that it generates £7,000 million of turnover. I suppose that central and local government probably spend nearly £1 billion of that sum. I am talking of an activity that, in one way or another, has 21 million participants and 6·5 million club members. We do not have to go further than those statistics to place on record the fact that sport and recreation represent a major economic motor within our society and should not and must not be pushed on to the back burner.

Tragically, we still have 2·75 million unemployed people. Although that figure, happily, is on the way down, it will be a long time before we can say that the problem has been defeated—if, indeed, it can ever be totally defeated in this rapidly changing world. To that, we must add the ever-shorter working week and the growth in the number of part-time and self-employed working people. We are clearly looking at a future life style that is different from that which confronted the House 10 or 20 years ago. Such trends point to an ever greater need to look at sport and recreation as an essential part of our modern society, and not just a throw-away afterthought. Like other sectors of our national budget, it, too, deserves proper and adequate resources. The scale of the potential social and economic pay-back justifies proper funding.

I shall paraphrase or interpret the objectives that the Government set out in 1985. If sport and recreation can improve the health and well-being of the nation, foster pride in the promotion of excellence and fulfil the aim of alleviating social stress, the Minister has indeed a major responsibility, and I welcome the opportunity to hear his plans. I hope that he will have time to comment on central and local government funding, on shared and joint use, particularly in education, and the loss of open public space in urban areas. I hope that he will be able to comment also on the House's continued belief in the benefit of competitive school sport.

The Minister has only just returned from India. He will not have had time to study the report, but I hope that he will carefully read the booklet—published only on Monday of this week—which deals with sport for the disabled. His own area of Lewisham was largely responsible for the production of that report, and I commend it to the House. I hope that he will join me in expressing dismay at the dreadful example set by one of the nation's great athletes in peddling in the drug trade. It diminished him and sport, and it corrupts our young people.

I should like the Minister to comment on the Government's policy on centres of excellence. The flag-bearers of each sport motivate the rest. The Minister will know that, in regard to our own sport of rowing and other water sports, prior to the creation of the national water sports centre—the Holme Pierrepont centre in Nottingham—rowing successes in this country were a pipedream. One gold and one silver medal were the sum total of our sports effort in that regard. Since the creation of the Holme Pierrepont centre of excellence, we have probably achieved that sort of medal tally, on average, each year over the past 20 years.

I am aware that the Government are trying to obtain value for money. Some centres are trying to achieve a near balanced budget. But I am equally aware that they can do more to generate additional income. I hope that the Minister will not throw the baby out with the bath water. In Nottingham—I am sure that it applies to a greater or lesser degree in other centres—some facilities are nothing more than open country parks. Nobody really expects a local authority to run a local park as a successful commercial enterprise.

Millions of people kick a ball, fish, climb, swim, row, paddle, or just watch. What they do greatly adds to their quality of life. The overall effect on the totality of the nation's well-being is beyond measure. I hope to hear the Minister say that he shares my hopes and ambitions for sport and recreation and endorses the objectives that the Government set out in 1985.

8.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) on securing an Adjournment debate on this subject, albeit at this late hour on a Tuesday. The day started about five and a half hours earlier for me than for my hon. Friend as I was aboard an aeroplane leaving Delhi to return in time for the consideration in committee of the Public Utilities and Water Charges Bill. My voice has suffered from such a long day.

I congratulate my hon. Friend also on his commitment to sport and recreation, which is well known inside and outside the House. His keenness to ensure at an early stage that a debate was secured on sports policy is reflected in his success in the ballot. I know that he has made consistent representations to try to ensure that success in recent weeks. I congratulate him on his achievement this evening.

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

My hon. Friend represents part of a city that has a proud record as a sporting centre. I shall take three examples. In water sports, with which my personal association has been the strongest, it is appropriate for me to pay a tribute to my hon. Friend. His contribution has been remarkable and important in rowing. I am delighted to have the opportunity to pay tribute to him accordingly. Nottingham has also been important in its contribution to football, and this year especially in cricket.

I shall say a few words about cricket before I take up my main theme. I refer especially to the achievement of the England cricket team in the final of the world cup. Hon. Members will know that I was present for the world cup final in Calcutta on Sunday. It was important in the MCC's bicentenary year to offer the cricketers and administrators alike our congratulations on doing superbly well to reach the final. There were moments—even close to the end—when it looked as if we might have an England victory to celebrate. I must also congratulate the Indian and Pakistani authorities on organising such a successful competition. Everyone I met in Calcutta was full of praise for the way the organisation had worked. I know that we all wish the England team well for the rest of its tour.

The theme of this debate—the future of sports policy—is a particularly relevant one for me as a new Sports Minister, and I would like to use this opportunity to invite a wider debate on what should be the Government's aims in their sports policy and how best should we organise ourselves to achieve these aims.

The subject is an important one to many people in this country for 21 million adults and 7 million children actively participate in some form of sport or exercise. The sports industry provides about 400,000 jobs, and my hon. Friend was right to mention the substantial turnover that that has created. Most of our national press devotes three or four pages to the subject every day.

Central Government's direct role in all this is a limited one, and rightly so. We do not want Government programmes on the east European scale. Our direct financial contribution is through the Sports Council, whose grant for next year will be £38·8 million, nearly £2 million more than this year. I thank the Sports Council for the welcome that it has given this increase. Its figure compares well with the level of spending that we inherited from the Labour Government in 1979—£15 million a year. There has been a substantial increase in real terms since this Government took office.

I believe that we need to consider what we seek to achieve through this expenditure and, of course, through the use of such influence the Government may exert in other, non-financial ways. Part of our purpose must be to attempt to preserve the good name of British sport by countering the abuses. On drugs, for example, I have been very pleased by the response that there has been to the report that Sebastian Coe and myself produced and by the swift way in which the Sports Council has moved to act on the report. The use of drugs distorts the very principles of sport. It should have no place in sporting activity. We do not want top-level sport to become competition between chemists' laboratories. I am glad that Britain is now in the forefront of national and international efforts to drive drugs out of sport.

We must also be firm in our efforts to counter another form of abuse, that of violence both on and off the sports field. We have taken initial steps forward in combating football hooliganism. I shall continue to press for further action with the Football League, and I shall not hesitate to ask those who are not doing enough to do more. Violence on the field is no less serious an abuse, not just in football but in all sports. If players break the rules, still more if they are violent to one another, there is a major responsibility on governing bodies to take determined action.

The curbing of drug abuse and violence are matters which any Government must be concerned with but our role in sport must have wider policy aims too. I suggest three. First, we must improve the nation's health. Particularly, the United Kingdom has a relatively high death rate from heart disease. Sport and exercise help to reduce that rate and the heavy call on health resources. This will help to promote the benefits of participation in sport for individuals and for the community. Secondly, we must alleviate social deprivation. Sport can and should be used as a policy tool in areas of high unemployment and deprivation. In particular, sport and recreation can provide a catalyst for channelling the energies of the young into constructive and satisfying activities contributing to their self-esteem and discipline. Both recreational and competitive sport can also contribute to community confidence and cohesion, especially in pockets of social deprivation. Thirdly, we must help to promote excellence in sport at national and international levels. Some help is necessary to enable prospective international competitors to meet their rivals on equivalent terms. Success in sport reflects well on both our standing in the world and on trade and morale.

In developing these aims, we must seek, first, to extend participation in sport and recreation, especially among young people. Secondly, we should find ways of directing necessary resources to top-level and "elite" sportsmen and women to encourage competitive involvement at national level. The two run in parallel.

The private sector has an important and increasing role to play in financing sport. It already plays a major part—£160 million per annum by way of sponsorship for sport at all levels. The interest for companies in promoting major events and top competitors is obvious. It is an important fact of commercial life that financial support for sport is an integral part of the marketing mix of companies seeking to target sales at specific consumer groups. It is no longer an era dominated by altruism and patronage. All involved in sport from governing bodies to coaches need to recognise and respond accordingly. Some leading firms are now interested in initiatives to support additional provision for young people. We should build on this. Positive steps must be taken to encourage substantially more private sector involvement.

Local authorities must seek to make more use of the private sector in providing sporting facilities for people in their area. The House will be aware that we are now consulting about the possibility of requiring competition for the management of local authority sports centres. There are abundant examples of the success of competition in improving local authority services. With better management, differential pricing, keener marketing we may hope to widen the availability and use of sports facilities. We shall have to see what results the consultation process brings.

We must ensure that those in social and educational need are encouraged to participate in sport at all levels. We have recognised the importance of proper physical education and sport provision for all children by proposing that physical education should be a foundation subject within the national core curriculum.

If the aims that I have described—or something very like them—are those that the Government should seek to achieve in their sports policy, are we going the right way about achieving them? I shall be writing to the Sports Council chairman shortly. This will form the basis for a consultation exercise involving all those with an interest in sport and recreation.

The challenges faced by the sporting world have changed in 15 years since the Sports Council was established. People play a wider range of sports for one thing. Commercial pressures are much more closely involved with sport. The sporting world is much more complex now with trust funds, contract commitments, pressure from television, professionalism, drugs and appearance money. We need to consider the implications of these and many other changes.

I would like to look, with the Sports Council and others in the sporting world, at what the emphasis of our policies should be in the future. I hope that in doing so we may build on the consultation exercise which the council has just completed. My open letter to the chairman will aim to stimulate debate on these issues by asking a number of questions. I am determined to use the time while I am Minister for Sport to ensure that we focus our attention on the best possible policy for the 1990s.

Important questions need answering. Are we striking the right balance between providing for sporting excellence and encouraging wider participation? Should the Sports Council concentrate more of its efforts on local programmes to promote participation in sport, perhaps through strengthening its regional structure? How best can it generate the interest of local industry and commerce? What more can it do to strengthen links with local education authorities? What scope is there for encouraging the governing bodies of individual sports to seek more private sector sponsorship? How best can more private sponsorship be attracted towards the cost of supporting elite competitors, building on the success, for example of the Sports Aid Foundation? Can the Sports Aid Trust extend its excellent work to generate and direct further resources to support local schemes for those in social and economic need?

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: Before my hon. Friend moves away from the commercial sponsorship of sport, will he say something about the difficulties advertising logos give the media? The question of how big or how small a logo should be causes problems for many of the national sports bodies. We should be able to find a simple answer.

Mr. Moynihan: Throughout the wide range of sports which have sought television coverage and which have entered into negotiations with television companies there has been an apparent discrepancy in the size of the logo and of sponsors' names and, where relevant, the extent of the use of the sponsors' names during television coverage. Work needs to be done on giving clear guidelines to all governing bodies. This may be an ideal opportunity for the Central Council of Physical Recreation to bring together all the knowledge and expertise which it has at its disposal and to produce guidelines for the governing bodies that it represents. I will put that important suggestion to the CCPR and I hope that it will respond to it. I hope that assists my hon. Friend.

Other important questions will, I hope, form part of the debate in coming months. If there is a continuing need for public support for elite competitors, as I believe there is, is there a case for channelling it through a body other than the Sports Council, perhaps the British Olympic Association? How might the running of the six national sports centres be improved? Can we bring in more competitive tendering to their operations? It is very important to bear in mind the contribution that my hon. Friend has already made to the consultation exercise this evening in his perceptive remarks about Holme Pierrepont which has been an important catalyst for our rowing crews in the generation of success at international and national level. I shall consider in detail the points that my hon. Friend has made. I am delighted that his speech began the period of consultation that we shall continue.

Finally, I believe that we have to address the question of how best all of us involved in the administration of sport and recreation can serve the interests of sports men and women, for it is their interests which must come first. I think that the House will agree that these are important questions and that it is right that we should be asking them. I hope that we shall have a constructive debate. I repeat my thanks to my hon. Friend for giving me the chance to foreshadow it now.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Nine o'clock pm on Wednesday 11 November.

House of Commons

Thursday 12 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday 19 November.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL
(By Order)

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords]*
(By Order)
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 19 November.

HIGHLAND REGION HARBOURS (MISCELLANEOUS POWERS) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL
Considered; to read the Third time upon Monday 16 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Equal Opportunity

1. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to legislate on the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights report on equality of opportunity.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Viggers): As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 29 October, we shall be taking the report's recommendations into account in framing detailed proposals for new legislation on fair employment.

Mr. Lloyd: Does the Minister accept that the report has received considerable approval from most sections of society in Northern Ireland? Will he guarantee that he will introduce legislation to amend the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976, and that because that was Westminster legislation he will introduce the new legislation before the House?

Mr. Viggers: We are firmly committed to such legislation. The standing advisory commission's report contained some 240 specific recommendations, so we must give careful thought to the matter before we legislate. We shall bring the issues before the House; we are currently considering whether we should do that by a Bill or by order.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is the Minister aware of what occurred yesterday in Northern Ireland when workers at Short's, the University of Ulster and at Fisher Body wanted to observe a one-minute silence? The managements said that, as a result of the FEA arrangements, they could not do that because it would offend certain employees in the work place. Is he aware that when nurses from the Royal Victoria hospital complex who worked with the nurse who was slaughtered asked that the Union Jack be put at half mast they were told that it would be offensive? It was only when the board intervened that the flag was flown at half mast. Will the Secretary of State assure the people of Northern Ireland that they will have the right to observe a one-minute silence in their workplace when atrocities are carried out by the IRA?

Mr. Viggers: The points made by the hon. Gentleman do not directly follow the subject of the main question, but I assure him that the Government are committed to legislation on fair employment. We believe that our policy has the broad support of employers and employee representative bodies and is the right measure to reduce sectarian difficulties.

Mr. John David Taylor: Does the Minister see any inconsistency in the fact that a person was recently removed from employment in this building who was merely suspected of supporting Sinn Fein, when the Government's legislation is forcing employers in Northern Ireland to employ people who positively support Sinn Fein?

Mr. Viggers: The Government are committed to fair employment. The process that we have outlined in our consultative document and again in the employment guide in September is——

Mr. John David Taylor: Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Viggers: Monitoring of sectarian background is necessary to encourage employers and employees to co-operate.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is essential, in maintaining the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland — not only in relation to the improvements that have been made in court procedures vis-à-vis the Diplock courts but in matters relating to fair employment — to ensure that Catholics have a fair opportunity to attain jobs on terms equal to those available to other members of the Ulster community?

Mr. Viggers: My hon. Friend expresses the general view that it is broadly unacceptable to have unemployment among those from Catholic background at two and a half times higher than that among those from Protestant backgrounds, and that the Government line is the correct one.

Mr. Hume: Does the Minister accept that the standing advisory commission statistics, the Government's own consultative statistics and, indeed, his own remarks show an unprecedented frankness in admitting the extent of the problem and a determination to deal with it? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we need a two-pronged approach? First, we need strong fair employment legislation to outlaw discrimination and to take sanctions against employers who deliberately discriminate; and, secondly, we need investment in areas of high unemployment. Anything that obstructs that process of investment damages the creation of fair employment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: The figures that I cited were the Government's figures, confirmed by the standing advisory commission. I support the line that the hon. Gentleman has put before the House. Clearly, if we can encourage further investment and project Northern Ireland as a good place to do business and a fair place to employ people, we shall help to promote further prosperity and jobs.

Mr. James Marshall: Does the Minister accept that that last aim could well be advanced if the Government showed firm political commitment to the measures in two ways? Does he agree that the report should be debated on the Floor of the House and, more important, will he give a commitment that the legislation will be introduced in the form of a Westminster Bill and not by order?

Mr. Viggers: We are giving careful consideration to the latter point. On the timing of the legislation, there has been a large response to the proposals in our consultative paper. Some 80 substantial written representations have been made and it is crucial that we get the legislation right.

Abortion

2. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent consideration has been given to extending the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Needham): The legalisation on abortion in Northern Ireland was last reviewed in 1985. At that time it was concluded that any change in the law would be opposed by an overwhelming majority of the population. I believe that that remains the case.

Mrs. Wise: Is the Minister aware that some readily available ante-natal tests in Britain for the detection of serious congenital abnormalities are not so readily available in Northern Ireland? Is he further aware that in Northern Ireland a significantly higher percentage of babies are born with defects? Does that not give him good cause to reconsider the matter?

Mr. Needham: I am aware of the facts mentioned by the hon. Lady and I must admit that personally I should like to see a broader debate on this matter. However, therapeutic abortion is available in Northern Ireland and I am doing all that I can as the Minister responsible for health to make sure that people are properly counselled.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that many people in this country regard the 1967 Act with utter abhorrence and would greatly regret its extension to Northern Ireland or anywhere else? We should bear in mind that only about 7 per cent. of babies surviving beyond the 18th week of pregnancy are born disabled, that many deformities are only slight and that many disabled people lead worthwhile lives.

Mr. Needham: I understand my hon. Friend's views and I appreciate the depth of her feelings. However, I believe that adequate and proper counselling should be available for mothers who may find themselves having a badly handicapped child, which may be immensely disruptive and destructive for the family.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The Minister has underlined the fact that therapeutic abortion is available in Northern Ireland. Will he also acknowledge that in our professor of genetics we have a very able person who is conducting a worthwhile scheme? However, in a week in which the House and the nation have shared in mourning the destruction of 12 lives in Northern Ireland, would the Minister not say that it was deplorable to suggest that an Act that has contributed to the destruction of almost 3 million human beings with potential should be extended to Northern Ireland? We do not want it.

Mr. Needham: As I have already said, it has been the policy not only of this Government but of their predecessors not to introduce legislation of that sort, which would be opposed by a large majority of the people in Northern Ireland. That remains the position.

Security

3. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the present security situation.

4. **Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is satisfied with progress in the fight against terrorism.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Since I last answered questions in the House on 23 July, 29 people have been killed in incidents arising from the security situation. These include a number of believed terrorists killed by their own devices. Against that serious background, the security forces have achieved some significant results. So far this year 394 people have been charged with serious offences, including 25 with murder. A total of 230 weapons and approximately 13,000 rounds of ammunition and 12,725 lb of explosives have been recovered.

In addition, the Garda Siochana has recovered 118 weapons, 10,000 rounds of ammunition and some 4,000 lb of explosives. In addition, the House will be aware of the substantial arms seizure on the Eksund, for which we are most grateful to the French authorities.

As I informed the House, I am having further urgent discussions with my security advisers in the light of the recent outrages. I shall also be having early discussion with Irish Ministers about security matters. The House will also be aware of the universal condemnation that Sunday's outrage in Enniskillen has received. It is vital that that condemnation is backed by the fullest help and support from all sides of the community to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the security forces in their vital fight against terrorism.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that after the ghastly and horrific events of the past few days there can be no doubt that those evil terrorists are the sworn enemies of all the people of Ireland, North and South? In the light of that, are we not entitled to expect, and likely to see, a renewed determination and total commitment by the Southern Irish Government to combat terrorism and impede it at every possible turn? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is more important than ever that the two Irish Governments should work together?

Mr. King: There is no question but that recent events have made a profound impression south of the border as well as north. I note reports in *The Irish Times* of the formation of a new security committee headed by the Taoiseach. There is no question but that the kidnapping had a serious and proper impact on thought. Enniskillen has rightly shocked everybody throughout the island of Ireland and the arms shipments are a serious matter, which every person in the island of Ireland needs to take seriously.

Mr. William Ross: I asked the Secretary of State whether he was satisfied with the progress in the fight against terrorism and I am not clear from his answer whether he is. If he is satisfied, he must be the lone voice in the House today. If he is not satisfied with the progress in the fight against terrorism, when does he expect his level of confidence to match the requirements of the situation?

Mr. King: Of course I am not satisfied. I should make it clear to the hon. Gentleman that I do not believe that any hon. Member could be satisfied with the progress on security after the events of recent days. There is no question of that at all. We are fighting hard. The hon. Gentleman does no credit to his knowledge of the situation to pretend that it lies in my hands or in the hands of the Government to wave a wand. There is a role for the security forces and for the leaders of all the communities in Northern Ireland. We owe it to all the people who have died in the tragedy of Northern Ireland not to seek to open old wounds. I believe that there is a new spirit flowing under the leadership of many of the people who have suffered most in Enniskillen. They want to see how they can build new bridges and make a new start. I plead with hon. Members who represent the Province not to open old wounds but to try to build on the spirit of what I believe is calling to them from these people and to give a new lead.

Mr. Kilfedder: In order to further the new spirit to which the Secretary of State has referred, do all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland now fully and unequivocally support the members of the security forces? Does the right hon. Gentleman now expect appeals to be made for the minority to join the security forces in greater numbers, so that we can present a united front irrespective or religion or politics against the men of terror?

Mr. King: As I made clear in my answer, I look to all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland to give the fullest support to the security forces, and I should dearly like to see enhanced recruitment of members of the minority community. The evidence in recent years of the contribution made by the security forces in upholding the law impartially, protecting Nationalists as well as Unionists in the face of intimidation and terror, entitles them to the fullest support of both communities in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Alton: Will the Secretary of State confirm that we need not only the co-operation of the Catholic part of the community, important though that is, but co-operation from Dublin as well? In that context, will the right hon. Gentleman reiterate his hope that the extradition agreement will be enacted on 1 December? Will he also tell us why the Prime Minister ruled out a joint security commission before discussions with the Irish Government had even taken place?

Mr. King: I am not sure that I picked up what the hon. Gentleman said about the joint security commission. However, I have made no secret of my concern about the extradition treaty. I have no hesitation in making it clear where I stand on that.

I believe that, strong—overwhelming, some might have said—as the arguments were before the events of the past week, there is now no doubt that we must have the very closest co-operation and joint activity between both Governments in the fight against terrorism. There is such an identity of interest, manifest to everyone in the island of Ireland, that it has become a compelling priority.

Mr. Hayes: Is my right hon. Friend not appalled that this morning the IRA placed a nail bomb outside a primary school in Belfast, which, mercifully, was defused by the security forces? Does he not agree that the "sympathy" expressed by Sinn Fein is nothing more than an obscenity?

Mr. King: As the House will know, within hours of the issue of that contemptible statement of regret, a further bomb was identified. It had been placed at a Remembrance Day parade in Tullyhommon, near Pettigo. The overwhelming casualties that would have resulted if the bomb had gone off—thankfully, the IRA failed to detonate it—would have been civilians: young members of the Boys Brigade and the Girls Brigade, their parents and other spectators. It ultimately and totally reveals the contemptible nature of the IRA campaign.

Mr. Mallon: Does the Secretary of State agree that the bomb that exploded in Enniskillen was a very political bomb? Does he agree that its aim was to damage the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and that the people who stand to suffer most from that agreement are the Provisional IRA, who fear the two communities coming together as the Secretary of State has recommended?

Does the right hon. Gentleman also agree that the only way in which the Provisional IRA and those dedicated to violence can ultimately be defeated is through the united efforts of all those living on the island, and the help of the two Governments acting together?

Mr. King: Certainly I agree. It would be difficult to conceive of an attack more villainously designed to stir up sectarian hatred than that outrage—in its conception and in the location and target of the bomb. I make no secret of the fact that I know that the IRA is determined to smash any attempt at closer co-operation between the

British and the Irish Governments. I also know that, if we are to defeat the evil of terrorism, that co-operation is vital.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the only positive response to outrages such as that at Enniskillen is to reaffirm our determination to make a success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will he assure the House that not only is that his view, but that he will make every effort to ensure that that view is shared by the Republic?

Mr. King: Co-operation must be the right way forward and it is overwhelmingly in the interests of the majority and minority communities in Northern Ireland. The majority community has the greatest possible interest in a more effective attack on the problems of terrorism and in improvements in security. I am determined to work for that and I accept the advice of the Chief Constable that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has given him the best possible opportunity for furthering that cause.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Jim Marshall to ask Question 5.

Mr. James Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry. I had not realised that I had not called the Opposition Front Bench spokesman. Mr. McNamara.

Mr. McNamara: You do not have to, Mr. Speaker. As I echo most of the opinions expressed by the Secretary of State, I shall not pursue the matter.

ACE Funding

5. **Mr. James Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available the evidence on which his decision to withdraw ACE funding from various organisations in Northern Ireland has been taken.

11. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the main criteria used in deciding whether or not to renew ACE funding to organisations in receipt of such funding.

Mr. Viggers: Subject to the availability of resources, priority is given to projects which provide services for disadvantaged groups, those which may promote permanent employment, and projects in areas where the level of ACE provision is lower than the local incidence of long-term unemployment would warrant. With the exception of a small number of cases where security considerations apply, I am willing to discuss the basis on which a decision to withdraw or not to renew ACE funding has been taken.

Mr. Marshall: I hope that the Minister will accept that no Labour Member wishes to see any Government money get into the hands of any terrorist organisation on either side in the Province, but is he aware of the damage that is done to community relations when ACE funding is withdrawn and no reasons are given? If so, does he agree that, in order to minimise that damage, it would be elementary justice to introduce either a right of appeal against the Government's decisions or an independent review body to look at the decisions?

Mr. Viggers: ACE is a popular scheme and its funding and numbers have increased every year since it was introduced by the Government in 1981. More than 6,000 people are now involved in those places and there is a waiting list of 4,000. However, in a small number of cases there is a dispute about the way in which ACE funding has been withdrawn. For security reasons no details can be given, but each case is dealt with on its merits and a change in the pertinent circumstances can lead to a review of the case.

Mr. Fatchett: As my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) said, I am sure that no hon. Member would wish to see money used for purposes that would damage security, but, if I may pick a comment in the Minister's reply, will he meet representatives of the Twinbrook tenants and community association, from which I understand that funds have been withdrawn? It may not be possible for him to state the reasons for that now, but will he meet representatives?

Mr. Viggers: The terms on which support for ACE groups can sometimes be withdrawn were spelt out in detail by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in a reply in the House on 27 June 1985. For security reasons it is not advisable for us to give details of the reasons for the withdrawal of ACE funding.

Mr. Kilfedder: Will the Minister encourage voluntary organisations to make full use of the ACE scheme, particularly as many elderly and handicapped people would benefit from the services of some young people in their homes or gardens?

Mr. Viggers: We try hard to ensure that ACE funding goes to those groups that are in the best position to assist the kind of disadvantaged groups that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

International Fund

6. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals and organisations have applied for funding from the international fund for Ireland; if he will list those approved with the amount granted in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The international fund for Ireland is administered by an independent board appointed by Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Irish Republic. Details of applications for assistance and awards made are a matter for the board. A copy of the fund's press notice of 27 August detailing programme allocations totalling £47·9 million is in the Library.

Mr. Bowis: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied and certain —if not will he make himself certain—that no money from the fund reaches any paramilitary or terrorist organisation? I have in mind especially the seepage that tends to happen from industries such as the construction industry to such organisations through the evil and unacceptable method of the protection racket.

Mr. Stanley: I endorse entirely my hon. Friend's sentiments. That important consideration exercises the chairman and the board members of the fund when they consider individual applications, which are, of course, carefully scrutinised from that standpoint.

Mr. Hume: Is the Minister aware that the European Community is willing to contribute to the fund and that it is simply awaiting encouragement from one member state—the British Government? Will he please give the Community that encouragement?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman is familiar with the background to that. This matter raises wider issues of the EEC budget. He is aware of the substantial contributions that have been made in the Province and the Republic by the EEC through infrastructure funds and in other ways.

Mr. Budgen: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's impertinent and raucous advice to the Americans about their domestic financial affairs is especially unfortunate because it provides some partial justification for the Americans in their arrogant and ignorant support of the Anglo-Irish Agreement through the fund?

Mr. Stanley: The Government Front Bench and, I believe, many Conservative Back Benchers and many Opposition Members welcome the fact that by August this year the United States Government had made significant contributions to the international fund. That is an important testimony to the American Administration's commitment to the process of economic and social advancement and reconciliation in North and South.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

7. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of Stat. for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference established by the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

14. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the working of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

15. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: The last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference took place on 21 October. A joint statement was issued after the meeting, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. As that records, the conference discussed a range of matters, including extradition, the administration of justice, cross-border security and economic co-operation and religious equality of opportunity in employment.

Mr. Corbett: While thanking the Secretary of State for that reply may I ask him to confirm that the barbaric events in Enniskillen underline the critical importance of the co-operation of the Irish Government in all areas, and that that is best achieved under the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will he accept that many of us in the House wish to play our part in the parliamentary tier envisaged by that agreement? Will he advise us when action will be taken on that to open the door so that every hon. Member of the House can play a constructive role in that process?

Mr. King: Those who consider the position today will recognise the vital importance of closer co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic. There is great merit in closer understanding between hon. Members in this House and the Houses of Parliament of the Dail Eireann. However, it is for hon. Members of this House to decide the ways in which they want to achieve that.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: After two years, cannot Ministers be honest, humble and courageous enough to admit that the agreement has outraged most people in the Province, including moderate people, without achieving its aims and that it should be reviewed, as is provided in the agreement? How can my right hon. Friend continue to treat Northern Ireland as a colonial condominium? Is not the surest safeguard against any sectarian domination, of which the Social Democratic and Labour party speaks, to treat Northern Ireland as truly part of this Kingdom, under this one Parliament, because that is the surest guarantee of minority rights?

Mr. King: I advise my hon. Friend, whose interest in such matters I greatly respect, that the slogans that address this matter are not the most helpful way forward. However, I congratulate him on being prepared to put forward ideas, sit down and discuss them. What Northern Ireland now needs, above all after the events of recent days, is leadership from the leaders of all the parties in Northern Ireland to consider whether there is some way in which we can work to find ways in which there could be improvements. There is a later question on the Order Paper in the answer to which I make it clear that, although the Government support the concept of devolution, there may be difficulties in the speed of progress that can be made towards it. Obviously there is a case for looking at whatever alternatives can be considered as well. What I hope we can say and what I hope is the message from the people of Northern Ireland to their elected representatives, is, "Let us start talking constructively about the way forward."

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend is aware that I passionately support the cause of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. However, at a time when the two nations are, quite properly, determined to establish their separateness and their sovereignty, is there still a case for extending to the citizens of Southern Ireland so many privileges that are uniquely extended to them compared to other citizens of the European Community?

Mr. King: Of all the problems and issues that we have at the moment, that is a particular area in which I would not propose to trespass. However, it is true to say that, as my hon. Friend is aware, the particular and unique privilege regarding voting has been reciprocated by the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: Does the Secretary of State accept that, in my constituency, the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not produced the smallest vestige of improved security? Does he recall that the murder of Corporal Thomas Hewitt occurred when a sniper from the Irish Republic killed that young soldier in Belleek? Will he also give a detailed account to the House of the circumstances surrounding the bomb at Tullyhommon, which was placed in an area where young people were assembling for a church parade? The bomb was intended to wipe out an entire generation of young people in the Tullyhommon area and the attempt to detonate it was made from a hill in the Irish Republic.

Mr. King: In respect of the first illustration that the hon. Gentleman has given of the murder of a British service man at Belleek, he will be aware that the Garda Siochana subsequently arrested one person in the Republic who has now been charged, although not initially, with murder. Obviously, co-operation in such matters is extremely important to us. In respect of the second matter, I have made extremely clear my views on the outrage that was attempted at Tullyhommon. The hon. Gentleman's account is accurate and I entirely share his feelings on that matter.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the Secretary of State answer the question that is on the lips of the hundreds of people from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland who are lobbying the House today? After two years of an agreement, the declared aims of which were to produce peace, stability and reconciliation, but which instead has increased the death toll, polarised the community and caused political and economic instability beyond that that we ever had before, when will the Secretary of State end the agony, bury the agreement and get a satisfactory alternative?

Mr. King: The hon. Member talks as though the problems of Northern Ireland started two years ago. He knows perfectly well that the troubles of Northern Ireland and the terrorist campaigns go back very much longer than that. He knows very well that the scale of murders in Northern Ireland was vastly higher some years ago than even the existing appalling level, which I find quite unacceptable. May I say to the hon. Gentleman, as I have said to the House, and as I have said to the elected politicians of Northern Ireland, that Ulster cannot just say no. Ulster must say yes to something. The hon. Gentleman has a responsibility in that matter, if I may say so—a responsibility which he and one or two others have sought to address. I hope that others will be willing to look constructively at constructive solutions.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Secretary of State agree that the continuance of the present divide in Northern Ireland will only result in hopelessness and cynicism about what is happening in mainland Britain concerning the Irish problem? Does he agree that the only way of dealing with the problem over the long period during which Ireland has been in this state has been through positive initiatives towards Ireland as a whole? The only way to soften the divide between the different parts of Ireland is to recognise it as an entity, so that we can move towards a proper unity of the Irish people and nation.

Mr. King: If I understood that question correctly, I think that my answer is no.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the Secretary of State take it from me that none of the eleven people who died in the massacre at Enniskillen wanted to be associated with the Anglo-Irish Agreement? They did not die — *[Interruption.]* I know that, because I know that the people of Northern Ireland have completely rejected the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It has brought nothing but death and destruction.

Will the Secretary of State also take it from me that it is a tragedy that it took 2,500 people to die in Ulster before certain hon. Members were willing to condemn the IRA?

Mr. King: It is most unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman has introduced those elements of argument into a tragedy and outrage that has united people in condemnation. I do not know of his right to speak for every single individual in this. All of us who believe in democracy know that we shall stand united against terrorism. We are all determined on that course. It is the most united message that the House can give.

Mr. McNamara: May I return to the issue of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and say that if hon. Members did not understand the Secretary of State's difficulties before, they will now, after the last supplementary question? We believe that the Government are to be congratulated on the way in which they have been able to defy the bomber and the constitutional wrecker in maintaining the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We want it to go ahead and be extended to include not only security matters but others of economic and social importance for the benefit of all the people of Ireland. In many ways, the last declaration of the Anglo-Irish Conference was one of the most helpful and constructive that there has been for a long time.

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. I have made it clear to the House that the agreement is a sensible basis on which to co-operate in a number of matters of benefit to the people north and south of the border in the island of Ireland.

Administration (Reform)

8. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he is considering to enable the people of Northern Ireland to have a greater say in the administration of the Province.

Mr. Tom King: While I believe that some form of devolved government would best meet the needs of Northern Ireland, the crucial test for any system is whether it can command widespread acceptance. I am willing, therefore, to consider any proposals that might pass that test.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the overwhelming reaction to the massacre at Enniskillen is a feeling that unless the community is prepared to live under the shadow of the gunman and bomber indefinitely, it must find a way of working together? Earlier, my right hon. Friend referred to a new spirit. If he is to make something of that, is this not the moment for the Government to bring forward an initiative for some type of political forum in which the political parties in Northern Ireland could take part?

Mr. King: I have made it clear that I would welcome discussions on any matters along the lines that my hon. Friend suggests. Whether it would be best for the Government to bring them forward, or whether others should seek to propose them and at a later stage the Government might become involved, is a matter for consideration. The events of recent days and weeks make clear the responsibility on all of us to see whether we can find a way in which that spirit of reconciliation that is echoing out of Enniskillen and other parts of Northern Ireland at this time can enable us to recognise our responsibility towards the people showing that spirit.

Northern Ireland Economic Council (Report)

9. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the report of the Northern Ireland Economic Council recently published and indicate what further action he intends to take to reduce the unemployment prospect facing Northern Ireland.

Mr. Viggers: I welcome the constructive assessment contained in this report. Unemployment continues to be a problem, but, as shown by the figures published this morning, it is encouraging to note that for the past five months the underlying trend of unemployment in Northern Ireland has been consistently downwards. The improvement shown in the monthly figures announced today was the biggest drop in the seasonally adjusted year-on-year numbers for 13 years.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Minister for that reply. Is he aware that the Northern Ireland Economic Council recently forecast that in the coming years unemployment would increase in Northern Ireland? At 18·7 per cent. it is now the highest in the United Kingdom. Does he agree that those figures disguise the hidden unemployment, because of such special schemes as ACE and YTP, a prolific security industry and emigration? Does he further agree that recent Government action will exacerbate unemployment in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Viggers: It is of course true that many people are undergoing training on Government schemes. We are proud of that, not ashamed of it. Substantial new business investments are being made and more jobs are becoming available in areas of industry where Northern Ireland is a leader. This is good news and should promote more confidence that Northern Ireland is a good place in which to do business.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Nelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November 1987.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Nelson: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity today to welcome the decision by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and the commendably swift report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission giving the go-ahead to the bid by British Airways for British Caledonian? Does she agree that such a merger is likely to be in the interests of both companies, their employees and customers, and that it is wholly consistent with the Government's competition policy? However, will she give an undertaking that if British Airways fails to comply with the conditions for competition the Government will not hesitate to refer British Airways back to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission worked with commendable speed and that the decision by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has been widely welcomed. I also agree that the merger is consistent with the Government's policy on competition. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has made it clear that he expects the Monopolies and Mergers Commission proposals to be fully implemented. Assuming that the merger goes ahead, the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority has undertaken to report in a year to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport about its implementation on the basis proposed.

Mr. Kinnock: Are we to take it for granted that from now on the Government's policy on competition is the creation of private monopolies in gas, electricity and airlines, regardless of the interests of the consumer?

The Prime Minister: No. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that the BCal-British Airways merger was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. He is also aware that in the absence of an adverse public interest finding by the MMC there are no powers for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to prevent the merger. The right hon. Gentleman must await the Bill on electricity privatisation to see how that industry is to be privatised.

Mr. Kinnock: The terms of reference of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are one thing; the Government's role as the ultimate safeguarder of the public interest is another. Will the Prime Minister answer the question? Is the future to be one of private monopolies, whereas previously she has been critical of public monopolies?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is critical of the decision. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer"]. I will answer in my own way. The right hon. Gentleman is critical of the decision taken on British Airways and British Caledonian. That is the meaning of his question. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister must be given a chance to answer.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend took the decision to refer the merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The commission decided that the acquisition would not operate against the public interest and I have just informed the right hon. Gentleman that, in the absence of an adverse public interest finding by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, there are no powers for the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to prevent the merger. Our competition policy remains. There are other powers under competition legislation if concerns arise in the future.

Q2. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. Friend spend a little time today looking at the latest unemployment figures, which show that for the 16th month in succession unemployment has fallen—to below 10 per cent.? Does she agree that, together with the steady growth in inflation, the steadiness in inflation and the value of the pound, the people of this country and abroad can rejoice in the strength of the British economy, which strength has come about through her Government?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is quite right. The unemployment figures today are encouraging. Unemployment has now fallen by a record 445,000 over the past year, faster than in any other major industrialised country. Six years of economic growth show the wisdom of the Government's economic policies. Sound finance and British enterprise have produced the highest standard of living the country has ever known.

Q3. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fatchett: In a week in which the House has experienced the sordid use of bought political influence, it has been announced that private companies, without any reference to their shareholders, donated more than £2·5 million to the Conservative party in 1986. Is it not time that the Government introduced legislation to provide that shareholders are balloted before companies make political contributions, or is this simply another case of where the Government's stated political principles come second to their political and private greed?

The Prime Minister: I totally reject the hon. Gentleman's charge. The reason why Conservative Members supported the Felixstowe Bill is that Felixstowe is an excellent port. The Bill will help it to develop and it will be good for jobs, enterprise, exports, prosperity and the local people generally. No wonder the Labour party opposed it.

Mr. Aitken: While warmly welcoming yesterday's surprise announcement that the Government now intend to reform the Official Secrets Act, may I ask my right hon. Friend to clarify whether her replacement legislation is likely to be a measure in the direction of greater liberalisation, or greater restriction?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General said earlier this week, work has been in hand for some time to find effective enforceable and reasonable provisions to replace section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911. If, in the light of that work, we decide to bring forward further proposals for the reform, we shall announce our intentions in due course. I hope that my hon. Friend is conscious of the criticisms that have been levelled at the 1979 Bill. A great deal of work was done on that Bill. The Franks report was produced in the lifetime of the last Labour Government and that Government produced a White Paper. We brought forward the proposals then fashioned in the White Paper, but they did not find favour in the House. Therefore, we must be careful with the measures that we bring forward. They will be more restrictive than the present section 2. My hon. Friend did not need to ask a question to secure that reply.

Mr. Steel: Presumably the Prime Minister did not mean to say that the legislation would be more restrictive.

An Hon. Member: That is what the right hon. Lady said.

Mr. Steel: I know that is what the Prime Minister said, but presumably it is not what she meant. Presumably it will not be more restrictive than section 2 of the Official Secrets Act. Will the right hon. Lady support the private Member's Bill being introduced by her hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) to repeal section 2?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is quite right. Should we decide to bring forward a new section 2, it will be less restrictive than the present section 2, for obvious reasons. Indeed, so was the clause brought forward in 1979, which was rejected, as the right hon. Gentleman knows. A great deal of work had been done by both sides of the House then and it was thought to be a virtually agreed measure, but it did not turn out to be so.

Mr. Barry Field: In view of the imputations against my right hon. Friend over her support of yesterday's business, does she agree that it is remarkable that the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society spent £10,000 on the London Labour party——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will explain afterwards why that is not in order.

Q4. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hoyle: In the course of her busy day, will the Prime Minister take time to read early-day motion 96 about speech therapists, which has been signed by 222 hon. Members belonging to all parties? Will she note that the motion draws attention to the grave shortage of speech therapists and their low salaries compared with those of other graduate professions? Will she, as a woman and as Prime Minister, support speech therapists, who are predominantly a female profession, in their efforts to obtain equal pay for work of equal value compared to that of other graduate professions in the National Health Service, which are mainly male?

The Prime Minister: Yes, of course, I shall read the motion. On pay, my recollection, subject to checking, is that speech therapists stayed outside the professions supplementary to medicine being referred to the review body on pay.

Q5. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bennett: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to send a message to the Customs service and to the Dutch authorities to congratulate them on their success in discovering the £51 million haul of drugs this week?

The Prime Minister: Yes, gladly, both to the Customs officers, who are delighted with the haul, and to the Dutch authorities, on their efficiency. The drug seizure was double the total amount seized in Britain in the whole of last year. That is very good news and we gladly give congratulations to all concerned in the seizure.

Q6. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eastham: Does the right hon. Lady recall the statement that she made to the House last week in response to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock), when she claimed that funding for the National Health Service had been transferred, thus improving the service in the north? May I draw to her attention the fact that in Manchester royal eye hospital old people aged 78 and 80 are waiting 60 weeks for their first appointments and up to two years for cataract operations? How does the Prime Minister square that with the statement she made last week?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is aware that under the reallocation of health resources more has been allocated outside London to help other hospitals. I have visited many new hospitals which have come about as a result. He is also aware that far more cataract operations are undertaken now than there were eight years ago. It is hoped that under the waiting list provision that improvement will continue.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that millions of people throughout the country will have welcomed the fact that the Licensing Bill received its Second Reading last week? No doubt quite a few hon. Members in the House will have welcomed that as well. Does she agree that that is one more successful step down the path of deregulation, and that removing the obstacles and burdens from both large and small firms is the best way to get them to grow and create the new jobs that we all need?

The Prime Minister: I welcome the passage of the Licensing Bill to its Second Reading and I hope that it will complete all its stages without any hitches.

Mr. Mallon: Noting the resolve of the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach of the Irish Republic to bring to justice those who planted the bomb in Enniskillen, may I ask whether the Prime Minister agrees that no one should use the terrible suffering of those people of Enniskillen for political reasons? Does she further agree that the job of politics in the north of Ireland now is to translate the humanity, compassion and forgiveness of the relatives of people who have suffered in Enniskillen into politics in the north of Ireland for the betterment of all the people there?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the brave and noble reaction of the people of Enniskillen has had a profound effect on all who witnessed it. The people of Enniskillen have no time for hate, only for dignity and help. Now is the time for co-operation between the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, that is, those who reject violence. They must come together to make a new move forward.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Wakeham): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER — Proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

Second Reading of the Immigration Bill.

Motions on Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) Orders. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 17 NOVEMBER—Opposition Day (3rd Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Failure of the Government to Provide Adequately for the Transport Needs of the Nation."

Motion relating to the Education (Governing Bodies of Institutions of Further Education) Regulations.

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER—Debate on a Government motion to take note of the White Papers on Developments in the European Community July-December 1986 (CM.122) and January-June 1987 (CM.205) and EC documents relating to the future financing of the Community. Details of the EC documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Family Credit (General) Regulations.

THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER — Motion on the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations.

FRIDAY 20 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER—Opposition Day (4th Allotted Day). The debate will arise on a motion in the name of the Leader of the Liberal party. Subject for debate to be announced.

[Debate on Monday 16 November 1987

Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 3) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 1837)

Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 4) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 1888)

Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 5) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 1894)

Debate on Wednesday 18 November

Relevant European Documents:

(a)	*COM(87)100*	*Future policies in light of Single European Act*
(b)	*COM(87)101*	*Future financing of the Community Budget*
(c)	*8248/87*	*Budgetary Discipline*
(d)	*8249/87*	*Own Resources*
(e)	*8251/87*	*Reform of structural funds*
(f)	*8087/87*	*Amendment to Financial Regulation*
(g)	*8940/87*	*Third Amendment to Financial Regulation*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:

(a) HC 22-xvii (1986-87), para 6
HC 22-xx (1986-87), para 2
(b) HC 22-xix (1986-87), para 1
(c) HC 43-v (1987-88), para 3
(d) HC 43-v (1987-88), para 3
(e) HC 43-v (1987-88), para 15
(f) HC 43-v (1987-88), para 15]

Mr. Hattersley: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I want to ask the Leader of the House three specific questions. First, he will recall that the Government have taken a decision to deny unemployment benefit for six months to employees who it is said have left their jobs unreasonably. Should not a statement on that subject have been made to the House? Will he arrange for a statement to be made to the House next week justifying that petty and vindictive act?

Secondly, when is the House likely to debate the Autumn Statement? Must we wait for the constitution of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and then for the Committee to consider the Autumn Statement? The Opposition believe that we should debate it more speedily than that.

Thirdly, with regard to the section 2 of the Official Secrets Act 1911, the only thing that became clear during the Prime Minister's comments today concerned the prospects of the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) ever receiving a knighthood. We need to know the Government's intentions on that Act. May we be assured that there will be no press leaks and that the Prime Minister, or whoever is lucky enough to have responsibility for the subject, will come to the House as soon as a decision is finally made and tell the House, rather than tell the newspapers as happened earlier this week?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman asked me three specific questions. On the regulations concerning voluntary unemployment, the benefit sanctions are intended to discourage people from leaving jobs without good reason. The House will have ample opportunity to debate these changes, which require an affirmative order and regulations. Therefore, I see no need for a statement to be made next week.

With regard to the Autumn Statement, it would be obviously to the benefit of hon. Members if the House could have the advice of the Treasury and Civil Service Committee before it debates the matter, but I recognise the need to get on with it. I give a clear undertaking that the debate on the Autumn Statement will be before the Christmas recess.

With regard to Official Secrets Act 1911, I cannot say other than that work is going on. A statement will be made to the House as soon as a decision is made.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be great difficulties if the Select Committees are not set up by next week, not least in the context of the Autumn Statement that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) mentioned? Will he make sure that time is available to ensure that that occurs in the course of proceedings next week?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise what my right hon. Friend has said. I note that the recommendations of the Committee on selection are on the Order Paper, but they were blocked. It will be a matter for the Chairman of the Committee to determine when he would like them brought before the House again.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House will be aware that NIREX issued a discussion document today on the disposal of radioactive waste. Given the concern of many hon. Members about the issue and the fact that NIREX wants a wide discussion on it, will the Government provide time to discuss the matter in the House?

Secondly, does the Leader of the House agree that, given the support yesterday by the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) for the B-Cal-BA merger and the apparent opposition to it by the Leader of the Opposition, a debate would be useful to elucidate the Labour party's position?

Mr. Wakeham: The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question seems to be a subject that could well form part of next Tuesday's transport debate.

Responsibility for identifying a suitable method of and location for a disposal facility rests with NIREX. Its consultation exercise began today with the publication of a discussion paper. Hon. Members are encouraged to read that paper and comment to NIREX. It would be better to await the outcome of the consultation exercise and see what proposals NIREX brings forward before considering a debate.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the imminence of the Eurotunnel share offer, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is vital that the Chancellor of the Exchequer makes an early statement to assure us that the welcome and repeated assurances about Government finance for the tunnel will not be undermined by the Bank of England, which is an arm of Government, using cash in its control to invest in the project?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that at a late hour during Tuesday's sitting I did not give my hon. Friend a full answer to the question that he asked in slightly different terms. There is no intention to use either the issue department or the banking department of the Bank of England to buy equity share capital in Eurotunnel. I shall refer my hon. Friend's interest to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Leader of the House accept that all hon. Members greatly appreciate the courtesy shown to the House by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in making a statement today on the European Space Agency, despite the dislocation of business yesterday? Will he accept that that only highlights the discourtesy to the House of the lack of a statement on Scottish Homes by the Secretary of State for Scotland? Will he ask his colleague the Secretary of State for Scotland to come forward next week and show some courtesy to the House?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot accept that criticism. The Secretary of State was willing to make a statement to mark the publication of the White Paper. However, the date of publication having passed, there is no urgent need for discussion. Opportunities for full discussion will arise during the debates on the proposed legislation.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Bearing in mind the importance of the Housing Bill to the Government's housing policy, does my right hon. Friend expect it to be published next week?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot give my hon. Friend a firm undertaking, but the Bill will be published shortly.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): With regard to next Wednesday's business will the Leader of the House consider providing separate debates for the retrospective consideration of White Papers and the prospective consideration of future financing? In that regard, is he aware that the proposals for Britain's rebate payments, which will replace the Fontainebleau formula negotiated by the Prime Minister, have been outlined in Commission document 101? I have it on good authority that the document was published yesterday in Brussels. Will the right hon. Gentleman do his best to ensure that that document is before the House during the debate on Wednesday?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's great knowledge of and interest in these matters, but I cannot give him the undertaking that he requires. If by chance he and I should have a discussion about these matters later today, we will be able to discuss the matter in more detail.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): For the third successive week may I raise the subject of haemophiliac AIDS victims? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the sympathy and understanding that he showed last week was greatly appreciated and gave considerable encouragement to those outside as well as inside the House? May we expect a statement from the Secretary of State for Social Services next week? If the Government were to respond to the needs of these people and their reasonable requests, that would be warmly welcomed.

Mr. Wakeham: I accept what my hon. Friend says, and I hope that we will deal with the matter as soon as possible.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Will the right hon. Gentleman join me in expressing horror at the events of a few hours ago in my constituency, with the death of one man, and possibly others? Does he agree that everything possible should be done to bring the culprits to book and that nothing should stand in the way of the efforts of the police to achieve that end? The local community and others should be cautioned against jumping the gun or leaping to premature conclusions.

Mr. Wakeham: I am sure that the House shares those sentiments. May I say how much we appreciate the leadership that the hon. Gentleman has shown for many years in trying to maintain understanding between the communities in his constituency.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): As it is absolutely clear that there is no point in the Chairman of the Selection Committee retabling the motion to set up the Select Committees unless and until the Government give time for that above the line on the Order Paper, to prevent automatic blocking, when is my right hon. Friend going to give time that will enable the Chairman of the Selection Committee to take effective rather than nominal action for the setting up of the Select Committees?

Mr. Wakeham: The Chairman of the Committee of Selection will not find me wanting. As soon as he feels that he has a reasonable chance of resolving these matters I shall act, because I am as anxious as he is to get on with setting up the Committees.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House recall that in August I wrote to him about the allocation of money to opposition parties, particularly the problem that he has in the allocation of that money to the SDP? Is he aware that the allocation is based on the number of Members of Parliament returned, together with a sum of money allocated on the basis of the number of people who cast votes at the general election preceding the allocation of the money? As we have not one, but possibly

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

two SDP parties, how will he allocate the money? If a rump of SDP supporters form a mutation and choose a new leader in the House, as is likely, who will receive the £62,000? Will it go to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who supposedly leads the authentic section of the SDP, or will it go to the provisional wing, which is represented in Sainsbury's supermarkets?

Mr. Wakeham: I well remember the letter that the hon. Gentleman sent me, which was written in his own fair hand. I hope that he will allow me to keep it among my souvenirs for my later life. I must say that the hon. Gentleman's letter posed problems rather than gave me solutions to problems. I assure him that before too long there will be an opportunity for him to give the House an insight into his thinking on the matter.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): May we have a debate as soon as possible on the Anglo-Irish Agreement so that we may talk about extending it to the whole of the United Kingdom, as there are more nationals of the Irish Republic living in England than in the whole of Northern Ireland? We could discuss, too, all those who have fled from the Republic to benefit from the social services in England, as well as those who have come here to seek divorce, abortion or contraceptives. Finally, we should give the Opposition representatives of the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland the opportunity to come out unequivocally in full support of the members of the security forces, the soldiers and the police, who daily face death to protect everyone in the community from the gunmen.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the feelings and the concern of many hon. Members on these matters. However, at the moment we should be very careful about having a debate that might exacerbate differences rather than heal them. I shall talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to get his views before I come forward with proposals.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to study early-day motion 214 on the environmental consequences of the Grande Carajas project in Brazil?

[That this House is concerned that the Grande Carajas project in Brazil is environmentally damaging and disastrous for the indigenous people of the area; welcomes the recent report from Survival International which describes the devastating effects of the scheme; calls on Her Majesty's Government to support the proposals outlined in the report; and demands that Her Majesty's Government use its influence to stop the use of EEC and World Bank profits to finance projects that are environmentally damaging to the eco-system of the Amazon rain forests.]

Will the Leader of the House ensure that in the near future the House has an opportunity to discuss the British Government's attitude to the world debt crisis, their funding through the World Bank and the EEC of environmentally damaging projects such as the Grande Carajas project, and the damage that is being done to the economies of many Latin American countries by the imposition of totally unsuitable economic models upon those countries?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is looking into the matters raised in Survival International's report and will write to that body in due course.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): While Northern Ireland is without a devolved administration, has my right hon. Friend given any thought to a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs along the lines of the Scottish Affairs Committee? What would be the procedure for creating such a Select Committee, which would be a precedent?

Mr. Wakeham: It would be easier to deal with the procedure than to get everyone to agree that the move was worth while. I have given some thought to the matter, but I do not believe that it would be right to take such a step at present. However, these matters are constantly under review.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Given that the NIREX report makes Scotland the prime target to be used as a dumping-ground for nuclear waste, will the Leader of the House reconsider his previous answer and allow a debate so that urgent and proper consideration can be given to this very important matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I have to say that the report only confirms the wisdom of my original answer. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman reads the report more carefully.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Following an earlier question, will my right hon. Friend spare a thought for the people of Scotland, who have been unable to get their questions answered this week because of the incompetence and disunity of the Opposition? Might not that be rectified by an extra Supply day for a debate entitled failure of the Opposition to conduct its affairs in such a way as to give proper representation to the people of Scotland?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend tempts me, but today is not a day for raking over yesterday's business. Scottish Opposition Members should concentrate hard to decide whether three of them are prepared to serve on the Select Committee, because we lack them at the moment.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the right hon. Gentleman reconsider the reply that he gave last week about a debate on the future of the construction industry? The right hon. Gentleman said that we could discuss it during a debate on proposals for the housing industry. Housing is just one part of the construction industry. It is a large industry, the largest in the country. On that basis, and with all the growing problems, such as the growth of lump labour, the fact that more and more people are being killed and injured every year, the continuity of employment, and so on, is it not important that we should have a debate on the industry as a whole and not use other Bills and other issues within the industry to try to discuss the whole matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that the answer that I gave the hon. Gentleman last week was not entirely satisfactory, for the reasons that he has just given. However, it was the best answer that I could offer him at the time. I am afraid that there are many calls on the time of the House, and although I shall bear the matter in mind, I cannot promise a debate immediately.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend say that in the week after 1 December the Government will provide an opportunity for a full debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, so that the House may have the advantage of considering any debate in the Dail on the extradition proposals, and so that the Government may have an opportunity to explain, in the light of two years' experience, how they see the agreement?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the importance of the subject, but I do not think that I can add to the answer that I gave earlier.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I am somewhat dismayed by the right hon. Gentleman's response to the two questions that he has been asked on the NIREX document. He seems to be saying that the standards for the discussion in the House will be set by the contents of the document. Will the Leader of the House take it from me that the document is incomplete? It makes no reference to the most reasonable proposition, namely, engineered storage at the surface on the site at which it originates, where it can be managed, redeemed, monitored and re-packaged if necessary. The Leader of the House, of all people, must know that that subject can have grievous consequences at election times. Will he give the House the assurance that the subject will be discussed at an early date, that it will be a full debate and that it will not be in any way decisive in imposing the decision upon the people of this country?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that I can add to the answer that I have given, except to suggest that perhaps the hon. Gentleman could have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends to see whether he can obtain assistance from them.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will my right hon. Friend reflect on the important environmental and conservation issues raised during the passage of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, particularly the Labour party's concern for the over-protected species, the greater registered dockworker? May we have an early debate on the operation of the dock labour scheme in general, especially the desire of the other ports in this country to be free of the scheme and to recruit more workers?

Mr. Wakeham: I thought that my hon. Friend was going to ask whether we could have a debate on redshanks, waders and other matters. I would be able to tell him that I would welcome that, because I have been a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds for 40 years. I have not been a member of the dock labour scheme, but I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Attorney-General to make a statement to the House on his deplorable decision not to initiate prosecution proceedings against the perpetrators of the offensive, racist and lying document entitled "Holocaust News", which has been circulated, not only widely in my constituency but, I believe, to every hon. Member? Will he at least seek to confirm that there must be some law in the land to prevent that sort of offence from being given by way of political pornography of the worst and most vile sort?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the hon. and learned Gentleman's concern in these matters, and I shall certainly refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My right hon. Friend may recall that in distant days we used to have debates on the English regions, usually in Government time. In years gone by I could never understand why the Government allowed that time, for obvious reasons. Now that times are better, will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the north-west region so that we can say how well we have done and how much better we intend to do in the future?

Mr. Wakeham: That is a very good idea, but I cannot promise a debate at the moment. If my hon. Friend has the opportunity to take part, however, that would encourage me to look further at such a possibility.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Leader of the House make a statement on commercial lobbying interests, particularly in view of the stench of financial inducement to vote in a particular way that we have observed over the past few days, which represents merely the tip of the iceberg of commercial lobbying in this place? Will he also make a statement on the timeshare developers' association involving Barratt, Costain and Wimpey, which have no doubt contributed to Tory party funds, using this place for the purposes of an exhibition and providing further drinks for Members on the Terrace? Is it not pretty appalling that the House of Commons seems to have been handed over to the financial supporters of the Tory party at the whim of the Government in office?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept many of the hon. Gentleman's allegations. However, I consider it right that we should get on and deal with the question of the Register of Members' Interests. It is for the Select Committee on Members' Interests to decide when to lay the Register before the House. I understand that the Committee has not yet done that, because some hon. Members on both sides of the House have not yet registered. The Committee feels that a delay of a week or two may enable a complete Register to be placed before the House.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): While it could be said to be a bit savage and uncharitable to kick a suicidal institution in a sensitive area, may we have a debate on the Church of England? In the meantime, will my right hon. Friend tell the House whether he considers it right to sustain a Bench of Bishops in the other place for as long as the Church continues to fudge and funk fundamental biblical and moral issues?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend will no doubt continue to put his point of view in his own special way, but I must tell him that the Church of England and the Synod are an important element in the setting of moral standards in our society. I am sure that they will take that into account when reaching any decisions that they may make.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Will the Leader of the House find time next week to discuss the newly established office in London of the South African coal industry, and will he allow the House time to discuss what involvement the director of that office, a Mr. Robert Swain, has with Government Departments, in view of his known links with the South African secret service and alleged links with the British secret service?

Mr. Wakeham: I shall not arrange for such a debate next week, but if the hon. Gentleman would like to write to me about the matter I shall find out whether there is any Government responsibility.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as my constituency is near both Heathrow and Gatwick airports, a substantial number of my constituents work for British Airways and British Caledonian? They welcome the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Government's response to it. However, many others work for small airlines and they have a sizeable and legitimate interest in obtaining access to routes and slots, as discussed in that report. May we have a proper, full debate on the report as soon as possible?

Mr. Wakeham: If that is a trailer for the speech for which my hon. Friend may seek to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, in next Tuesday's transport debate, I for one shall try to come and listen to it.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Is the Leader of the House aware that Councillor Neil Powrie, the leader of the Conservative opposition on Dundee district council, is at present on a visit to South Africa as the official guest of the South African Government? Is he also aware that Councillor Powrie will be having discussions with the National and Conservative parties in South Africa, thereby lending credibility to the perpetrators of an evil and inhuman system? Given the press report this morning that Foreign Office representatives are having discussions with the ANC later this week, does Councillor Powrie's visit represent a change of policy on the Government's part? Do the Government support Councillor Powrie's visit to South Africa?

Mr. Wakeham: There has been no change in Government policy. I cannot comment on the Councillor's visit.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to look at early-day motion 281?

[That this House expresses its grave concern at the allegations made in the Scottish Television programme dealing with the financial affairs of Dundee Labour clubs and the Dundee Labour Party and a number of individuals who were named in the programme and who were active in public affairs in Dundee during the period when substantial financial losses were incurred by the Dundee Labour clubs; and calls upon the Government and the law officers to report at an early date on the effect the financial losses have had on Dundee District Council's rent and rates collection.]

If so, may we have an early opportunity to debate its contents, which relate to a television programme that was shown in Scotland concerning the affairs of Dundee district council and the Labour party in Dundee; allegations that large sums of money have disappeared, and that, indeed, there have been acts of homosexuality?

Four hon. Members were named in the programme —the hon. Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Doran), for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), and if

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) *rose*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that that was an unacceptable slur on the hon. Members involved.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) wishes to reflect on the conduct of any hon. Member, he must do so on a motion.

Mr. Walker *rose*——

Mr. Wakeham *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. That was a most clear innuendo—if there is such a thing—against four of my hon. Friends. I put it to you that things have been said by Labour Members that have led to you demanding that they be withdrawn, and they have either been withdrawn or the hon. Member has been asked to leave the Chamber.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I agree. I think that it would be right for the hon. Member for Tayside, North to withdraw what he said.

Mr. Walker: I never completed my sentence, Mr. Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]

Mr. Speaker *rose*——

Mr. Walker: Please, Mr. Speaker, this is fundamental. I am trying to defend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman complete his sentence by withdrawing any allegation about any hon. Member.

Mr. Walker: I am making no allegation, Mr. Speaker. I want to make that quite clear. I am not making an allegation. Two of those hon. Members are friends of mine. The remarks were made in a television programme that was seen throughout Scotland, and those hon. Members have two courses by which to clear their names —one is in this place, where we have an opportunity to raise such matters, and the other is through legal action. I am trying to help them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call the Leader of the House.

Mr. Wakeham: Would it be in order for me to answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), because these are important matters? The Government's view on the need to strengthen local government accountability for its financial behaviour is well known. By their actions they will continue to press for that accountability to be the subject of the voting judgment of those electors it affects.

Hon. Members: "Disgraceful."

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Please sit down.

Despite what the hon. Member for Tayside, North has said, I have not seen the programme, but I note that the thrust of his question was an allegation against hon. Members of the House. I ask him now, please, to withdraw that.

Mr. Walker: If I have made any allegations against the integrity of any Member of the House, I withdraw them without hesitation. However, I was not making any allegation. I was referring to them in the context of the programme.

Mr. Speaker: I asked the hon. Gentleman if he would withdraw any allegation without any qualification.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the aftermath of yesterday, and with exchanges such as this today, let me say that the reputation of our House of Commons is in the mouths, actions and behaviour of hon. Members. What went on yesterday, and matters of this kind in the House, bring the House into grave disrepute. I hope that we will give a lead to the nation by our good behaviour in this place and by good standards. That was not a full withdrawal of his comments, so will the hon. Member for Tayside, North now withdraw them unreservedly?

Mr. Walker: I unhesitatingly—I mean unhesitatingly—withdraw. I said earlier that two of the Members named are friends of mine. They may be on the Opposition Benches, but they are friends.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Friendships span across the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman has unreservedly withdrawn his comment, and I accept that.

Mr. Dobson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am sorry to go on. The hon. Gentleman has now apparently withdrawn the accusation that he was making against four of my hon. Friends, but what perturbs me just as much—it is related to my previous point of order—is that the Leader of the House came to the House prepared to answer that very question, which was out of order. It is outrageous that he should have come so prepared.

Mr. Wakeham *rose*——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take any points of order that may arise on this after questions. Who was next?

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): May we have a statement next week from any Minister with responsibility for health on why last weekend, at less than 24 hours' notice, half the beds in the cardiac unit of the children's hospital in Birmingham were closed, causing massive anguish to parents throughout the west midlands this week? Babies less than a week old had to queue up for operations, which were then suspended because the beds had been closed. Such action surely demands some kind of ministerial statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Obviously, anything of that sort is greatly distressing to everybody on both sides of the House. Operationally, it is a matter for those who are dealing with the services locally. It is not directly a matter for the Minister for Health. If there is any way in which he can help he will do so, and I shall refer the matter to him, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not forget the substantial increase of funding of the Health Service that was announced recently — a £2·8 billion cash injection into the Health Service in the next four years, the biggest increase that has ever been announced.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important that the House should have a chance to debate the claims that Vanessa Redgrave and other CND members financed the operation to spring the Soviet spy George Blake from Wormwood Scrubs?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot promise an early debate on that matter, but I have no doubt that my hon. Friend can find a way of raising it.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): Further to the unsatisfactory answer that the Leader of the House gave me last night, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, (Mr. Douglas) a short while ago, does he accept that there is now every need for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on the Government's proposals for Scottish Homes? Does he not realise that the proposals will mean substantial rent rises for many Scottish people? As Scottish business was squeezed out yesterday, mainly at the Government's behest, and as there appears to be an interest in Scotland on both sides of the House, even from unexpected quarters, will he now get the Secretary of State to make a statement on Scottish Homes next week?

Mr. Wakeham: Of course, prolonged filibusters, from wherever they come, cause difficulties for all of us. I was here through the night and I witnessed from where the filibustering came, but I cannot add anything to what I have already said.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): May I ask——

Mr. Speaker: Let us have Mr. Holt first.

Mr. Dickens: I give way.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Would my right hon. Friend care to note that there is great disappointment in the country that this Parliament has not debated capital punishment and it is time that we had a debate on that, particularly in the light of what happened last week?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the concern and, as I have said previously, I have no doubt that there will be a debate on capital punishment when the Criminal Justice Bill comes from another place.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Will the Leader of the House look at early-day motion 282 about the crisis in the NHS in Halifax?

[That this House condemns the Government's inadequate funding of the National Health Service, whkich has led to a financial crisis in Halifax resulting in the district health authority taking a decision to implement £½ million cuts; notes that these cuts will lead to: (a) *the premature closure of Faldon Hospital for the Mentally Handicapped,* (b) *the closure of a gynaecology ward and* (c) *the closure of an acute psychiatric ward; and believes that these measures will lead, inevitably, to an increase in waiting lists and a serious deterioration in the service provided to the people of Halifax.]*

In view of the right hon. Gentleman's previous remarks, will he allow time for a debate and explain to us why, if all that money has been spent on the NHS, we are facing yet another £500,000 worth of cuts, which will lead to the closure of a hospital for the mentally-handicapped, and a gynaecology and a mental illness ward? Why, when there is such a crisis in caring for the mentally ill in Halifax, and when the health advisory service has condemned the care of the mentally ill in Halifax, is another ward to be closed for purely budgetary reasons? May we have time for a debate?

Mr. Wakeham: The Chancellor's recent announcement on 3 November on the spending plans for the NHS in 1988-89 showed a 1·7 per cent. real increase over 1987-88 levels and a 32 per cent. real increase over 1978-79 levels. Health authorities, like other organisations, are required

[Mr. Wakeham]

to work within their budgets. Measures recently announced by the Calderdale health authority will not affect the overall level of service provided to patients. Faldon hospital's case represents only the earlier implementation of the plans contained in its longer-term strategy.

Mr. Dickens: Following the debate in the Church of England Synod this week and the helpful advice that we have received in this honourable House on occasions from bishops, will my right hon. Friend make some time available for a debate on the future of the Church of England, so that we can call on the Church to purge its pulpits of homosexual vicars, many of whom have proved to be a danger to children?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise the strong feelings of my hon. Friend and of other hon. Members. However, I am afraid that I cannot offer any Government time in the near future.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I have lost my voice, Mr. Speaker, but may I ask the Leader of the House to reconsider the answer that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook)? Does he recall that on the last occasion that NIREX made recommendations they failed, there was a row, and the Minister and, indeed, the Leader of the House, had to be rescued before the general election? We do not want that to happen again. May we have a debate on these matters prior to the recommendations being made?

Mr. Wakeham: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has lost his voice, but I am not sure that my sympathy is shared by everybody in the House. However, he seems to have lost his memory also, because my recollection of events is different from the one that he has recounted to the House.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend please take note of the Eurotunnel share advertisements, which suggest that a number of free journeys across the English channel may be obtained by the buyers of certain numbers of shares? Will he draw that to the attention of his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, so that an early statement can be made to the effect that such free offers on journeys would be a benefit received by shareholders and would be assessable to income tax? In consequence, the offer may seem less attractive, and investors should be fully informed of that when the prospectus is published.

Mr. Wakeham: The question of any prospectus and the terms in which it is couched are fully covered in our statute law. Eurotunnel is a private consortium that takes its own decisions. I do not believe that there is any responsibility on me to tell the House that it can get on with it.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In view of your concern, Mr. Speaker, about standards in the House being in grave disrepute, and because standards start at the top, has the Leader of the House noticed the following early-day motions: No. 228.

[That this House notes in the book, Campaign, by Rodney Tyler, the Selling of the Prime Minister: 'from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative Central Office — A unique inside account of the Battle for Power that the author on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, states 'It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27th January 1986 when Mrs. Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign . . .' and on page 3 that 'On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shakey enough to doubt her future' though some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared the following morning). It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent', and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account of what transpired between 3rd January and 27th January 1986, at Number 10 Downing Street, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Office's letter concerning the Westland Affair].

No. 253,

[That this House notes that the Member for Aldershot on page 136 of his book Heseltine: the unauthorised Biography, states in relation to the Westland Affair that 'John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite, if effective message, that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party, we did.' and calls on the Leader of the House, The Right Honourable Member for South Colchester and Maldon, to explain when he first knew the role of the then Trade and Industry Secretary, The Right Honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, in the matter of the disclosure of a selectively leaked Law Officer's letter.]

No. 272,

[That this House notes that in his book Mrs. Thatcher's Revolution, published this week by Jonathan Cape and Co., Mr. Peter Jenkins writes, on page 200 'Brittan himself refused to enlighten the Select Committee on any point of substance. However, he is reputed to have told close friends subsequently that not only has she known perfectly well what had happened but that, on the day following the leak, had expressed her satisfaction to him at the way things had been handled. However at that time, the downfall of Heseltine had not been achieved. . . . He (Mr. Brittan) might point the finger at her (Mrs. Thatcher). Potentially he now had the power to destroy her'; and calls on the Prime Minister to give the House a full account of her conversations with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, over the period from 3rd January and 27th January 1986, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

No. 273,

[That this House notes that in The Thatcher Years — A decade of Revolution in British Politics, published by BBC Books, Mr. John Cole, on page 170, considering the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter in the Westland Affair, writes 'why did he (Sir Robert Armstrong) not give her a quick interim report when he discovered that the leak was an inside job, authorised by her office? Why did Leon Brittan not tell her? Or the private secretary concerned? Or his chief, who sits in the same room? Or her press secretary? And why did she never ask?'; and calls on the Prime Minister to inform the House of the answers to these questions.]

No. 286,

[That this House notes that, in the book 'Not with Honour — The Inside Story of the Westland Scandal'; on page 142, Magnus Linklater and David Leigh write that 'Instead, following Havers's complaint, she spoke privately to Brittan about the leak. Although this is something the Prime Minister has failed to disclose, to widespread disbelief, the evidence comes from an authoritative source, who told us: "The Prime Minister knew about the leak. She

was pleased it had been done. There was a meeting between Brittan and her after the complaint from Mayhew. Only the two of them were present . . . Brittan assumed she knew of [the leak's] origins. You must draw your own conclusions." One of Brittan's friends adds, "Nobody thought it was a problem. The complaints were out of the public domain and any inquiry was expected to be a formality. Leon wasn't worried at all about it."; and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account to the House of the meeting between herself and Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, referred to therein.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman provide an opportunity next week for the Prime Minister to explain to the House why she told my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 27 January that she did not know about the role of her then Trade Secretary until the inquiry had reported? Will she confirm that Mr. Charles Powell did, indeed, keep her fully informed? Will she explain why, for the protection of her position as Prime Minister, and in order to remain in Downing street, she told the House a necessary and indispensable lie?

Mr. Wakeham *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Dalyell: It is not a question of being economical with the truth. It is a question of——

Mr. Speaker: No. The hon. Gentleman started his speech with a perfectly correct preamble on his and my concern about standards in this House. Will he please withdraw that statement?

Mr. Dalyell: Good standards start at the top.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the point. Will the hon. Gentleman please unreservedly withdraw that statement?

Mr. Dalyell: I must make my position quite clear. I believe that the real affront has been to the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have some memory of this matter. Will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw his comment about the Prime Minister?

Mr. Dalyell: Having been here for 25 years, I believe that the real affront is to the House of Commons and that it will damage its standing with the public.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I give the hon. Gentleman one more chance. I have some memory of this matter and I am sorry that this has surfaced again today. Will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw the comment about the Prime Minister?

Mr. Dalyell: I must make it clear that if I had been going to withdraw it I would not have said it in the first place. I really mean it.

Mr. Speaker: Well, in that case the hon. Gentleman puts me in an extremely difficult position. I shall be forced to name him unless he will withdraw that comment.

Mr. Dalyell: I do not withdraw it. I believe that it is quite clear that I set out in the debate on the Defence Committee reports on Wednesday of the week before last——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I name Mr. Tam Dalyell for persistent disobedience of the Chair.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Motion made, and Question put,

That Mr. Tam Dalyell be suspended from the service of the House.—*[Mr. Wakeham.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Heffer *(seated and covered)* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that when a Member has been named in the House and the Government have moved the motion, we are allowed to debate it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. The Question must be put forthwith, as I have done.

The House having divided: Ayes 220, Noes 102.

Division No. 68] **[4.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Durant, Tony
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
French, Douglas
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard

Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Madel, David
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Alan Howarth.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Steinberg, Gerald
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, relating to that vote.

Mr. Speaker: There can be no point of order.

Ordered,

That Mr. Tam Dalyell be suspended from the service of the House.

Mr. Speaker: I think that it would be wise to get on with the statement.

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I sense that the mood of the House is that we should get on with the statement.

Mr. Cook *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I will take it after the statement.

European Space Agency

4.27 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister of Trade and Industry (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I should like to make a statement on the outcome of the European Space Agency council meeting that I attended at The Hague on 9-10 November.

The 13 European Space Agency member states met to discuss wide-ranging proposals for the agency's future development. This was the first ministerial meeting since the council in Rome in 1985 when members agreed on a blanced long-term plan for the next decade with the aim of moving by measured stages towards a wider European space capability. We have since underlined our commitment to ESA by the significant increased funding we have provided—no less than £85 million this year alone.

Since the Rome ministerial meeting, our commitment to European co-operation in space has not changed. What has changed, however, is the scale of ESA's aspirations. Overall, the total cost of the proposals put to us at The Hague would increase spending on space by more than two and half times over the next five years. For the United Kingdom, agreement to those programmes would have meant an increase to more than £200 million — the equivalent of more than a dozen new NHS hospitals—every year from now on.

Our objection is, however, not solely that the bill is so huge. We recognise that space research is expensive, but we cannot see sufficient scientific, industrial or commercial benefits to justify such a huge increase. My approach at the council was therefore to press for a reassessment of priorities under present-day conditions, and to develop a strategy designed to achieve worthwhile aims which would yield solid and worthwhile returns.

Three major new optional programmes were presented by ESA: Ariane 5, a new heavy-lift launcher capable of putting three satellites into orbit; Columbus, the European involvement in the international space station project; and, at French insistence particularly, the Hermes manned spaceplane. I made it clear at the outset, as we had done in the preparation for the meeting, that I could not endorse the grandiose ambitions of the Hermes programme to put man in space by the year 2000. At enormous expense this would only achieve capabilities which the United States had achieved 20 years previously. There was considerable sympathy for my view from a number of other member states and it remains to be seen whether they will formally sign up to the programme in its entirety. At the moment, only six countries out of 13 have firmly committed themselves to making a contribution to the first phase of development.

On the Columbus space station programme, there has been no satisfactory conclusion yet to negotiations with the Americans about European participation. I declined to agree to proposals that Europe should in any event go ahead with a separate and autonomous version of the Columbus programme if agreement with the United States could not be reached. I said that we would consider further the proposal for a polar platform associated with Columbus, which would be an unmanned space vehicle, primarily for earth observation, that would be complementary to a similar United States platform. Our final position on that will depend on further discussions I shall be holding with United Kingdom companies about the financial contribution they would be prepared to make to ensure their participation either in contracts to which they attach significance or as users of the platform.

My approach to the Ariane 5 launcher proposal was that emphasis should be given to ensuring that the European Space Agency has a fully commercial launch capability—for satellites, in particular. It is important to give European industry ready access to a launcher for telecommunications and other satellites. Again, however, I had to question the increase that some other members wanted solely in order for Ariane 5 to be man-rated, and to enable it to launch spaceships as well as satellites.

The European Space Agency executive also brought forward proposals for increases in the mandatory science and general budgets, which had already enjoyed major increases since the Rome ministerial meeting. The science budget will have increased by about 27 per cent in real terms — over and above inflation — between 1985 and 1989. The European Space Agency proposed a further increase of 5 per cent. per annum in real terms up until 1992. Professor Bill Mitchell, the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council, and I had to make it clear that there could be no justification for such a proposal. In our opinion, the European Space Agency could and should achieve the agreed scientific objectives within the currently agreed funding level. I could therefore not endorse the proposed increase.

Throughout the proceedings, I emphasised the need to take a fresh look at some of the new and hugely expensive European Space Agency proposals, which largely derive from a new [illegible]ire to follow the Americans into manned space craft. I confirmed our substantial support for those parts of the established programme that gave due weight to industrial, economic, commercial and scientific considerations. I also argued for greater involvement of industry and users in the planning and financing of programmes. There was support from other Ministers for these aims, several of which were incorporated in the final Council resolution.

The United Kingdom remains one of the major participants in European space programmes. We have a budget of more than £110 million a year, and we shall continue to ensure that it is used as effectively as possible. We shall continue to play a constructive role with our European partners, and I shall be holding meetings with United Kingdom companies to see how that can best be achieved.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Will the Minister accept that what we have just heard is not so much a statement, more an admission of failure? First, it is an admission of political failure because, even in terms of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's own stated objectives, he completely failed to bring about any reassessment of priorities within the European space programme, and found himself wholly isolated. He is reported as having said that he at least came back with his money still in his pocket. It might be nearer the truth to say that he came back with his tail between his legs and a flea in his ear.

Is it not true that, while the Government may be correct in describing some of the ESA programme as over-ambitious, they have no alternative future programme to suggest for the European Space Agency? Is it not the case that, however modest and sensible the ESA's expansion, the British Government would have opposed it on

[Mr. Bryan Go[illegible]]

principle? Can the Minister assure the House that we shall at least participate in the Columbus programme and try to secure the lead role in the polar platform satellite project?

Is not this decision the worst possible news for the no fewer than 300 United Kingdom firms that are involved in space? Will they not now inevitably fail to win contracts, and will they not face a new brain drain of top scientists to Europe? What chance do we have of retaining those scientists and programmes when all the worthwhile and advanced work is being done elsewhere?

Did the Government try to win ESA support for investment in the Hotol project? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman amplify his teasing, unsatisfactory remarks about the possible Japanese funding of Hotol? How do the Government expect the private sector — it must be their expectation — to make up the gap in space spending? What mechanisms has the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster arranged for private sector contribution to the ESA? How can that possibly match the contribution that the Government — unlike 12 other Governments — have refused to make?

Is not the failure to back a British contribution to the European Space Agency symptomatic of a wider failure to back science in this country? Has the Minister seen the article in today's issue of *Nature*, which describes how British science is falling behind in metallurgy, biomedical engineering, solid state physics, civil and mechanical engineering, and material science? Those are all areas of weakness, and disciplines of great importance to our industrial future. Which of them will be hit by the Minister's opting out of the space programme in Europe?

Is the Minister aware that the Autumn Statement of a week or so ago promises real cuts in science spending over the next two years? Was his attitude at The Hague merely a reflection of that financial priority? Is he aware that his attitude at The Hague was a prime example of Thatcherism in action, characterised by short-term considerations — anti-investment, anti-scientist — and, in the end, uniting everyone else against us in opposition to the position that he took?

Mr. Clarke: First, I obviously do not accept the hon. Gentleman's diagnosis of the meeting. It is fashionable when reporting European meetings to describe them in terms of rows, failures, or successes, with people coming away saying that they gave each other bloody noses, or failed to, as the case may be. However, the atmosphere at the meeting was extremely friendly. My colleagues, Dr. Heinz Riesenhuber of Germany and Alain Madelin of France, are people with whom I am on friendly, satisfactory terms and with whom I usually agree on politics. We share a belief in strong European co-operation in this and as many other matters as possible. We discussed optional programmes to be added to the mandatory programmes, to which we are a strong contributor. We exercised our option to decline to join in projects which are essentially led by the Hermes spacecraft project — a new addition since the Rome meeting.

If the hon. Gentleman inquires among the British industrial and scientific communities, he will find remarkably little support there for Hermes — the name of the proposed spaceship — and much sympathy with my view that the desire to get into manned spacecraft has been distorting the balance of the ESA programme. The only reason that I abstained at the end from supporting the resolution as a whole was not that I wanted to stop anybody going in for Hermes. If the French and the Germans want to pay for Hermes, I wish them success. I hope that Hermes succeeds eventually — if it matches their priorities.

I am worried that going in for the manned spacecraft will distort the balance of the whole programme, and perhaps damage the programmes in telecommunications and Earth observation which are our principal interests and which we think ought to be at the forefront of the programme. As Hermes gets into difficulties, I am sure that we will come back to the alternative that I put forward, that we should reassess priorities, and especially reassess what Ariane 5 was for, and get back to an assessment of the scientific and industrial objectives upon which we all started.

Mr. Gould: It did not happen.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that it did not altogether happen, but that was because the French put so much money into ESA. With the French prepared to put up almost half the cost, a decision was taken, to which only six member states firmly adhered, to press on with putting this spaceship in the centre of the programme. That was the position in which we were placed.

On alternatives, the hon. Gentleman mentioned the polar platform. I agree that that is an extremely interesting concept that has attractions for British industry and would enable valuable Earth observations to be conducted. Further discussions are required with the Americans, because to get the best value we must ensure that it relates to a similar American polar platform. In addition to the discussions that I have already had and which did not go very far, further discussions are required with British Aerospace and others who are interested in the polar platform to see upon what basis Government and industry might contribute if the [illegible]lumbus programme goes forward in the way that we wish it to go forward.

What does this decision mean for firms? It means that we have decided not to go into these huge additional programmes, but it does not imply any reduction in our existing effort in space or in our existing contribution to the European Space Agency.

The hon. Gentleman asked about Hotol, the very ambitious programme put forward in particular by British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce for a re-usable spacecraft. That was not on the agenda at the ESA meeting and was scarcely mentioned. There was no prospect of ESA adopting it as a project and, so far, it has not been so adopted. I think that the French regard it as a competitor to the Ariane-Hermes project, which at the moment they have succeeded in promoting within the agency.

Hotol must be worked up to a serious project and we need to consider what international collaborators are available, because such collaborators are certainly required. That requires further discussions between British industry and the industries in the countries that are interested, and between the Government and British Aerospace and others about the next step in working up Hotol. There was never a snowball's chance in Hades that Hotol would be taken up by the European Space Agency at the Hague meeting. Sensibly, that was not put on the agenda.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: With respect, the hon. Gentleman cannot intervene now. He may ask a question in a moment.

We are interested in more private sector funding on those aspects of space work that produce a commercial return. Not all space research can do that, but some can, and we have succeeded in getting private sector funding in the development work on a number of programmes. I shall give an example. With the agreement of practically every other member state represented at the meeting, I strongly stressed that the proposed data relay satellite is of such commercial potential that we should contemplate making it largely a private sector project. There would be strong British participation in that.

That matter was not clearly resolved because some member states, notably Italy, insisted that to a large extent it should be financed by Governments. I suspect that that sort of argument comes from countries that are not sure that their industries will get a large part of the work if it is left to the private sector to develop it and to British and other industries to compete on fair terms for the work that they can do best. We are interested in more private sector involvement, and that was put in the resolution. All the other 12 states agreed that we had to go further in getting private sector contributions.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether there was an increase in ESA's science budget. The answer to that is that there is. Professor Bill Mitchell, the chairman of the Science and Engineering Research Council went with me to the meeting. The hon. Gentleman would find that if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science were to say that an additional £10 million was available for science and engineering research, Professor Mitchell would say that it should not be spent on space research because that is done very well and is not the highest priority.

The £200 million that the hon. Gentleman says we should spend each year on ESA—if he says that we should have signed up—is almost one third of the total amount that all the research councils at the moment put into the funding of all university and polytechnic programmes. It would be a huge slice from the scientific budget and the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Government and I had to decide whether that was a justifiable use of huge resources on what I regarded as largely non-scientific objectives.

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): While I support my right hon. and learned Friend in his desire for realistic programmes in space, is he not aware that Government spending on space has declined in real terms in the last few years? Is he not concerned that every country with a space capability is increasing its expenditure, while we appear to be cutting ours?

Mr. Clarke: Just making comparisons with what other countries spend does not take one far in many policy areas unless one asks on what those countries are spending money and if we are comparing like with like. When one looks at comparisons with other countries one finds that they are sometimes spending, not always very successfully, on quite different types of space programmes. They are not the kind of objectives that were on offer to us in ESA. We have to make a sensible appraisal of what is on offer.

If, in my discussions with British industry and in further council meetings of the European Space Agency, people come forward with well-judged projects of proven commercial, industrial and scientific value, we will consider them, analyse them and put them alongside other scientific and commercial priorities. I should be happy to discuss such projects with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary or with anybody else. When we are faced with a take-it-or-leave-it optional programme by an agency such as ESA, there is no point in saying that Britain has only one option and must choose to take what is on offer and go into things that I do not believe are in the interests of Britain's scientific or industrial community.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Will the Minister accept that there is considerable resentment about the very strong position that he has taken against co-operating with the 12 other countries in Europe? His comment that was widely reported and, I think, broadcast on television—that, "If these countries want to frolic in space on their own, that is their affair"—has been properly and rightly resented as a demonstration of hostility to the idea and principle of European co-operation on the frontiers of technology.

Does he not accept that his view is totally inconsistent with the Government's active encouragement to British companies to get involved in research for the star wars project, for which the technology and the final implementation is dubious and over which the Government have no control whatever? In this instance, he has turned down the opportunity to be involved in a technological development in which the Government would be actively involved and in which British companies would be guaranteed a stake in advance.

Apart from further damaging our relationships with our European partners with whom technological co-operation is vital, this decision will exclude many British companies from access to a vital market. Many of those companies are already investing substantial amounts of money. I understand that British companies have invested over £100 million in space technology. Therefore, the Government's suggestion that there is inadequate support from the private sector does not stand.

Does the Minister not acknowledge that, at the end of the day, the space programme and space technology will be developed in Europe and that British companies which have made that investment will be shut off from full participation and involvement in the spin-off? Is that not a disgraceful betrayal of securing Britain's role in the future development of some of the highest technologies that will be advanced in Europe?

Mr. Clarke: The comment to which the hon. Gentleman took exception arose out of my attempt at the end of the meeting to describe to lay journalists the difference between the mandatory programmes to which we are fully committed and in which we actively participate, the optional programmes in which we choose to take part — especially those programmes in telecommunications and Earth observation — and these new optional programmes related to this spaceship. I used a figure of speech that I took from a different legal connotation and described the French and one or two others as having gone off on a frolic of their own in exercising this option. As I said, they are paying for it and I wish them success, but we were not obliged to join it.

I do not understand the reference to star wars. No hon. Member has suggested that the Government should put

[Mr. Clarke]

hundreds of millions of pounds into star wars. We are not doing that. We are aware that private companies in Britain are trying to win contracts. That is what private companies are doing in space. The relationship between the space programme and interested companies in Britain is very important. The Government are putting money into space not simply so that British companies should get the money from the contracts and profit from the work, although we are glad when that happens. The justification of the Government's contribution is that, in addition to the commercial profit, there is some general economic spin-off and benefit to the nation, through technological advancement or access to other markets in other parts of the world.

That has to be a judgment. The judgment of supporters of some parts of the ESA programme is quite uncritical. Those wider economic benefits are not available from participation in this rather ill-judged project.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I realise the importance of this statement. I will endeavour to call every right hon. and hon. Gentleman who wants to put a question to the Minister, but could I ask for brief questions, as we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): I am sure that I would be doing my right hon. and learned Friend a disservice if I did not convey my disappointment and dismay at some of his recent announcements on this subject, having recently returned from the Johnson space flight centre at Houston and having seen something of the industrial, commercial and scientific significance of space.

Does he agree that there are essentially three major groupings in the world capable of taking technology further to the general benefit of all—the United States, the Soviet Union and western Europe? Is it not perfectly clear that none of the old great powers of western Europe, including Britain, can possibly do that on their own? Therefore, there is only one possible way in which it can be done, and that is by a united, effective western European effort—which this country should lead.

Mr. Clarke: We are party to such a united effort, and always have been, through the European Space Agency. It is important that we stay at the forefront of space science and reap the technological benefits it can bring to a wider range of industries. That has been and remains our object throughout.

We need international collaboration, but we have to collaborate with those who are taking the right route to those major benefits. My hon. Friend would be the first person with any knowledge of the subject with whom I have spoken who thinks that the Hermes spaceship is the right route. I thought it was wrong that France, as the dominant contributor to ESA, should determine that the central thrust of the organisation should be turned to getting a manned spaceship into space at the turn of the century.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that many Opposition Members feel that it is a pity that the only words he can use are about industry—though that is necessary—and commercial return, and that words such as education, research, knowledge and long-term progress seem unable to pass his lips? It does not matter how many highly misleading statistics and figures he gives—he gave us enough in his statement today—he will not get away from the fact that Britain is worse in space and scientific space research than any other developed country. What advice can he give to me, and to scientists in Britain who are deeply ashamed every time we meet scientists from abroad, of the policies of the Government and his philistine friends?

Mr. Clarke: Professor Bill Mitchell and I spent our entire time talking about science, industry and technology as well as the benefits that should come to European society from what we are doing. We also talked about devoting considerable sums of money but had to weigh up the advantages of spending it on other educational and scientific matters. We were being asked to pay £200 million a year into the project, which is nearly half as much again as total Government spending on medical research of all kinds in Britain.

We were arguing about science and, with respect to many of our critics, we are facing woolly stuff about the 21st century and the need to put a man into space, and general not quantified or clearly targeted talk about technological collaboration with our partners. We were keeping our eyes on the ball. By the time our partners have got three years further into this singularly ill-judged attempt to get a man into space, because the Americans did 30 years before, they will come back and start talking to us again.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that the formula that he is using of commercial use could be used against other important subscriptions to Europe — CERN in Switzerland and Grenoble in France? Does he not also recognise that the major industrial countries — West Germany, France and Italy—support Hermes and that flowing from all those contracts will be important orders going to manufacturers, and that we stand a chance of losing the lot?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend said, we engage in much international big science, and it is important that we do. Space research is merely one of several areas where international collaboration is necessary and essential. We will get nowhere on our own, and we all understand that. If my hon. Friend talked to those in the academic and scientific community, I think that he would find that they agree that international big science should still be well targeted and properly run and that it cannot be allowed to run away with too high a proportion of total budgets that are much in demand in other academic areas. I cannot remember my hon. Friend's second point about contracts.

Sir T. Skeet: We will lose orders from Europe that will naturally go to European countries and not to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Clarke: We will, but my hon. Friend should not forget that we were only being offered in Ariane about 3 per cent. of the total project. Ariane 5 is 45 per cent. French and they are insisting that 45 per cent. of the work goes to French companies. It was designed for French political purposes and no large participation was offered to us.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Minister has rightly said that not many people disagree with his summation on Hermes. If we are to accept what the Minister has said today, he must answer a number of questions. He has to tell us what his alternative projects are. He has to identify those projects so that we can see exactly what our commitment will be to the European space initiative. He must also tell us how the reorganised British National Space Centre will operate. We have heard nothing about it today. At present, private industry is putting money into space research in the proportion of 3:1. How much more does he expect private industry to put in without knowing the extra support that he may or may not give it? He also has to make it clear that he is prepared to stand up and to fight for British industry. If he will fight for our industry, we need to know the various projects that he will fight for and give his support to.

Mr. Clarke: The alternatives are being looked at. The alternative that we think is required and that we were pressing is a launcher that is likely to be competitive in the 1990s, with the key role of launching satellites. There will be several such launchers in the world by the time Ariane 5 comes on stream. It is not wise to spend so much additional money on Ariane—in raising its payload and its safety levels to carry man—to put a spaceship into orbit, because other rockets will be designed more cost-effectively to put launchers up. Our great strength is in satellites and telecommunications. We are interested in cost-effective launchers and not one designed for political purposes.

I have discussed the data relay satellite, which is extremely important and an area in which we hope to go forward. We are still having discussions on Hotol. We are to have discussions with the industry, and if out of those discussions come some well-judged projects which, if they are justified, offer value for money across all the criteria we have to apply to space projects, we will consider backing them.

Mr. Kenneth Warren (Hastings and Rye): Has my right hon. and learned Friend sensed the fear that is abroad in industry and commerce that we are standing on the threshold of a vast commercial breakthrough in the use of space transportation and that the Government are afraid to cross that threshold? I think it would be most helpful if he could reassure the House and the country that he understands the dimensions of those opportunities and will visit the space facilities to see what we can do. Lastly, would he please tell the House, and reassure me, that it is not a philosophy of how little we need to spend but how much we must spend that should guide him?

Mr. Clarke: I think that we have rather a good position in some areas of space at the moment, particularly as users of space facilities, telecommunications and satellites, and in some aspects of Earth observation. When we look at the polar platform, we will be looking at its value for Earth observation and what we might derive from that. I do not believe that someone with my hon. Friend's knowledge of the industry would disagree with my proposition that we must not be drawn into purely political choices of objectives. Having a spaceship with one's flag on is a political objective that is in danger of distorting the whole European space effort.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: In advising the House that the Hotol project did not have a cat in hell's chance of being adopted, is the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirming that the British Government were not going to propose it and that therefore the private promoters of Hotol have to wait for the Dutch or Portuguese Governments to propose British projects at ESA meetings?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) raised it at the Rome meeting. Everyone in ESA knows about Hotol, but there is no interest in taking it on. It is not meant to be a criticism of my French colleagues, with whom I get on very well, but at the moment it is perceived by the French and the Germans as a competitor, and they do not want Hotol to go forward. *[Interruption.]* We have to consider with our own industry how to proceed, and it is not through the route of ESA at The Hague. I have encouraged British Aerospace to have discussions with the Germans and the Japanese, whose industries are interested. We will have further discussions but, as every hon. Member has urged upon me, there is no point in going it alone on a project like Hotol. If the European Space Agency is not a collaborator, there is no point in my throwing money down the drain into ESA on the Hermes project, which is a competitor. I have to continue the exploration for other international collaborators who might be interested in taking Hotol further.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the Government have got this totally wrong? Is he prepared to accept—I am not—that our nation will become a division 3 country, and that research and development in space will be relegated in the way that he has suggested? If that is the course that he will pursue, my constituents and I will not.

Mr. Clarke: With great respect to my hon. Friend, who is an old friend and colleague of mine, he is making the widest possible assertions based on the glossier public relations that surrounds the space industry—that this is somehow the future and the forefront of science. It could be, and parts of it are, and it is those bits on which we will collaborate. However, I remind my hon. Friend that the sum of money that we were being asked to contribute is a third of the total amount of all the research councils' funding of research of all kinds in all our universities and polytechnics. The amount represented the entire bill for school textbooks for England and Wales in every secondary school, or more than half as much again than what we are spending on medical research.

My hon. Friend, who is deeply concerned about science, ought to take note of the opinion of those in the Science and Engineering Research Council. That council said that it was quite unjustified to go into research on that scale, to the obvious detriment of the claims of the rest of the scientific and academic community.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many people in private industry who pay taxes and are therefore concerned how taxpayers' money is spent will welcome his insistence on value for money and agree that just throwing money at space is not the right way? What I believe he is saying is that expenditure and effort should be targeted in the direction where it is most likely to be successful. That is a hard-headed, not a hard-hearted, approach, which I believe will appeal to those industries that will have to pay the bill.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, we were dealing with the optional programmes, where there are choices to be made. We have opted to play a full part in user programmes, those concerned with telecommunications, which is probably the most dramatic area of all, and Earth observation. We wanted the users and industry to be more closely associated with the planning than they are. The ESA is another great governmental agency that is driven by Governments and the officials of the agency, and it does not have close enough contact with industry and users. Users includes the scientific community. That is what we are arguing for.

I still think that the ESA will have to come back to that eventually because the Germans, as an hon. Member mentioned earlier, have got themselves in the curious position of backing Hermes but saying that it should cost 20 per cent. less. I cannot imagine how they will get on with that. In my opinion, the estimated cost of Hermes is a gross under-estimate. Before they get the spaceship in the air, it will cost far more than they are talking about at the moment.

If the Germans think that they can go on without us and spend less money than they are being asked for at the moment, the German Government are in for a big surprise.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept the clout that Britain carries in this sphere and that the extent to which British companies can play their part in space projects depends inevitably on the extent to which we are willing to make cash contributions towards their costs? Does he also agree that space technology involves not only the big companies but some 300 small companies, such as SIRA in my constituency, which are all doing a variety of work in space technology which has enormous potential in many areas apart from space? Does he agree that this work will be endangered and will not be able to continue unless we continue to play a realistic part in the European Space Agency programme? Will he take that into account?

Mr. Clarke: I will and do take that into account. Obviously I spend most of my time encouraging companies to fight for contracts. Among the reactions to the present news is the disappointment of the companies that expected contracts if we had gone into Ariane, Hermes and so on. We will have to to have more discussions with the industry and continue to explore ways for further international collaboration. Meanwhile, we are not cutting back on what we are doing. We remain heavily engaged in space industry of all kinds.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): Although I understand the call to get industry more closely involved, can my right hon. and learned Friend say how we can ask companies to make long-term commercial judgments, bearing in mind their responsibilities to their shareholders, in areas that are by their very nature exploratory, where the benefits will be long-term and where those benefits might necessarily be unprotected? Other companies and countries within the ESA range are not asked to make such a contribution. Is it fair that we should do so? Bearing in mind that Columbus discovered America on state aid, should we not do the same?

Mr. Clarke: Columbus was not taking part in an international project so he probably had fewer problems at the planning stage. What we are asking is fair in certain parts of the space programme. People tend to go on about space without defining clearly what objectives they are after. There is a mixture. Some is pure scientific research, research and inquiry. Some is to try to get spin-off from technological advances that might be applicable in other areas. Some is for pure commercial return. It can be extremely profitable to go into large sections of the satellite and communications data relay business. When satellite development has obvious commercial benefits, it is right to expect commercial contributions.

Technological spin-off is more difficult because it is difficult to get clear figures. Most researchers tend to be full of enthusiasm about potential technological spin-off but are not always clear about what it is. In pure science, we have to weigh up the claims on the budget with the claims of other areas. Pure research in space has seen a bigger increase in real terms in the last three years than any other area of pure science in this country. It is the combination of those things that one has to apply. That is what we are doing. I do not think that what was on offer at The Hague passed any of those tests satisfactorily.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I again ask for brief questions, please?

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the ESA subscription is far from being the be-all and end-all of the Government's involvement in space research? Does he agree that the firm control which he is rightly exercising over that subscription creates room for worthwhile bilateral projects, such as Radarsat in Canada, which will themselves give British industry a greater depth of experience towards the ESA programmes like Columbus and the polar platform?

Mr. Clarke: I do. My hon. Friend is right; we have a national space programme as well. We are heavily committed to keeping in the forefront of space exploration and research and industrial applications. At The Hague meeting, a Canadian observer was pressing on me again, as the Canadian Minister had already done, the prospects of collaborating in Radarsat into which the Canadian Government are prepared to put a large amount of money and in which it wants British participation. There are endless projects of that kind but I ask the House to accept that we must choose. The bulk of British industry will probably agree that our choice at The Hague not to go into Hermes was correct. We should all get together now and find better alternatives.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some of us are sceptical of the value of certain French-inspired space projects? Is he also aware that it is vital for the British space technology industry that we have a positive lead from the Government on the approach that should be taken by this country in space activities?

Mr. Clarke: As I say, we will have continuing discussions with the industry. I hope we can respond to my hon. Friend's challenge.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): Is it not the case that the development of the air-breathing engine for Hotol is progressing? Can my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that, if that development comes to fruition in the near future, he would be in a position to put Hotol on the agenda at the ESA with the backing of some money?

Mr. Clarke: Work is progressing on the unique propulsion system of Hotol because the Government have been helping to finance it. That is how we have got to where we are on Hotol. The next stage will be more expensive, because it is enlarging the investigations. I think that we agree with the companies involved that we need international collaborators. If the ESA would collaborate on Hotol, we would have discussions with it. Meanwhile, we have to explore the position with others.

I expressed strong scepticism a moment ago about whether the European Space Agency would take Hotol on board. Apart from anything else, it has spent miles over the limit already — *[Interruption.]* I do not think the hon. Gentleman understands. The hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross), who understands these things very well, knows that the French will not put money into Hotol because they see it as a competitor to Ariane and to Hermes. The Opposition are urging me to put money into the principal competitor of Hotol, which is what we were being asked to do at The Hague meeting earlier this week.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): My right hon. and learned Friend is obviously aware that space is currently the fashionable area for public expenditure. I am sure that he will bear in mind also that every pound that we commit to speculative space projects is a pound less for other parts of industry, particularly the rest of the aerospace industry, in which we recently overtook French production and exports. Will he therefore bear in mind the fact that there are many demands on public expenditure and that we should not wade head first into unsatisfactory projects just because they are in a fashionable area?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. I also agree with my hon. Friend's point about the importance of committing ourselves to the British aerospace industry. We are heavily committed to Airbus, where we are working with the French, the Germans and the Spanish to ensure that Europe retains its own capacity to make large civil airliners. We are close together in discussions with the Americans to make sure that that is not thwarted. We are interested in a European fighter aircraft. I find that a very attractive suggestion. We are working on that with the Germans and the Italians. I regret that the French are inclined to go it alone and not join in on the European fighter aircraft.

If that aircraft does not go forward, we will have to look to the American industry to provide the bulk of all military aircraft for Europe. Those are areas where we are collaborating. Before we get too excited about what happened this week, it just happens that we do not agree with our French and German friends on this occasion that a spaceship should be added to the list of our other commitments to the aerospace industry or to the scientific community.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): My right hon. and learned Friend should be aware that the free enterprise culture which has done so much to restore our economy does not yet apply to the business of space. With a Government lead it will, if it does not do so yet. He is aware that over 300 companies and most of our universities and research establishments are involved in space. In order to ensure that there is maximum effort in the right place, and no duplication of effort, will he please, under the auspices of his Department, arrange for proper co-ordination? If that co-ordination requires additional resources, can he assure us that those resources will be forthcoming?

Mr. Clarke: There are parts of the space effort with great commercial returns. There is private sector investment already in this country. There is a lot of private sector investment in America. There are areas where returns can be won. In other areas, the return is longer-term and Governments need to fund it. Frankly, other areas are not worth it because the commercial returns are nil and the scientific aims are illusory. We have to make a choice between them. Certainly we will have discussions with companies and others to try to co-ordinate our effort and make sensible choices.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the Minister confirm that, had the decision this week been different, it would have meant more work for British industry and British institutes of technology? I apologise for having had to leave the Chamber on urgent business in the middle of questions on the statement. Will the Minister explain how he would square that with the hapless and hopeless readiness of the Government to agree immediately to contribute towards President Reagan's SDI programme, and to scuttle around Europe trying to persuade our European partners to do likewise? Is the Minister not leaning greatly towards American projects rather than to those which we share with our European partners?

Mr. Clarke: I have already referred to star wars. We are encouraging British companies to look for contracts there, but the programme will be paid for by the Americans, so that is a false analogy. My attitudes this week were not in any way governed by pro-American, anti-European feelings. I am an extremely enthusiastic supporter of closer European co-operation in this and many other respects. It was simply a difference of opinion about whether these were the correct optional programmes.

The hon. Gentleman asked what would have happened if I had agreed earlier this week. I suspect that the next time that he had a claim to make on behalf of Stockton, his region or shipbuilding, and I had started pleading difficulties with resources, he would have pointed out how cheerily I had just agreed to put £120 million a year into a spaceship programme because the Europeans were demanding it. I am not sure whether I would have won either way with some hon. Members.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No. I will take first the matter raised under Standing Order No. 20.

Nursing Staff (Intensive Care)

5.17 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the shortage of specialist nursing staff in intensive care units in west Midlands hospitals, affecting infants needing heart surgery".

This matter is specific because a north Staffordshire baby, David Barber, 34 days old and suffering from a hole in the heart and a missing valve, has now had his heart operation cancelled five times. The excellent Birmingham children's hospital has operating theatres available. It has surgeons who are ready and anxious to perform the operation. It has beds in the intensive care unit, but it cannot make use of those beds which lie empty because it has not the specialist nursing staff to service those beds.

This matter is important because it concerns not only the misery and anxiety which must face David Barber's family, but also the terrible choices facing hospital staff in deciding on which babies to operate. Above all, it concerns the crisis of nurse shortages which are facing the National Health Service after eight years of Government cuts and neglect. We know that 30,000 nurses leave the National Health Service every year because of a combination of low pay, poor conditions and very inflexible hours, and the Government are doing little or nothing about it.

This matter is urgent because, unless David Barber and other babies like him get the surgery which they so desperately need, his and their condition will inevitably deteriorate. Hon. Members on both sides of the House and members of the public will be appalled that the Government have allowed the National Health Service to decline to the point at which infants needing heart surgery are denied treatment. For that reason, I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the shortage of specialist nursing staff in intensive care units in west Midlands hospitals, affecting infants needing heart surgery".

I have listened with the greatest care and concern to what the hon. Gentleman has said and I also listened to him earlier this morning on the radio. I regret that I cannot find that this matter should take precedence over the Orders for today, but I hope that he may have other opportunities of raising it.

Points of Order

5.19 pm

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have been notified of a point of order from the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that, earlier this afternoon, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) made some gratuitously offensive allegations about some of my hon. Friends. At this stage, it is not appropriate for me, or for any hon. Members, to debate the issues raised in the recent television programme in Scotland. I do not want to follow the hon. Member for Tayside, North in his reckless course of conduct in that respect.

It should be put on record that no specific allegations were made about hon. Members in the programme. The procurator fiscal, who has the proper responsibility for these matters, has been asked to investigate any matters that may arise from the programme. Indeed, he was asked to do so some weeks ago by members of the Dundee Labour party and by my hon. Friends who were referred to in the outburst made by the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

I rise to make this point because I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will advise the House, as I am sure that you would want to, that it would be better in these circumstances if hon. Members—even the hon. Member for Tayside, North — showed a proper and decent restraint and were not tempted into making irresponsible speculation and provocative suggestions which can only complicate the task of those who are properly looking into the issues that have been raised. Such behaviour reflects no credit on the House or on any hon. Member responsible for such opportunism.

Mr. Speaker: I accept what the hon. Member has said about the matter. I hope that we can conduct the affairs of this House on the basis of mutual respect and mutual honour. I trust that we will not have allegations of that kind made across the Floor of the Chamber.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Wakeham): There was a suggestion earlier that there was a planted question on this point. I owe it to the House to explain the position, and I can do that perfectly easily. The position is that any hon. Member who tables an early-day motion in the House is entitled to expect the Government to consider it and that, when the Leader of the House comes to the House for business questions, he should come with an answer to that early-day motion. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) raised a question specifically on early-day motion 281. The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) raised a question on early-day motion 282 and the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) raised a question about early-day motion 214. I came prepared with answers to all early-day motions on the Order Paper and naturally I try to help the House. To do less would be a discourtesy.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the House will leave it at that.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I think that we have exhausted that matter.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be well aware that "Erskine May", on page 254, states

> "The efficient and smooth running of the parliamentary machine depends largely on the Whips"—

that is, Whips from both sides of the House. Page 445 states that, when an hon. Member persists in disorderly conduct, Mr. Speaker is "enjoined" under Standing Orders 42 and 43 to take action. "Enjoined" means basically that you, Mr. Speaker, are required to take action. Earlier this afternoon circumstances arose with regard to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) as a result of which there was a vote, quite properly. That vote, I submit to you Mr. Speaker—I do not submit it, it is so obvious—was about your authority, the rules of order of the House and the provisions of "Erskine May". I am happy to say that——

Mr. Speaker: Unfortunately, I had to take an unpleasant decision. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Marlow: The point of order is that I am pleased to say that the Opposition Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) supported you, Mr. Speaker. However, the Opposition Whips, the hon. Members for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay)——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that this is going down an unhelpful track. *[Interruption.]* Well, do not let us stir it up. I hope that both sides of the House will always support Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Marlow: I am seeking to help.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has said enough for me to know that I am not anxious to hear any more.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a helpful point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am most grateful, but I think that we should get on.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was one of the tellers in the vote earlier on the naming of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The first person through the Aye lobby was the Prime Minister. If the complaint by my hon. Friend had been upheld, the Prime Minister might have had to relinquish the Prime Minister's job. As she would thereby lose money, she had some direct pecuniary interest.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on a totally different matter?

Mr. Hind: It is a matter of great importance.

Mr. Speaker: They are all matters of great importance, but is it a point of order?

Mr. Hind: This is a point of order on which you can rule, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance over the matter, which is now outstanding, of how to deal with the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). About 15 minutes after you ordered the hon. Member for Linlithgow from the Chamber I was walking from this building to Norman Shaw and I saw the hon. Gentleman with a television camera crew. It is clear that what happened during the business statement was set up for the purpose of cheap publicity on the hon. Gentleman's part.

I seek your guidance, Mr. Speaker, on this point. Will you take into consideration in the sentence that is imposed upon the hon. Member for Linlithgow — [HON. MEMBERS: "Sentence?"] Whether he is banned for one day or seven days, that should be regarded as a sentence. It is a disgrace, and let no one forget that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that I need any more help on this matter. I advise the hon. Gentleman that it is neither one day nor seven days. If he looks in "Erskine May" he will find that it is five days. I received a report from the Serjeant at Arms that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) had in fact left the precincts of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Hayward: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Hayward: I wish to make a suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. I cannot rule on suggestions. That would leave our proceedings wide open.

Mr. Hayward: The events of this week have unfortunately shown this House, both inside and out, in some of its worst moments. We can put some of that down to extreme exhaustion. However, many hon. Members regret that there has not been obvious support for the Chair from all sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker: We dealt with this matter yesterday and I have said today that I believe that what happened yesterday did not show the House in a good light. I hope very much that I shall have the co-operation of the House in ensuring that that kind of thing never happens again.

BILLS PRESENTED

WELSH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Mr. Secretary Walker, supported by Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. John Major, Mr. Wyn Roberts and Mr. Ian Grist, presented a Bill to increase the financial limit which applies by virtue of section 18 of the Welsh Development Agency Act 1975 to the general external borrowing of the Agency and certain other amounts: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 52.]

SCOTLAND

Mr. Donald Dewar, supported by Mr. Dick Douglas, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. John Maxton, Mr. Norman Hogg, Mr. Allen Adams, Mr. Bruce Millan, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Gordon Brown, Mr. Dennis Canavan and Mr. Sam Galbraith, presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Scottish Assembly and Executive and for their functions and powers; to make provision regarding finance; and to make consequential provision: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 5 February and to be printed. [Bill 50.]

Social Security Benefits

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on the three social security instruments. I remind the House that, pursuant to the order of the House on 6 November, they are all to be taken together.

5.27 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move:

> That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 3rd November, be approved.

As you have said, Mr. Speaker, with this we are to take the following:

> That the draft Income Support (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 10th November, be approved.
>
> That the draft Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 10th November, be approved.

The motions enable us to debate today three main items —the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987, the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987 and the Social Security Benefits Up-Rating (No. 2) Order 1987, which implements the uprating announcement that was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 27 October. The first of the instruments sets out the detailed provisions for the new income support scheme, the basis for a more coherent and aligned structure for income-related benefits. The second set covers the rules across the range of social security benefits for claiming and paying state support. The third covers the general increase of social security benefits from next April. All are important. Since about 70 per cent. of the population of this country live in families who are in receipt of some income from benefit, the importance is underlined. Certainly, they fully justify the time that the House intends to spend debating them today. Indeed, I hope that the House will understand if I set out not in detail or chapter by chapter the coverage of the regulations, but at least the background to each of the sets in some detail.

The House will have noticed that the income support and claims and payments regulations contain two minor changes—in regulations Nos. 15 and 48 respectively—from the versions that were originally made on 3 November. The changes were required to meet legal questions that were raised prior to consideration of the regulations by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. The House will understand and appreciate that we moved quickly to clarify the areas of doubt in response to the concerns expressed and to re-lay the regulations to avoid any delay in the House's consideration of them.

The regulations are the outcome of the most significant changes in the patterns of income-related benefits that we have had since the end of the second world war. They follow a review that began in 1984 with consultation and oral hearings and proceeded through the publication of a Green Paper and further consultation in 1985. A White Paper followed later that year, and there were many hours of consideration in Parliament during the passage of the Social Security Act 1986. Since then, work has continued on implementation and especially on the detailed regulations that were made available on a wide basis in draft form in July this year.

The regulations bring together the main provisions of the new scheme in one set. They replace four complete sets of regulations in the present scheme and parts of three others. The regulations are clearly laid out, with separate sections covering different parts of the scheme. We have produced—I hope that the House will find it useful—a detailed memorandum explaining the provisions. In view of that, I do not propose to provide a chapter-by-chapter description of the provisions. Hon. Members will have been able to read the details for themselves. Instead, I shall highlight particular points in the regulations in relation to the objectives for reform that we set for ourselves in the Green Paper.

In that document, we set out the aims of the reform. They were to produce a system that is easier for claimants to understand, to improve operational effectiveness to enable a better service for claimants, to target resources on those facing the greatest pressures, to encourage self-reliance, to ensure fairness between the position of people on benefit and others on low incomes, and to achieve greater alignment with other income-related benefits. All objectives are reflected in the regulations before the House.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend will note that the one provision that gives rise to a great deal of disquiet on this side is the decision in real terms to lower child benefit. Inflation goes up but child benefit stays the same. My hon. Friend will know also that it is the intention of our right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reduce taxation later this year. What the Government are doing — I hope not with forethought — is taking money from families with children and giving money to those families or individuals who do not have children. We are taking money from families and giving it to the dinkies: down the kids and up the dinkies. With double income and no children, one gets more money. If one has one income and several dependants, one gets less money. As a member of the party that believes in the family, can my hon. Friend give us some reassurance that the Government have taken note of the policy and intend to do something about that element of the tax-paying public — that family element of the tax-paying public—which is becoming worse off under this manoeuvre?

Mr. Scott: I am interested to learn that my hon. Friend perhaps has greater insight and greater information about the intentions of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer than have even some Members in the Administration. Apart from that, if my hon. Friend can control himself for a little longer, before I come to the end of my remarks I shall deal specifically with the decision of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State not to uprate child benefit. I know that the matter is important to all hon. Members, and I shall deal with it in due course.

The first two objectives that I outlined before I gave way to my hon. Friend provide a system that is easier for claimants to understand and for staff to administer. Those two things are linked. There can be no doubt at all to anybody who has anything to do with the operation of the system of supplementary benefit that the scheme is cumbersome and confusing. The difficulties are a barrier to claimants understanding their entitlement, to those who advise them and to the staff of the Department of Health and Social Security whose duty it is to administer the rules. The system has developed piecemeal over the years—like Topsy, it has just growed. New provisions have been bolted on to the original structure, until the central purpose of the supplementary benefit scheme, which is a guarantee of a weekly income for claimants with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of efficiency, has been lost in the complexities.

It has often been said in the past that there are about 16,000 separate regulations governing supplementary benefit. That is not exactly true; there are some gaps in the numbering. Certainly, when we get to the end of the instructions we get to the 16,000 mark. That in itself is a measure of the complexity and scale of the rules and regulations that have developed over the years. We should be concerned to simplify and clarify the provisions in any scheme that replaces supplementary benefit.

At the moment, the supplementary benefit scheme bases the amount of help given for normal living expenses on age, family circumstances, household status, length of time on benefit and potential entitlement to over 20 weekly extra payments. Because the permutations are virtually endless, there can rarely be a simple answer to the apparently straightforward question, "What am I entitled to?" All the evidence is that many claimants have little understanding of how their benefit is worked out. That lack of certainty must also serve as a barrier to take-up —no doubt we shall hear something about that matter this afternoon — by those, particularly pensioners, who could get help if they applied.

Under the new scheme, support for living expenses will be based on age, family circumstances, and the group to which the claimant belongs. That will usually be decided on the basis of routinely collected information — for example, receipt of other benefits. That is covered in part IV of the regulations and the associated schedules. Therefore, it will be far easier to explain to, say, a single pensioner or an unemployed couple with young children what level of support is provided for their living expenses. For staff, too, it will mean that decisions will be simpler and more straightforward.

The assessment of most claimants' needs will be simpler than it is now. I recognise that, of course, by definition, in an income-related scheme, there will have to be detailed rules regarding the treatment of income. If it is possible for a claimant to have a particular source of income, however rare, the rules must do their best to provide for it.

Also, in part V and the associated schedule, we have tried to do two main things in regard to resources. We have achieved some worthwhile simplification of the rules. For example, at present there is a special disregard of the first £1,500 of the surrender value of life insurance policies. That means that claimants and life insurance companies can be put to the bother and difficulty of working out the value to see whether it affects a claimant's entitlement to benefit. In the new scheme, such surrender values have been totally ignored when assessing benefit. Again, under the present system, if a local education authority makes a discretionary maintenance allowance for somebody staying on at school, there is a limit to the amount that can be ignored or disregarded—£7·50 for a school and £9·50 for a further education college. From April, all such payments will be disregarded without limit.

In future, payments in kind will be ignored. All the measures represent improvements for claimants and a reduction in the complexity of workload for staff.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): One of the objectives that the hon. Gentleman hopes that the new scheme will

[Mr. Frank Field]

achieve is that it will give simple answers to possibly complicated questions. I ask one simple question, to which I should like a simple answer. Under the new scheme, will payments be made in advance or in arrears? It is unclear from the regulations.

Mr. Scott: I shall refer to the way in which we shall seek to align payments so that claimants will not have some benefits paid in advance and some paid in arrears. I shall outline in detail how those systems will be aligned.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Many of my constituents are concerned about housing costs. In Brixton, where the crime rate is regrettably very high, it is the understanding of people who manage homes that are being adapted for the elderly that the cost of door entry phones and burglar alarms will be disallowed from housing costs if they are not purpose-built. They cannot understand why, if we want to protect the elderly and disabled from crime, these security measures should be disallowed. Will the Minister comment on that?

Mr. Scott: Subject to business arrangements, next week we shall discuss housing benefit regulations. The hon. Gentleman is saying that, under the housing benefit regulations, alarm systems that have not been purpose-built — thus, the charges are not an integral part of a payment to the individual for housing — should be provided under the housing benefit system or perhaps by local authorities through personal social services. I am sure that we shall discuss this matter in detail in the debate next week.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): I accept that there are complications with some benefits, but when the social fund is introduced will the Minister draw up a list of what people can claim?

Mr. Scott: I shall cover that matter next week, in particular the efforts that we shall be making to explain in clear detail how the new system will operate next April. Perhaps when I arrive at that part of my speech, the hon. Lady will ask me any questions that arise.

The second objective of the regulations is to provide greater clarity of difinition in other circumstances. The regulations on students' income, earnings from self-employment and attribution of income now incorporate matters that were previously included in guidance. More of the detail has been put on the face of the law. It will be of benefit to staff and claimants' expert advisers to have more of the detail brought together in the regulations.

Those changes will make it easier for advisers and hon. Members, who have a heavy case load in this regard, to explain the new scheme to claimants or potential claimants. Over the past few years we have made significant improvements — I am here addressing the point that was made by the hon. Member for Halifax — in the standard of our leaflets and other publicity material. An important objective of the reforms is to develop further this better information to claimants and their advisers. As part of the communications strategy, we are revising all the leaflets and claim forms for income support.

The information will be on a number of different levels. There will continue to be general leaflets explaining the broad outlines of the scheme for specific groups of claimants. In particular, during the reassessment of cases from November, all claimants will receive a leaflet explaining how their new entitlement is worked out. That will address the point that was was raised by the hon. Member for Halifax. We are revising the claim form so that it will include more explanation of the rules for claimants and will be laid out in an uncluttered and I hope less intimidatory format. It is intended to reduce the need for follow-up questions, which delay benefit awards.

Finally, we shall produce a full guide to the main rules of the scheme. This will replace the old supplementary benefit handbook, with which many hon. Members will be familiar. It will cover much the same ground but it will be free and freely available to those who advise claimants. We believe that the freely available new guide will prove a valuable document for claimants who wish to find out more detail of the benefit rules and will be of considerable help to various individuals and organisations advising them.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Most of the problems in this regard concern not the initial assessment but the subsequent appeal. Will my hon. Friend say something about the appeal mechanism, which currently is cumbersome and slow? Do the Government intend to revise that system, paperwise or mechanically, so that people who have been refused benefit in the first instance can obtain simplified information, such as that which is available to first-time claimants?

Mr. Scott: I hope that the simple application of the scheme in moving from supplementary benefit to income support will improve not only the original adjudication but the subsequent appeal. I am conscious of my hon. Friend's point and I shall address it in the changeover next April. The change-over itself should be of considerable help in that regard.

These measures are part of a dual strategy to make the system easier and to improve communications with those whom we are seeking to help. It is not realistic to argue on the one hand for improved publicity, a better service, a simplified system and further progress on take-up, yet on the other for the retention of every dot and comma of what most people would agree is an extremely complex scheme. Better communications, an improved service and changes to simplify the rules go together.

Mrs. Mahon: The Minister has not answered my original question. The social fund will be operated through the discretionary powers of a social security officer. I admit that, currently, benefits are complicated, but will there be a list of benefits that people know they have a right to, or will it be discretionary? If it is discretionary, one part of the country will receive different treatment from another. Will the information in the leaflets be specific about the matters that are basic and important to people on low incomes?

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Lady knows, elements of the social security system are regulatory, but provision is made in them for the discretionary loans system. We shall ensure that any publicity—leaflets and so on—will make clear the different aspects of the fund. There will be regulations covering the operation of the social fund, which will be subject to the negative procedure. I have no doubt that the Opposition Front Bench will seek to debate these matters in due course; I should be very surprised if they did not seize that opportunity.

Under the new scheme the main way that extra resources will be targeted on claimants with particular needs—this is another of the aims that I mentioned—is the system of premiums. The detailed structure and amounts are detailed in schedule 2. Extra help will be given to parents, lone parents, disabled people and, for the first time, from day one on benefit, to all families with children. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced the proposed rates for next April and published a revised illustration of the impact of change. I am sure that the House does not expect me to repeat the changes that were announced in his statement.

Our plan is to spend more, not less, on income support than if supplementary benefit had continued and been uprated in line with inflation. There are particular improvements for families with children and those who are receiving the disability premium. The published illustration implies extra resources in real terms compared to the present scheme for those groups of over £100 million for families and over £60 million for people receiving the disability premium.

Mr. Frank Field: The Minister said that the Government will spend more money, but will he give some information that I have tried, but failed to obtain in parliamentary questions? Is he saying that the proposed scheme will involve spending more money that if the supplementary benefit system had been uprated, taking into account the fact that the number of claimants is rising year by year and that the new scheme will have to cover 20 per cent. of the rates? Taking into account those factors, is he saying that claimants will be better off under this scheme?

Mr. Scott: Taking into account the £200 million that we will be putting into transitional protection, we shall expect to spend more on weekly support for income support claimants than we would have spent had we uprated the supplementary benefits weekly payments in line with inflation, which would have been our alternative to introducing the new system. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes.

Mr. Field: I am not sure what the Minister is saying yes to.

Mr. Scott: As I said, in 1988-89 more money will go into income support than would have gone into supplementary benefit uprated in line with inflation for the year 1988-89.

Mr. Field: With respect, that is not the question that I asked. I asked whether the sum would be more taking into account the facts that supplementary benefits would be increased, that during the year there would be more claimants and that the calculation must exclude the 20 per cent. on rates. That was my question, and not the more simple question to which he answered yes.

Mr. Scott: If I have understood the hon. Gentleman's question, the answer is still yes. However, we can pursue the matter in correspondence if the hon. Gentleman has detailed points to raise. My assessment is still that more resources will be going into income support next year.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): It would help the House to have clarification of the Minister's remarks. If I understand him correctly, he is saying that, taking into account the increased number of claimants and the fact that people will have to pay 20 per cent. of their rate bills, there will still be more money because of the money that is being put into transitional protection.

Mr. Scott: The transitional arrangements account for part of the resources that we shall be putting into income support next year. On the number of claimants, it is worth making the point that we are already experiencing a fall in the number of those claiming unemployment benefit, and we hope that that will continue. In spite of that, I believe that extra resources will be going into the system of income support for the coming financial year.

Let me remind the House of what I was saying; in a sense it follows on from the interventions. Much of the discussion about the effects of the transition to income support — perhaps the Government have played some part in this — has centred round breaking down claimants into gainers and losers. Some may have gained the impression that, when the new arrangements are introduced on 1 April next year, individual claimants will lose in cash terms. That is completely misleading. Wherever hon. Members stand on the merits or otherwise of the change from supplementary benefit to income support, they—and, indeed, all those concerned with the matter—should be at pains to remove the doubts and uncertainties that some existing claimants still feel.

Existing claimants who need it will have the cash value of their benefit maintained. That should be made clear. Ratepayers will also be guaranteed——

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Scott: I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have finished making this point.

Ratepayers will also be guaranteed cash in hand to meet the average value of the contribution to rates that they will be expected to make from next April. It is an inescapable fact that any significant reform on any realistic resource assumption must have different effects on different claimants' entitlement. I have described the structural change that we shall be making next April, but I emphasise once again that the transitional protection that we will give will be a major cushion to change for existing claimants.

Mr. Cook: The Minister will admit that those who have a cash benefit that exceeds their entitlement will get no increase next year. The 750,000 claimants whose cash benefit exceeds the entitlement by £5 a week are likely to get no increase in 1989 either. Moreover, if a claimant succeeds in re-entering the labour market but finds himself unemployed again at some stage next year, he will then receive less benefit than he received before he went back to work. How on earth can the Minister reconcile that with the known instinct of his Government to provide incentives for people to go back to work?

Mr. Scott: We are moving to a new system. If one moves from a system that has tended to concentrate on a complex process of deciding benefits against the background of thousands of regulations governing precise individual needs to a system that provides a basic personal allowance and premiums targeted on groups of people rather than on individuals, there is bound to be an unevenness of impact. New claimants will know the position and, as I said, extra resources will be put in overall. By the transitional protection arrangements we shall ensure that no existing claimants lose in cash terms.

[Mr. Scott]

As the schemes develop, hon. Members will have an opportunity if necessary to raise in the House the justice or otherwise of claimants who were receiving benefit before April 1988 being compensated in some way for inflation in future. That matter will have to be discussed on the Floor of the House. No doubt it will be discussed in terms of the way in which Governments allocate their resources from year to year. However, the Government should be given credit for providing comprehensive transitional protection for existing claimants as we move to a new system, which will be simpler and easier to understand and which, once bedded down, will be recognised as a great improvement on the existing complex system of supplementary benefits.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Scott: I almost feel as though other hon. Members are getting more of an opportunity to speak than I am. I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Field: My point relates to the transitional arrangements. Has the Minister had a chance to examine the statement in which his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced the proposals to the House? I understood the hon. Gentleman to say in reply to one of his hon. Friends that whereas some people would be caught under the transitional arrangements and would not get an increase in cash terms this year they would get an increase in subsequent years because the transitional arrangements would be inflation proof. That puzzled me because that is not how I understand transitional arrangements to work. If they did, they would last almost indefinitely—until people stopped claiming benefit. Is he saying that while income support will be increased only in line with prices the transitional arrangements will be kept in line with those price increases?

Mr. Scott: I shall check back on what my right hon. Friend said. In essence, we are committed at the moment to protection in cash terms of existing claimants—except for disabled people who receive domestic assistance in excess of £10 a week, who will receive not only cash protection but inflation protection. Perhaps that is the point on which the hon. Gentleman has picked up.

The fourth aim of the reforms was to increase self-reliance. This will be done in part by giving claimants a set income for them to manage—in much the same way as others in society, many of whom are little better off than those on income support. The present scheme, with its implied detailed breakdown into this or that expense, undermines that aim. It cannot make sense these days to run a benefit system that has us asking claimants how much they spend each week on washing powder. In addition, the regulations in chapter VI of part V provide for important changes in the treatment of capital. At present, capital of more than £3,000 debars someone from benefit completely. In future, the upper limit will be doubled to £6,000, with reductions in benefit only for those with savings between the two amounts. The success of this Government in bringing down inflation has made saving much more worthwhile. The new rules for income support encourage that.

The level of part-time earnings that will be ignored for benefit purposes is being improved to £15 for people receiving the disability premium, lone parents, and unemployed couples who have been on supplementary benefit or income support for two years. That is provided for in schedule 8. With unemployment now falling, we hope that this will encourage more claimants to regain contact with the world of work.

The last two objectives in the Green Paper—fairness across work boundaries and alignment with other income-related benefits — are also fully reflected in the regulations. The present mismatch of rules for help for those in and out of work or on similar incomes can leave someone worse off from taking a job or after meeting their housing costs. The last problem led to the creation of housing benefit supplement. Anybody who has had anything to do with that benefit will not see it as a sensible or easily understood benefit. The need for that will end next April.

The regulations we are considering today and those on family credit and housing benefit, which will be before the House shortly, achieve this by providing a common approach to the assessment of resources, based on net earnings. That is covered in part V. At the same time, we have taken the opportunity to align many of the detailed rules, ending, wherever possible, the differences—often quite small — that now exist between supplementary benefit, family income supplement, and housing benefit. As a result of those changes, under the new scheme people will be treated in a consistent way. In particular, housing benefit will be assessed on the same basis whether claimants are in or out of work. The maximum adult payment in family credit will be made at the level of the income support couple's personal allowance and, because of the planned increase in spending, more help will go to support low-income families in work.

That common approach in the income-related benefits has been generally welcomed, whatever other criticisms people may make of the transition to income support. It has been possible only because income support itself is less complex than supplementary benefit.

The House may be relieved to know that that leads me to my concluding remarks on the first set of regulations, those concerning income support. I believe that few hon. Members would argue that the present supplementary benefit scheme is the ideal model of a benefit system. There can be only one answer to the question, if supplementary benefit did not exist would anybody seek to invent it in its present form? I recognise that people have views and criticisms of particular proposals and of what we are doing as we move to the new system. However, it has been depressing for me, coming fresh to this subject, to feel that much of the logic of the criticisms I have heard has been a defence of the status quo, sometimes from sources that had been critical of that status quo until we decided to change it. That is a sterile approach and I believe that change is needed urgently if we are to produce a benefit structure more suited to modern-day needs.

That is the aim of the regulations before the House. We consider that the new income support scheme provided for in detail in the general regulations achieves a more coherent system, which is better able to direct extra help where it is needed, is more readily understood by claimants and paves the way for a better standard of service.

We are moving to a new system. The regulations set out clearly the basis upon which we will be embarking upon that. No benefit rules can be set in stone for ever. We, and I am sure Labour Members and the variety of organisations which properly seek to defend the rights and interests of those in need in our society, will no doubt be monitoring the regulations with great care.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Scott: I believe that the provisions in the regulations provide the right structure for help.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Scott: I will give way to my hon. Friend. I have never failed to do so.

As I said, they do provide the right structure for help. No doubt it will be necessary to develop them in the future in order to ensure that they are up to date in seeking to provide for the inevitable needs of society in the future.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry if I appeared to be agitated, but my hon. Friend said "finally" on a couple of occasions and gave the impression that he was about to finish his sentence and depart from his speech. My hon. Friend said that he would tell the House the logic of the Government's decision with regard to child benefit, and we are waiting with bated breath for my hon. Friend to tell us. I know that one of the points my hon. Friend might suggest is that we want to target that benefit——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It might be helpful if we listen to whether the Minister does suggest that.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Scott: I am sure that I can be of assistance to my hon. Friend if he will give me a moment. We are discussing three different sets of regulations. I have just come to the conclusion of the first set, on income support, and I am now going on to deal with the next two sets of regulations. I hope that I will deal with them more briefly than I have been able to do so far because of the way in which I have given way to hon. Members here and there. I give my hon. Friend a solemn assurance that before I sit down finally I will deal with the point he raised earlier, which I undertook to cover.

I turn now to the draft Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987. They cover all social security benefits and set out the administrative rules—which are not unimportant when we consider a social security system —which we intend will operate from the start of the income support scheme. The Green and White Papers on the reform of the social security system expressed the intention to pursue common rules to bring about greater harmonisation and simplification. These regulations replace in whole or in part separate provisions in 10 existing statutory instruments. They represent a significant move towards a more easily understood benefit scheme.

There are four main changes from current practice. The first covers the time limits for claiming benefits. That is an essential element for efficient administration of the schemes. We asked the Social Security Advisory Committee to consider and report on the subject. Its report and the Secretary of State's response were published in March of this year and most of the committee's recommendations have been incorporated in the regulations. The general thrust is to move away from the complicated and often contentious concept of "good cause" for failing to claim earlier. For example, a person claiming retirement pension or widow's benefit will be able to receive benefit for up to the statutory maximum of a year before the receipt of the claim, without having to give reasons or show "good cause" for the delay in claiming. That is a step in the right direction.

Secondly, there is at present a considerable mismatch between the periods for which benefits are paid. Contributory benefits such as unemployment benefit and the incapacity benefits are paid in arrears. Supplementary benefit is paid in advance. Consequently, someone receiving unemployment benefit with supplementary benefit receives payments which cover two separate and distinct periods. A vast majority of claimants find it difficult to understand how that comes about. Because it is difficult to understand as well as to administer, we propose to pay income support in arrears to nearly all claimants below pension age. Pensioners and widows will be paid income support in advance in line with retirement pension and widow's benefit. We will be bringing those two separate schemes into alignment.

Mr. Frank Field: I promise that I will not rise again during the Minister's speech. Will he take this opportunity to underline what a big change he has announced? His last statement was probably the most significant he has made so far. Does he realise the pressure that it will bring about in offices which already face pressure close to breaking point? Constituents will be turning up without a penny. They will be told that under the old scheme they would have registered and obtained benefit from that day forth but that now they may have to wait for seven days without any money. What advice will he give staff who may worry about their own physical safety under the new rules?

Mr. Scott: I sometimes give way with trepidation but never with reluctance to the hon. Gentleman because I acknowledge his skill in this subject, and the questions he raises may help to clarify the situation. Therefore, I shall never be reluctant to give way to him.

I think that the new system will be simpler and more clearly understood. It will be helped by the fact that, as part of the package, we will disregard last earnings, which were not disregarded under the previous system. They will be disregarded completely in terms of the calculation for income support. A clear majority of claimants come on to benefit from work. Claimants will now be able to use any final earnings to live on while awaiting their first benefit payment. They will no longer be excluded for the period covered by their last earnings. That is, I believe, a far more sensible arrangement than the present pattern. If there are particularly hard cases, I believe that the social fund will be able to operate to provide help. I think that the improvement that I have mentioned will deal with most of the hon. Gentleman's worries on the alignment front, and that it will be generally welcomed and will prove beneficial.

The third change is that it will be possible to make deductions from retirement pension, unemployment benefit and incapacity benefits when paid with income support if it has been decided that the direct payment of benefit to a third party is necessary—for example, to prevent the risk of disconnection for fuel debts. At present, if a pensioner's sole source of income is supplementary benefit, direct payment can be made to a fuel board. However, that may not be possible if the pensioner receives the same overall amount of benefit, but made up in part of retirement pension and in part of supplementary benefit. Again, I consider that a sensible arrangement.

Finally, we have introduced a new provision covering the suspension of benefit. In Committee on the Social

[Mr. Scott]

Security Act 1986, Ministers undertook to review the suspension rules, particularly as they applied to cases involving an appeal to the Social Security Commissioners. We propose that the social security appeal tribunal award may be suspended for a limited period only while consideration is given to an appeal to a commissioner. If within one month the claimant is not given notice that an application for leave to appeal has been made, the suspension will lapse.

Overall, the regulations will make for more effective and economical administration, and, I believe, will be more clearly understood by claimants.

We also have before us today the Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order, which is of direct interest to a large proportion of the population at all levels of income. As I said at the outset, about 70 per cent. of the population live in families receiving some income from social security benefits. The most sizeable group of social security benefit recipients are pensioners. About 9.8 million people receive a retirement pension of some kind, at a cost this year of some £18.5 billion. The number of pensioners has risen by 1 million since the Government came to office, and will continue to rise fairly steadily to a peak of nearly 13.5 million in about 40 years time.

Let me deal with a point which has been raised across the Floor of the House. However desirable increases in the basic pension may appear, they cannot simply be viewed in the short term. Raising the level of the basic pension creates an obligation for the future which it would be irresponsible to ignore. For that reason, we took the view when we came to office that it was right to update pensions by the increase in prices rather than by the previous Government's formula of prices or earnings, whichever was the higher.

Ours is a guarantee that protects the pensioners' standard of living, but creates no long-term obligation which might arise beyond the country's ability to meet it. The order therefore provides for an increase in retirement pension of 4.2 per cent., in line with price movements between September 1986 and September 1987. That uprating will raise the basic pension by £2.65 for a married couple and £1.65 for a single person. Most people will receive a larger cash increase, because the uprating will also apply to graduated pension, which is received by two thirds of pensioners, and to earnings-related pension. The amount of earnings-related pension payable is increasing rapidly, and SERPS can add over £20 a week to the basic entitlement of a person retiring this year who has been on average earnings. I stress that, because many people persist in claiming that we have abolished earnings-related pension, a claim that its 1.8 million recipients would find difficult to understand.

The order covers all the contributory benefits and the non-contributory benefits for disablement. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 27 October, it proposes an increase in all those benefits in line with the retail price index movement. I shall not take up more of the House's time in commenting on that, because I wish — to the great relief of my hon. Friend the Member from Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—to deal with child benefit, which is an interest shared by both sides of the House.

The House will know that the order does not propose an increase in child benefit on this occasion. It is important for hon. Members to remember, however, that it does increase one-parent benefit to £4·90 and child dependency additions to £8·40. Regulations will also be laid before the House to increase the maternity payment under the social fund by £5 to £85. All those are benefits that go to families with some degree of special need.

The assistance for families on income support, and our proposals for family credit for low-income working families with children all concentrate help on those in most need. Child benefit, by contrast, goes to all families with children, regardless of income. The wives of hon. Members who are in the Chamber tonight, or hon. Members themselves who have children under 19 in full-time education, will receive £7·25 a week from tax revenues as a result. Child benefit is, and will remain, a valuable contribution to the extra costs that every family incurs as a result of bringing up children. I must declare my own current interest in the matter! It will remain an important element in meeting those extra costs, and the purpose will continue to be met whether the benefit remains at £7·25 or goes up by 30p.

Mr. Marlow: I thank my hon. Friend for giving way, and I apologise for intervening earlier.

My hon. Friend will be well aware that child benefit, although we are a much wealthier nation, now gives less to families than child tax allowance used to give 20 years ago. My hon. Friend rightly said that what we want to do is to target money to the poorest families. Conservative Members are all very much in favour of that, but if we are going to find and target that money, why are we taking it from other families, rather than from the general taxpayer?

Mr. Scott: We have identified families on low incomes, whether they are on income support or in work, as one of the groups that particularly need help. Government is about allocating priorities, and we believe that giving extra help to those low-income families is a higher priority than providing a 30p increase across the board. The saving is some £120 million. That has made a contribution—less than half, but still a contribution—to finding the extra £300 million that we are putting into benefits for families on low incomes.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): If I may use my hon. Friend's language of priorities, let me ask whether he accepts that a consequence of this order of priorities is that between 30 and 40 per cent. of families entitled to receive the new family credit will not be claiming it. This is a consequence of priority being given to chasing a relatively small sum from families who are relatively well off.

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend makes several assumptions about take-up in the new system of family credit. The new scheme will, I believe, be generous. We are assuming that it will apply to twice as many families as have benefited——

Mrs. Beckett: That assumption is based on the most dubious grounds.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Lady will no doubt play her part, as we in the Government will play ours, in seeking to draw attention in the community at large to the new system of benefits. Already we reckon that it will go to twice as many families as before, and it will be much more generous. I believe that our communication strategy, and the fact that the general changeover to income support and the new pattern of benefits that we are introducing in April next year will doubtless arouse considerable interest throughout the country, will help take-up.

Our experience on the take-up of benefits is that it is those who are entitled to comparatively small amounts who decline to take up benefit. Those who are entitled to the larger amounts on any particular scheme tend, on balance, to claim. I see no reason why that should change when we introduce the new scheme.

I emphasise that increases in child benefit would not have given an extra penny to those families who were most in need—those already on income-related benefits. What matters to them is the level of child support that comes through the income support scheme and family credit. That is why, as I said, we are putting an extra £300 million into those benefits next year against the saving — 30p, not uprated this year — of £120 million which would have gone to the uprating of child benefit. That will ensure that the extra money available goes directly to those with the greatest needs, whereas the major benefit of an increase in child benefit would have been to people in the upper half of the income range.

It would not be right at this point to redistribute resources in that way. I hope that, on reflection, the House, and, in particular, my hon. Friends who talk to me about this and who I know care passionately about this, will agree that our decision for 1988 is the right one. I commend the instruments to the House.

6.20 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): It may be for your ease of mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I assure you that the Opposition have no intention of trying to take the debate through the night. Unless seriously provoked, we shall not oppose the business motion at 10 o'clock. We recognise that it will be for the convenience of the House to reach decisions at 10 o'clock. One reason why it will be for the convenience of the House, and why it is important that the House should avail itself of that opportunity, is that the House should be given the opportunity to reject the income support regulations, which will leave 4 million current claimants, and over 4 million dependants in the households of those claimants, worse off.

The uprating order, as the Minister recognised, is significant chiefly because of the benefit that is not uprated —child benefit. When the Secretary of State made his uprating statement in the House, I teased the right hon. Gentleman with the promise in the Conservative manifesto that child benefit would continue to be paid as now. I then added that we were no doubt intended to take that observation strictly literally.

I offered that observation in jest. However, it has since emerged from some press reports that that line in the Conservative manifesto was carefully honed; that a decision had already been taken before the election that child benefit would not be uprated this year. Indeed, we are advised by Mr. Hugo Young that, in a briefing to Conservative party candidates, the then Secretary of State was informed by some candidates that they intended to ask him in open session what that meant and were requested not to do so because he was anxious not to tell the conference. If a decision had been reached by the Government before 11 June, not to uprate child benefit, that decision should have been shared with the electorate before 11 June so that it could have taken part in the decision-making process.

One reason why I find the decision not to uprate child benefit perverse is that this is a Government who are constantly and cheerfully cutting taxes without the same kind of anxiety about whether the benefits of those cuts in tax necessarily go to those most in need.

Child benefit is a replacement of a tax allowance. I have no doubt that if it had been retained as a tax allowance the Government would happily be uprating it in line with inflation, although the case for doing that is exactly the same as the case for uprating child benefit. Indeed, in a sense, the case for uprating child benefit is more progressive since, after all, an increase in a cash benefit is of greater value to low-income families, who may not be paying taxes, and of less value to high-income families, who will be obtaining the tax allowance at the higher rates.

The decision not to uprate child benefit has two consequences. First, it increases the poverty trap. The Minister ended by saying that one reason why the Government were persuaded not to increase child benefit was that increasing child benefit did not help those most in need — those on means-tested benefit. One of the ironies of the decision not to increase child benefit is that it will increase the number of people on means-tested benefit.

We are grateful to the Minister for replies to two parliamentary questions which tell us that another 10,000 people will qualify for family credit as a result of the freeze, and a further 5,000 will qualify for income support. In other words, another 15,000 households will be put into the means-tested trap—the poverty trap. Child benefit is the best single way of helping families out of the poverty trap, precisely because it is a benefit that does not go down as their income goes up and as they attempt to make their way in the labour market.

The second consequence is that the decision will tilt the balance of distribution of income in the household from the mother to the father. It is the mother who bears most of the cost of the children, and those costs are increasing. Next April, thanks to the Government's decision in the Social Security Act 1986, those families not on income support — not on means-tested benefit — will find that they no longer qualify for free school meals. Half a million children from families whose parents are in work will lose entitlement to free school meals next April. That will cost the mother in those families, on average, £3 per week per child. As the chances are that if such mothers have one child in that category they will probably have two, it is likely to cost many mothers £6 per week.

It is odd that, at the very time when the Government are to impose that additional burden on the mother, they should choose to freeze her child benefit, the one income that she can claim on her own. Labour Members cannot accept the claims of Conservatives to be the party of the family when they plainly are not prepared to be the party of family benefits. They cannot have their claim to be the party of the family on the cheap.

Child benefit is not uprated at all. The other benefits in the uprating order are, but they are uprated only in line with prices, not earnings, although earnings are going up twice as fast as prices. Let me respond to what the Minister said about the effect of that on pensions. He said that the effect of the order would be to maintain pensioners' living standards, but we must be more precise than that about the effect. The effect of uprating pensions in line with prices, not earnings, is to maintain the purchasing power of the pension, but it is also to make sure that those

[Mr. Robin Cook]

pensioners who are dependent on the basic state pension do not share in the improvement in the living standards of the rest of the population. Indeed, they are left behind with a benefit that is constantly shrinking as a proportion of average income.

In 1979 the single pension was equivalent to 20·4 per cent. of gross male earnings. In 1988, as a result of the order, that proportion will have shrunk from 20·4 per cent. to a beggarly 17·2 per cent. I would not pretend that 20·4 per cent. was an adequate figure for the basic state pension —far from it—but at least under the previous Labour Government that figure did not shrink. It did not shrink because the previous Labour Government linked the pension uprating to earnings. That link, as the Minister acknowledged, was the first to be broken by the Government.

It was arguably the worst cut in benefit that we have seen from the Government, despite the many occasions on which they have broken benefit links. Had that link been retained, next April the single pension would, in cash terms, be worth £9·20 a week more and the pension for a couple would be worth £14·60 a week more. That may not qualify as serious money in the City of London, but it would make a big difference to the weekly budget of many British pensioners.

I note from the figures on the impact of these changes, which are published by the Government, that, on average, the income of those 3 million pensioners who are dependent on state benefits will go down. The average entitlement of people under 80 years of age will go down by £1 per week, and the average entitlement of those pensioners over 80 will go down by 30p per week. That will happen to some of the most vulnerable in our community.

An entertaining perspective to that reduction in entitlement was provided by the wit and wisdom of our Prime Minister. You may have noticed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that last week the Prime Minister did her Christmas shopping at a Marks and Spencer store, in the course of which she purchased a cashmere sweater. I note that she stated that she purchased the cashmere sweater because she is unable to wear wool next to her skin. I am touched to discover that there is at least one human frailty that I share with the Prime Minister. No doubt it is because of our thin skin.

On purchasing the cashmere sweater, the Prime Minister observed to the assembled throng of shop girls,

> "As you get older you need your comforts—the comfort of cashmere."

I would not go so far as the Prime Minister and describe the comfort of cashmere as a basic need, or suggest that a loan should be available out of the social fund to pay for the purchase of cashmere sweaters, but I agree with the Prime Minister that as one gets older one needs some comfort. One needs the ability to pay for the heating in one's home, to pay for the use of public transport or to pay for the occasional treat for the grandchildren. As a result of the decline in the value of their pension, even those comforts are as far beyond the income of some pensioners as is the purchase of a cashmere sweater.

The other regulation that is of even greater contention is the one on income support. It scraps supplementary benefit and puts into place the new benefit system that was the centrepiece of the Social Security Act 1986. The Minister described the lengthy process behind the regulation and the long period of mass consultation. I have difficulty in reconciling that with the reality of the reviews that were carried out by the previous Secretary of State, which took place in committees chaired by Ministers from the DHSS and were packed with the Government's friends from the Adam Smith Institute and the Institute of Directors. The Green Paper was written at a weekend conference held in a stately home. Even the agenda was classified "secret". One senior civil servant who was present made the diverting comment that the most open discussions were to be found in the gentlemen's room.

We have several fundamental objections to the structure of the income support system that is proposed in the regulations. The most fundamental is that the regulations sweep away all the additions that at present help claimants to get by. Those are the additions which the previous Minister of State, in a moment of Olympian disdain, described as "the twiddly bits" of the social security system. They may be "twiddly" to the Minister, but they are important to claimants. They include, for instance, additions for diet for those who suffer from diabetes or other medical conditions; additions for laundry for claimants who are incontinent or who have children who wet the bed; additions for hot water for claimants who need more than the one bath a week that they are allowed under the supplementary benefit regulations and additions for heating for claimants who need additional warmth in their homes or who have the misfortune to live in one of the houses that were devised by architects who had lost the art of insulating houses, assuming that the tenant would be able to put up with constantly high fuel costs.

I noticed that last week the Prime Minister — no doubt in a fit of inadvertence — said that last winter heating additions totalled £430 million. She took pride in that fact and told the House that that was a "record" amount. However, she omitted to advise the House last week that tonight we would be invited to pass a regulation that embodies a structure that cancels every one of those heating additions and abolishes that £430 million additional help for claimants. We are invited to do so at the very time when electricity prices are to increase by 8 per cent. to fatten up the electricity boards for the private sector.

We are told that the change represents targeting. In fact, the extinction of all those weekly additions for specific and particular needs is the precise reverse of targeting. It is shooting blind without regard for the individual circumstances of claimants. It will undoubtedly leave behind many casualties who will be worse off.

I concede to the Minister that my hon. Friends and I are not enthusiastic about means-tested benefits, but we accept that there will always be a case for a means-tested benefit as an income of last resort. However, the Government are offering the worst formula of a means-tested benefit, entitlement to which will be measured by reference to income, but the benefit of which will not be measured by any judgment of the claimant's needs.

The needs of the claimant are to be met, and the additions are to be replaced, by the new premiums for certain categories, but those premiums will not compensate for the abolition of all the weekly additions. Any claimant who currently manages to obtain two or more additions is almost certain to be worse off. Some claimants, especially disabled people, will be spectacularly worse off. Several disabled claimants face a loss of entitlement of up to £50 per week. There may be only a few hundred people in that category, but we know from the Government's own statement on the impact of the changes that 20,000 disabled claimants face a weekly loss of entitlement of more than £5.

That group should not be among the losers. It is blunt targeting that results in making worse off those in our community who are most in need of help. What makes their loss of entitlement especially offensive is that the House is asked to approve the change before the Government have received the results of their own survey of the needs of disabled people and the extent of disability in our country. If there is a case for changing the benefits of the disabled in a way that will leave so many people losers, that case should be made after, not before, the Government have received the results of the survey.

Mr. Scott: Would the hon. Gentleman argue, by the same token, that we should not have provided the extra resources that will help disabled people when we introduce income support? Overall, about £60 million extra will help to meet their needs. We are introducing a system under which 85 per cent. of people under the age of 60 who receive disability premium, will gain or be unaffected in real terms. About 44 per cent. will gain more than £5 per week. Would the hon. Gentleman have wanted that to be held up also?

Mr. Cook: If the Minister is to provide that additional help, of course it will be welcome. However, it should not be provided or paid for—as is happening under the change in income support—by reductions in the benefit of other categories, including reductions for other disabled people, 80,000 of whom will be worse off as a result of the change—20,000 by more than £5 per week. Moreover, the figure of 85 per cent. that the Minister quoted as the number of disabled people who will be better off relates only to disabled people who are aged under 65. As most disabled people who at present obtain weekly additions by reason of their medical or other disabilities are over 65 years of age, it is partial pleading to claim that most of those who are aged under 65 will benefit from the change. Most of those disabled people who are over 65 will suffer from the change.

There are other claimants who do not qualify for any premium. As we are discussing disabled people, let us consider the position of those who have given up work to care for a disabled relative. Many tens of thousands of women have left the labour force to work full-time looking after an aged relative. That is exactly the kind of step that I should have thought the Government would wish to encourage as part of their philosophy of care in the community. At present, those women qualify for the long-term rate of supplementary benefit. As a result of the change they will qualify only for the single person allowance, with no premium. They will be £5 per week worse off, even if they are not in receipt of any weekly additions. If they receive a weekly addition, they will be £10 or more worse off per week.

I know that we will be told that their benefit will be protected. However, in this case "protection" means that their benefit will be frozen and will not be increased, and because the drop in the entitlement of carers is so large, they are unlikely to receive any increase in their benefit until 1990. Moreover, those who choose to leave the labour force to care for a disabled elderly relative after April next year will find that they obtain benefit only at the new reduced rate. They may find themselves living in the same street as someone in identical circumstances, who is providing an identical service, but they will receive £5 or £10 a week less. They will not find that fair or reasonable.

Carers who are currently in receipt of benefit and whose income is protected may take a seasonal job next summer —some people do if such work is available—and they will find it unreasonable when they return to claim benefit to discover that their benefit is £5 or £10 less than they had received in the spring of this year. That will not seem like progress or reform to them; it will seem plain daft.

There is another layer of discrimination in the regulations that deserves attention. The Minister pleaded that simplicity was one of the merits and virtues of the new system. However, one of the odd features of the system —I would hardly call it simplicity—is that there are now five different entitlements to benefit, depending on the age of the claimant or his or her partner. That seems a rather odd complication. In seeking to assist the Minister to achieve simplicity in the benefit system, I suggest that he could achieve greater simplicity by dropping the bizarre discrimination against single people under 25. Under the new regulations they will receive £7 less than a single person over 25. The social security system will now be the only system in the whole of our legislation that recognises a unique and distinct age of majority to be 25. That bears no relation to reality of life at 24.

It is possible that people who have worked for a number of years and who have left the labour force because of redundancy will discover that, after those several years of work, they have an entitlement to income support at the junior level only. It will be possible for service men to complete a term of engagement, to be discharged and find, if they attempt to obtain income support, that they are not entitled to the full adult rate.

Long before the age of 25 I was a separate householder, living in my own right in my own house. I should be very surprised if that was not the case with the Minister. Indeed, when the Bells call us for the Division at 10 o'clock tonight, I should be extremely surprised if the overwhelmingly majority of Members voting were not living by themselves or with their own families by the age of 25. Frankly, I think that it would be ludicrous for us to vote for a reduced level of entitlement for single people under 25. That plainly supposes that they are a reasonable, partial burden on their parents, despite the fact that most unemployed young people tend to be found in the households of low-income parents.

I note that the National Association of Probation Officers predicted—it is in the position to know—that the reduced entitlement for young people is likely to result in an increase in poverty-related crime. That would not be surprising because, in truth, this discrimination has no logic in the benefit system and, given the need of young people, no justification. The sole reason for this discrimination against unemployed people under 25 is that it is part of the many attempts by the Government to rig the labour market for the young unemployed and force them to settle for lower wages, worse working conditions and more insecure employment. We reject that discrimination.

We also reject the basis on which the system will create invidious distinctions between different categories of claimants. That was perfectly expressed by the Social

[Mr. Cook]

Security Advisory Committee, which was, after all, set up by the Government to advise them. With regard to the premium system, the committee observed that it represents

"a sophisticated variation on the theme of deserving and undeserving poor with higher rates going to sympathetic groups such as the elderly or the disabled and lower rates to groups such as the unemployed, whose plight is liable to evoke less popular sympathy."

Our benefit system should not be based on moral approval for people's reasons for drawing benefit. It should be based on their need for benefit and not by reference to the particular reason why they find themselves claiming it.

I have listed our objections to the structure of the new system. It should be admitted—I cheerfully concede it—that those objections have been put to the Government over the past three years since they first produced the proposals. However, we have failed to make headway in persuading the Government to amend the structure.

Tonight at least we have a new dimension to the debate. For the first time we have the figures to fill in the blank spaces in the regulations. Until the other week the only figures that we had for the level of income support were those in the annex to the 1985 White Paper. We were always told that those figures were purely illustrative. Indeed, in one sense they certainly were illustrative, because there was never any attempt to explain how they were derived.

The central weakness of the review carried out by the previous Secretary of State was that at no time during the review, and during the consultations before or after the publication of the Green Paper, did the Government attempt to measure the needs of the claimants. It was a nil-cost review, which simply consisted of redividing a fixed sum in a different way for the same number of people. We do not know whether the resultant figures are adequate for the needs of claimants. We do not even know how the present level of supplementary benefit has been put together.

We know what the level of supplementary benefit is supposed to cover, because regulation 4 of the current regulations tells us. The full list published in regulation 4 of the supplementary benefit regulations, shows that the benefit is supposed to cover

"food, household fuel, the purchase, cleaning, and replacement of clothing and footwear, normal travel costs, weekly laundry costs, miscellaneous household expenses such as toilet articles, cleaning materials, window cleaning, and the replacement of small household goods (for example, crockery, cooking utensils, light bulbs), and leisure and amenity items such as television licence and rental, newspapers, confectionary and tobacco."

All those things are to be covered by a weekly single person's allowance of £30·40. We do not know whether that can be done—nobody at the DHSS has attempted to demonstrate that it can. Indeed, the Government have shown a stunning lack of interest in whether what they claim is covered by benefit can be purchased within the terms of that benefit.

We are aware that £30·40 ostensibly includes a notional £11 a week for food. The DHSS has not attempted to prove to us whether it is possible to feed oneself on £11 a week. Frankly, I rather doubt whether many hon. Members, certainly those on the Conservative Benches, could feed themselves for a day on £11. Certainly when one Conservative Member tried three years ago to live for one week on that level of supplementary benefit he was in darkness by the end of the week because he could not afford to turn on the light and was cadging free drinks in the pub because he could no longer stand his round.

Mr. Frank Field: Where is he now?

Mr. Cook: He is standing free drinks to hon. Members on a Sunday afternoon.

We have been assured that the figures in the White Paper were illustrative. There was always the hint held out to us that the real figures would be better. Time after time when we referred to the illustrative losers in the annex to the White Paper we were reminded that those were illustrative figures and that we could not assume that there would be as many losers when the real figures were unveiled. We now have those real figures, and they are worse than the figures in the 1985 White Paper.

Mr. Scott *indicated dissent*

Mr. Cook: The Minister shakes his head, but I believe that I will carry him with me before I finish, unless he wishes to get into real difficulty with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

To understand my argument it is necessary to take account of the alleged compensation for the cut in housing benefit. That cut in housing benefit arises from the exclusion of 20 per cent. of rates from coverage under housing benefit. Just before the election the Government, by the sheer stark unpopularity of their proposals, were obliged to commit themselves to compensate claimants on income support for that additional expenditure on rates. The additional burden of rates that claimants will face has been costed at £1·30 a week, but that is an average figure.

I was grateful to the Minister for his reply to my parliamentary question in which he admitted that "slightly under half" of all claimants will end up paying more than £1·30 per week. However, some of them will be paying spectacularly more than £1·30 a week. If hon. Members care to step outside the Chamber they will find themselves in the Inner London borough of Westminster. It is Conservative-controlled. The average weekly rates burden to be faced by those currently on housing benefit, but who will lose the entitlement to claim benefit for one-fifth of their rates, will be double £1·30.

In the Minister's own constituency of Chelsea the average weekly payment that his constituents will have to make for rates will not be £1·30—it will be £2·30. Even if they received the £1·30, they would end up £1 a week worse off.

Mr. Scott: ILEA.

Mr. Cook: With the greatest respect to the Minister, the source of that increase has vastly more to do with the way in which the Government have starved and garrotted local authorities in Inner London by the purse strings than with any spending decision that the authorities made.

Nevertheless, I shall leave aside the cavilling point whether £1·30 is fair or not. Let us accept the figure and turn our attention to how it is accommodated in the income support figures. A moment's reflection will demonstrate that it has not been accommodated in those figures. A parliamentary written answer to myself sets out a table providing for the uprating of the 1985 White Paper figures. It is perfectly clear that the working principle on which the DHSS has proceeded is that of taking the figures in the White Paper and uprating them by the Rossi index —that is, the RPI, less housing costs.

It need not surprise us that the DHSS has chosen the Rossi index, because it is the lowest index of inflation that could be found, so it is to be expected that the DHSS would use it. All the premiums are uprated fully by the Rossi index; but if we examine personal allowances for couples, in particular, and if we assume that the 1985 figure was uprated by Rossi, and then look for the excess over Rossi, we find that the additional element that has been added to the personal allowance for couples is not £1·30 at all—it is a beggarly 30p a week. At some stage in the process £1 has been lost in the pipeline.

I want to turn now to the Minister's vigorous shaking of the head when I suggested that the £1·30 had not been compensated for. When I responded during the statement on uprating and accused the Secretary of State of misleading the House in this matter, he was very hurt and chided me for doubting his word and for suggesting that he would do anything quite so heinous as to mislead the House. Very well, then: I shall give the Minister the choice, and I shall be grateful if he will tell us what he prefers. Either he can say that the 1985 figures have been fully uprated, in which case the Department has patently not compensated the income support claimants for the additional and new rates burden, or he can say that the Department has compensated the income support claimants for the new rates burden, in which case he is obliged to admit that the 1985 figures had not been honestly uprated. The DHSS can have it one of those two ways, but not both. If the Minister is now trying to tell us that the £1·30 is completely present, he must admit that when I suggested earlier that the White Paper figures had not been fully uprated, I was absolutely correct. They had not; £1 is missing.

Logically, if the net benefit in income support is now lower than in 1985, there must be more losers after we allow for the new rates burden. The Government are reluctant to admit that there are more losers, but they have at least admitted that there will be 3·7 million losers, three quarters of a million of whom will lose more than £5 a week. None of those 3·7 million will receive a penny increase in their benefits in April next year. The three quarters of a million who lose more than £5 a week are unlikely to receive a penny in their benefit in 1989, either. They will have to wait until 1990 for their next uprating. They will all face a new weekly charge for rates burden, averaged at £1·30 — in many cases it will be double £1·30. They will all find that they have no entitlement to single payments, because those have been abolished. If they try to find a substitute for single payments, they will be obliged to take a loan from the social fund, for which repayments will be deducted from their benefit, leaving them with an even lower, more meagre income.

It is not surprising that, on that basis, income support has few friends. The Minister of State referred to the lengthy consultation process. One of the curious features of that process is that the review bodies never published the evidence they received. However, we have the evidence of the survey that was carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group. Of 50 organisations that submitted comments on income support, Child Poverty Action Group counted 47 that were either flatly against it or heavily critical of it. The group could find only three of the 50 that supported income support. They were: The Association of British Chambers of Commerce; The Association of Independent Businesses; and the Monday Club.

I do not comment on whether those organisations might be politically favourable to the Government. I do them the charity of assuming that they came to the issue with open minds and allowed the free play of intellect to shine on those minds, coming to the conclusion that, on balance, they liked the proposal because it appealed to them intellectually. But those organisations are not conspicuous for representing claimants on benefit. The financial directors of those chambers of commence have no conception of the skills of budget management required by claimants to keep body and soul together from one week to the next.

My hon. Friends and I have that conception. We represent those claimants and work with the communities in which they are found in large numbers. We see them weekly. We know the poverty and the hardship that they experience. We know the loss of dignity and self-respect that comes from being unable to clothe their family or heat their home. We know that we cannot tolerate the level of benefit becoming worse, or the poverty growing deeper. That is why we shall vote against the regulations tonight.

6.58 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) certainly drew some blood, particularly on the subject of the disabled, but I am sure that, on reflection, he will agree that the idyllic picture that he tried to draw of what happened to pensions under the Labour Government bore little relation to what actually occurred. The system by which he sets such store did not operate in 1976, or 1978, and had the Labour Government won the 1979 election, it would not have operated in 1979, either. At the most, the system had a one in two rate of striking, which was not very effective.

My hon. Friend the Minister made a convincing speech, which was fortunate, because we did not, therefore, notice that quite a lot of time was spent on it. Of course, he gave way generously to several hon. Members during that speech. He gave a convincing rationale why we are changing from supplementary benefit and moving away from the family income supplement. Indeed, he was so convincing that I shall not extol the benefits of the change any further, because he did that much better than I could.

I want to ask one or two questions about the disabled, and comment on one or two areas about which my hon. Friend's remarks leave me less happy, one of which is the future of child benefit. Of course, we all welcome my hon. Friend's statement that, as has been said before, we shall spend £60 million more on the disabled this year. However, the organisations that represent, look after or help the disabled are exceedingly worried about some aspects of the scheme. I was rather hoping that my hon. Friend might have been able to give us more reassurances than he has been able to this afternoon. I trust that when my hon. Friend replies to the debate he will put many of our minds at rest, and particularly those of the people who run the organisations for the disabled.

Is it really true that, as has been estimated by some of these highly responsible and respectable organisations, at least 40 per cent. of the newly disabled pensioners, and at least 50 per cent. of newly disabled younger people will be worse off under the new system than they would have been? Is it true that about 280,000 new claimants will be

[Sir Ian Gilmour]

worse off? If that is true, how do the Government justify it? If it is not true, perhaps my hon. Friend will give us the correct figure. I know that those people will not be worse off than they are now, because at present they are not getting the money at all, but I should like to know whether they will be worse off than they would otherwise have been. If they are going to be, that cannot be right at a time of tax cuts, because people who are about to become disabled beneficiaries should not be treated worse than their predecessors. I hope that my hon. Friend will have some interesting and heart-warming things to tell us on that subject.

I and many of my hon. Friends have been accused of having historical views about child benefit. I do not mind having historical views, because very often such views are rather good. Anyway, the Government are taking a more historical view because they are going back to the 1930s. The great word nowadays is targeting, which is really Orwellian Newspeak for means testing. When we say that it is better to have targeted benefits for families with children rather than child benefit, we are really saying that the means test is a good thing. I am not sure that many people take that view.

So-called targeting does not work. My hon. Friend was extremely optimistic about how many people would take up these new means-tested benefits for children. I welcome these benefits and congratulate the Minister on getting the necessary money and in a moment I shall turn to how the benefit will be paid for. However, I do not know why he is so optimistic about the take-up rate and why he thinks that there will be a greater take-up than there has been in the past. The Government's figures seem to show that only about 60 per cent. of people will take it up. Therefore, the Government's intention on child benefit will hurt about 40 per cent. of the worst off. The failure to increase child benefit will not make the worst-off people better off; it will make them even worse off.

My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said that it was good to have this extra £300 million, but he asked why it should be paid for, at least partly, by other families with children. The Minister did not altogether meet that point and an uncharacteristic element of waffle was contained in his answer. I was unable to discern a great deal of meaning in what he said. There is a logical fallacy here. If we are to give so-called targeted, which really means means-tested, money to families with children, where is the logic in reducing child benefit? The answer is that there is no logic there at all.

I do not know whether the Minister is reading a newspaper or studying child benefits. He said that the benefit goes to all children. Child benefit should go to everybody. That is why it is a good benefit. It is said that it costs £4·6 billion, but as my hon. Friend well knows, that is an accounting fallacy, because it is largely a tax allowance. At the very most it can be said to be public expenditure only in respect of those who pay more income tax than they get in child benefit. Therefore, the suggestion that it costs £4·6 billion is quite wrong.

Some of my hon. Friends and the Government seem to hold the view that it is perfectly all right to get any number of allowances in order to avoid paying tax. This takes in mortgage tax relief, married person's relief and single person's relief. That is apparently perfectly acceptable, but as soon as the money is paid out it somehow becomes wrong. We all know that there are two sides to a balance sheet. Not paying in on one side is exactly the same as taking money out on the other side. I hope that we do not hear any more about the great mass of resources that is being put into child benefit, because it is not true. As I say, it is an accounting fallacy.

Child benefit is the best benefit that we have and has a far greater take-up than my hon. Friend with his great optimism about these matters will be able to match. It is paid to the mother and, above all, it does not deepen the poverty trap. It has been admitted that what is being done this year will increase the poverty trap. Another 15,000 families will be means-tested for benefits, and that is thoroughly wrong. I hope that that will never happen again.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): My right hon. Friend is not quite correct when he says that child benefit does not contribute to the poverty trap. The need to pay for the benefit requires income tax thresholds that are much lower than they would otherwise be and income tax rates that are much higher than they would otherwise be. As income tax bites on levels of income that by any standards are fairly low, child benefit is not only a disincentive but an engine of poverty.

Sir Ian Gilmour: As I say, it is basically a tax relief. I do not know how that could be called a disincentive. As soon as the worst-off people earn any more, their benefit goes down and they are trapped. That does not happen with child benefit, and that is why it is such an excellent benefit. The failure to uprate it this year is a bad blot on the review. I hope that such a mean-minded and unjustifiable thing will not happen next year.

7.8 pm

Ms. Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): I am grateful for this opportunity to make my first speech to this House. I am sure that many hon. Members are aware that my predecessor was Mr. Michael Cocks, now Lord Cocks of Hartcliffe. He represented Bristol, South for 17 years and during that time was Chief Whip in the Labour Government. In his maiden speech in 1970, he described Bristol, South as an industrial constituency with workshops, housing, transport and all the necessities required to enable a community to go about its daily life.

That is no longer the case in Bristol, South. Its industry is devastated to the point where there is only one major employer left. It is in the hands of Lord Hanson and we are not too optimistic about its future and his commitment to Bristol, South. Our housing is devastated and, as a result of deregulation, our transport services are poor and we have very few community facilities. I believe that new Members should bring to the House their experience of life and add it to the debates in order to make sure that people from all walks of life have their views reflected in the Chamber and in legislation.

As I say, Michael Cocks made his maiden speech in 1970, when I was 16. The debates on these regulations and the debates that we had last week on the Social Security Bill have caused me to reflect on what was on offer to me in 1970 and what is on offer now to our 16 and 17-year-olds. As other hon. Members have said, it is also interesting to note what is on offer for under-25-year-olds. I am not saying that in 1970 everything was rosy, but some things were different, including the opportunities open to young people. The choices open to me as a 16-year-old were that I could stay on at school and obtain qualifications and go on to further education, apprenticeship or go into some form of full-time employment. Although we had criticisms of the opportunities that were available to us, the one thing we had was hope for the future and the feeling that we were moving forward and that things would improve.

When I look at young people's lives in Bristol, South, today, I see despondent, disappointed and rejected young people who believe that we do not value them as individuals in our society. Indeed, the legislation put forward by this Government confirms them in such views. Young people are denied financial independence and the proposals in the Social Security Bill will force them into work without choice through low-paid youth training schemes. They have problems of homelessness, alcohol abuse, and glue sniffing. We expect young people to deal with all the problems of our society without our help and support.

If we expect young people to respect our institutions and our values, to look to the future with hope, to take up and develop our values, we should show them the respect that is due to them as young people. If we do not, if we write off generations as we are doing, if we say to young people, "We do not care; go away; you do not count; you are not entitled to anything," which is what the Government are doing, we will store up a backlash for which we will all pay dearly. We cannot expect them to have our values if we are not prepared to value them as young people. We cannot say, "You are not entitled to choose your career."

The Government have said a great deal about freedom of choice and have employed a great deal of rhetoric in persuading everyone that they have the right to choose, yet under these proposals 16 and 17-year-olds are not permitted to choose their careers. They are not allowed financial independence if they refuse to be forced into YTS.

The Government are dealing with that age group in such a way because they are seeking to force down their expectations. That is part of an overall labour market strategy, to force down all wages and make us a low-wage economy. We should take every opportunity to point that out. If one looks at the jobs that are offered and advertised on television for the under-25s, time and again one finds that the wages are YTS rates.

Under the regulations being discussed today, 7 million adults and children will depend on the new income support scheme. Hon. Members have mentioned that the proposals for benefit will not supply the basic requirements that people need to live, such as a nutritionally adequate diet. The DHSS has issued advice to its adjudication officers on expenditure on food to be expected by a claimant family —that is two adults and two children of primary school age. That amount is £28·60 a week and was set without any consideration of whether one could provide a balanced diet with that sum. That amount is provided in paragraph 4736 of the S manual of the DHSS.

Separately, the Department has decided to educate people on eating well and on nutritious diets. Through speeches and advertisements it is encouraging us to eat a healthy diet and stating why that is important. The London Food Commission calculated that the cost of the recommended healthy diet was £48·04 a week for that same family of two adults and two primary school children. Therefore, why is it that families on income support are denied the difference of £19·44 a week and are denied the opportunity to have a balanced diet? If one calculates what a family could buy with that money, the result is a diet that would be deficient in calories, with too much protein, low on fibre, high on fats and short on iron and calcium for children.

Why is it that healthy diets do not apply to people on income support? Why is it that the Government have two separate levels? Would it not have been a good idea if the two sections of the Department that proposed those matters had spoken to each other before they set the level of benefit for claimants? School meals were mentioned. In Avon, the county in which I have my constituency, parents have to pay 80p per day per child for a school meal. Those parents who will be taken out of the free school meal service will not only devastate the service and the people who work in it, mainly women; it will also mean that parents simply will not be able to pay that level of contribution.

Of the other items that one is expected to buy from income support, similar research by researchers Bradshaw and Morgan has been carried out on what families spend on clothing. The survey came out with absurd results of what people are entitled to buy. A woman will be able to afford a coat once every five years, a pair of shoes once every one and a half years and various items of underwear, one at a time, approximately every two and a half years. Perhaps some hon. Members make their clothes last that long, but it is a fact of life that the standard of clothing today is such that it simply does not last. The Government are saying to people that they are not entitled to eat properly or to dress in clothes that are adequate, because they are being used as pawns so that the Government can force down the wages of those in work.

In Bristol, South, because we are no longer the industrial constituency that we were, as a direct result of the Government's economic policies, many people claim supplementary benefit. The Bristol, South DHSS office is the second largest in our region. People in Bristol, South, whether or not the Government are making the system less complicated, understand clearly that the regulations will create a two-tier system, under which people will be forced back into low-paid jobs because the Government are too mean to give them the rights to which they are entitled. When young people look back on how they were treated, I hope that they will reflect that there were some hon. Members who said that they did not want them thrown on the rubbish tip, who did not believe that they were not valued in our society, who believed that they had a contribution to make and who treated them with respect. It is not the Government who will be remembered for doing that.

7.19 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): It is a genuine pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) at the conclusion of her maiden speech. She represents one of the few Labour constituencies in the south, south-west or south-east of the country outside London, so the strain on her might be argued to be rather heavier than on other hon. Members. She delivered a fluent, assured, spirited and questioning speech which was of great credit to her and which I am sure will be held in great esteem by the House. It was a controversial speech but none the worse for that. No doubt she will find that

[Mr. Robin Squire]

when she rises to her feet and makes similar contributions she might have a slightly more animated response from Conservative Members. However, I am sure that she will be able to cope with that.

One small but important quibble I have with the hon. Member's speech is that I would like to endorse, in stronger terms than she perhaps felt she could, her comments about her predecessor. Michael Cocks was well respected on both sides of the House as a man of considerable achievement. I put it on record that I thought he was an admirable parliamentarian.

I wish to concentrate on the uprating order and child benefit, and during my speech I shall quote from a couple of letters that I received only today from constituents. I welcome not only the way that my hon. Friend the Minister moved the orders but the uprating of the pension fully in line with our election pledge, which I am sure is welcomed by many of the elderly in my constituency. That uprating was regardless of the wealth of the pensioner.

I strongly regret, I know in company with many Conservatives both in the House and outside, the decision by the Government not to uprate child benefit this year. That loss of 30p a week may seem small to some people, but to poorer families and even some not-so-poor families it represents a sizeable sum. When it is, as an alternative, to be put into a means-tested benefit, it can only result in an increase of those in the poverty trap. We are told that 10,000 extra families will be dragged into the poverty trap. Those people will lose 70p for every £1 of net extra income they receive.

However others may interpret our election manifesto, I was quite clear as to what it meant and in this area not only was I in full support of what the Government were doing, but thought that it was fully in line with what we had been saying and carrying out during our years of government since 1979. Along with several other hon. Members, I received today a petition organised by the Save the Child Benefit Campaign, on which were some 40,000 signatures collected in a short time. I have no doubt that, had the organisers wished to extend the time of the campaign, they could have gathered many more signatures from all constituencies. Their concerns on child benefit are shared by hon. Members in all parties.

One letter I received today from a constituent was about child benefit. It states:

> "I am writing to protest about the proposed freezing and ultimately abolition of the family allowance".

I hope that will not happen. The letter continues:

> "The family allowance was adjusted, supposedly, to take the place of tax allowances for children and to put some money straight into the hands of the mothers of children instead.
>
> The amount of money involved, especially in the case of these people who have two or three children is not small either, and is a necessary part of a family's income, even when one of the parents is employed. I know that in our family, even with my husband in a good job, the family allowance is essential for paying the bills and is not frittered away on luxuries."

Those are not my words but those of a constituent. She is right.

Had we not made the change from the tax allowance, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) has pointed out, there can be little doubt that the child allowance would have been increased. We can only guess at the sum, but since the single man's allowance has been increased by 14 per cent. in real terms since 1975 and the married man's allowance by 17 per cent., we can make a reasonable guess that the child allowance would have been increased by about 15 per cent. That compares with a decrease in real terms.

Perhaps we are at a stage when tax allowances are good and benefits are bad. If so, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to redouble any efforts he is making and to consider reintroducing the tax allowance. However we tackle it, we must find ways of reaching out to people who will lose because of this decision.

I was pleased the other day to hear that the Government hope that the take-up of family credit will be 70 per cent. We all share that hope, particularly against the background of the family income supplement having a take-up of 50 per cent. Only last year the Government expressed the expectation that it would have a 60 per cent. take-up. So even before the benefit has come in, we are on an upward path. Let us hope that the reality meets the Government's expectation.

Whichever figure we take—I will stick to 60 per cent.—it is inescapable that a significant proportion of the poorest families will not benefit from the extra money which the Government are properly putting into family credit, because they will not take the benefit. That is the nub of the concern which I share with a number of my hon. Friends.

We rightly talk much about encouraging people to improve themselves, to gain work where they are unemployed or to get better paid work when they are poorly paid, but they need a platform on which to build. It must not be assumed that we wish to have a society in which every benefit is means-tested. That would be a bad society. I am backed in that view by a very good article a short time ago in *The Times* by Hermione Parker, who said:

> "If you look at the arguments in favour of freezing out child benefits or pensions, you find they rest entirely on the immediate advantages of public expenditure savings, without regard for the effects on self-reliance, self-esteem and family life. Already a disproportionate number of families with children are forced to depend on means-tested benefits. Without child benefit still more families would be taxed into poverty during the vitally important years of child-rearing. We would be moving towards the American system where there is no child benefit and where over-reliance on means-tested welfare has produced a massive ever-increasing under-class. To allow the US experience to be repeated in Britain would be unmitigated folly."

I have suggested in the past, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, that we examine ways of reform. If we do not revert to tax allowances, perhaps we should consider taxing the 5 per cent. of taxpayers who pay at the higher rate. It is only two years since the Government's Green Paper appeared, so we know that the arguments for taxing at the standard rate are not good. The Government rightly dismissed the proposal only two years ago because of the extra administration, among other reasons, and also because it would represent a massive switch of resources from those with children to those without.

I urge some of my hon. Friends not to get too hung up on the elimination of all benefits. There are many more obvious targets—company cars and mortgage interest spring immediately to mind—which go much more than child benefit to the better-off.

Last year even *The Economist*—scarcely an organ of other than rectitude in spending—pointed out in its conclusion to an article on the whole question of benefits and taxation:

> "There is only one way to raise take-up and reduce . . . marginal rates: give the same benefit to everybody. The snag is that some of the cash goes to those who do not 'need' it. True: but three-quarters of families with children have a household-income-per-head that is below average."

Hon. Members who still wish to see child benefit phased out have to take that into account and have to find a way, which I certainly would applaud, of increasing the take-up of any means-tested benefit until it is at or near 100 per cent.

Another area of child benefit which concerns me is the role it plays in many families as an assistance to the woman in the household; sometimes, indeed, it is her only income. Again today—it must be my lucky day—I received a letter from a constituent on this point. She wrote:

> "This is not a heart-wrenching letter of woe or dire poverty, but a letter from an ordinary constituent, who is also the mother of children under five, asking you not to phase out, means test or tax child benefit. I do not desperately need the money to feed my starving children. I need it for my own sense of pride. It is the only money I can call my own to spend as I want, without prior consultation to my 'bread-winning' husband. The only money I do not have to ask for. Example: 'Pete, the children need new shoes and I need some tampons. Can I have some extra money?' Answer: 'Do they need new shoes again already and I thought you bought some tampons last month.' This is why I want my child benefit (which, incidentally, I think I more than earn). The only alternative is returning to work, If I can find a child-minder and if I can find a job. Anyway, I thought your party wanted to preserve family life."

That constituent, who apparently does not support me, writes in tones that I can endorse and with which I think many of my hon. Friends will find sympathy.

Those of us who support child benefit do not regard ourselves as stuck in the past, to quote what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said recently. We regard ourselves as willing to embrace new ideas but those ideas must not and cannot be at the expense of some of the poorest in society. For those reasons, sadly I say to my hon. Friend that I shall be unable to support the instruments.

7.32 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) who gave us a clear understanding of the problems of young people in her constituency. I am sure that we shall hear much more from the hon. Lady. She will be an asset to the House.

By far the most disappointing feature of the uprating order is the decision not to increase child benefit. Many hon. Members have already spoken about that decision, but I should like to emphasise the point. Child benefit is currently £7·25. I am perplexed by the attitude of the Secretary of State, who has made it abundantly clear in speeches and interviews that he wishes to encourage individual independence. The decision not to increase child benefit will have exactly the opposite effect. It undermines the future of child benefit and I believe that it represents a move towards the Secretary of State's preference for means-tested benefits.

The freeze will mean a loss of 30p or 4 per cent. in real terms. To keep up with inflation, the benefit would need to be increased to £7·55. To make up the 35p cut in November 1985, it would need to be increased to £7·90. The latest cut seems to be the death knell for child benefit. The Government fail to understand that child benefit is an aid to self-reliance because it acts as a base on which families can build. The freeze will draw an extra 10,000 families into dependence on means-tested benefits.

When the Secretary of State announced the shameful decision to peg child benefit at £7·25, he attempted to justify his decision by increasing the funds available for family credit and income support, but families on family credit will not receive extra resources and they will be no better off than if he had decided to increase child benefit in line with inflation. Those on income support will also be compensated for the freeze in child benefit, but, worryingly, in two-parent families this will probably mean a transfer from the mother to the father. One of the best features of child benefit is that it is payable to the caring parent, usually the mother, thus ensuring that the children are really helped by child benefit. Widespread research has shown that problems can arise and that children may not receive the money if the benefit is not paid to the mother.

I am also greatly concerned that the transfer of resources to means-tested benefits will significantly reduce the take-up rate. Another of the good arguments in favour of the retention of child benefit is that it has a remarkable take-up rate of 100 per cent. By contrast, two out of five eligible families will not claim family credit, according to Government figures, and take-up for income support will also be much lower.

I urge the Minister to recognise the merits of child benefit, especially its ability to provide stability despite the fluctuating circumstances of the family's income, and the protection that it provides to children by providing a measure of independent finance for mothers. If the Minister persists in his attempts to move towards means testing, or if he really is contemplating the eventual abolition of child benefit, he will make families more dependent on state benefits, rather than achieving his avowed aim to encourage self-reliance.

My next point deals with the income support flat-rate premium set out in regulations 17 and 18 of part II. The greatest worry to me in the income support scheme is the flat-rate premium system. This will adversely affect thousands of people with disabilities, who will receive less money from income support than they do under the present supplementary benefit scheme. I am not satisfied that the disability premiums will be adequate replacements for the long-term rate of supplementary benefit and the loss of weekly additions.

The main problem with the flat-rate system is that it is geared to the needs of bureaucrats and the convenience of their computers, not to the daily needs of people living with a disability. Will the Minister accept that life is not as neatly ordered in the real world as it is in Whitehall? The real world is filled with individuals with different needs and problems. That is nowhere more true than with disabled people and their difficulties. These various difficulties, whether of a medical nature or concerning their personal circumstances, cannot be accommodated by a flat-rate system. It simply means that some people will inevitably lose and will face great hardship and misery as a result.

The change to income support will mean a loss of between £5 and £50 for thousands of people with disabilities and it will hit the severely disabled worst of all. The restrictive nature of the severe disability premium will cause great difficulties. Many carers will not claim

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attendance allowance because that would make the disabled person ineligible for the severe disability premium.

There is a suggestion in the Social Security Bill that, if anyone over the age of 18 stays at the house, the severe disability premium will not be paid. That is quite distressing. The narrow qualifying conditions for disability premiums will disqualify many thousands of people who can claim weekly additions at the moment. I ask the Minister to think again and retain a more flexible and fair system of weekly additions for people with widely differing needs.

According to Government figures, 80,000 people classified as sick and disabled claimants will be worse off as a result of the change to means-tested benefits. If disabled pensioners and disabled people who are unemployed are taken into account, that figure rises to about 500,000 people who will lose as a result of the changes in supplementary benefit. I have been told that there will be more than 1 million losers as a result of the Social Security Act 1986. That is sad enough, but the fact that so many thousands of those are disabled people, many severely disabled, is an outrage and presents a poor reflection on a supposedly civilised society.

Mrs. Beckett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fearn: I am just concluding my remarks.

For the reasons that I have given, we will be voting against the instruments.

7.41 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Like the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn), I first became a Member of the House in June. In common with other hon. Members, I have found that one of the greatest difficulties arises in addressing cases in my surgery, and especially cases involving social security matters. I have come across the very complex regulations and the 16,000 numbered clauses that apply to supplementary benefit. I find it very difficult to understand the regulations and so decide whether the constituent concerned has been treated fairly and in accordance with them. If I could not discover whether my constituent was being treated fairly, what hope had my constituent? Invariably, those constituents are in some difficulties and are not necessarily familiar with so many volumes of regulations and the thousands of clauses.

In the Government's proposals tonight, I am attracted by the opportunity for simplification of the way in which we handle the social security system. I particularly commend the proposals for family credit and its sister benefit, income support. Both those benefits provide a far more comprehensive system of support for those in need in the community. I have examined the various projections and note that the benefits would be at the disposal of no fewer than 470,000 families, which is double the number of families covered under our present system of family income support. That will gather into the net more of those in need on the margins than we provide for at present.

The new system will allow us, in addition, to concentrate resources on those most in need. Now that the figures are coming before the House, it appears that the Government intend to include an additional £200 million in the operation of the two benefits to which I have referred. That is money over and above the amount that would have been put in had we simply uprated the present supplementary benefit system next year. Any change to a major new system of social security benefits obviously brings gainers and losers. I have been encouraged by the fact that the Government have made detailed provisions for the protection of those who would not be entitled to as much benefit under the new system as they are entitled to at present. Some £200 million will be earmarked for that specific purpose to ensure that those people are not adversely affected.

It is significant that, according to the proposals, more than two thirds of those currently on social security benefit will gain or not be adversely affected by the new system of benefit. Indeed, it is far more interesting to note that one fifth of those on benefit—880,000 people—would gain at least an extra £3. That is a very significant funnelling of support for those most in need. It is also significant to note that one tenth of those families benefiting from social security—430,000 people—whom we could quite rightly describe as the most needy, would gain in excess of £5 a week per family from the Government's reform. That is significant. If we are a nation with a conscience, we should concentrate more resources on those most in need.

Many hon. Members have expressed concern tonight over the non-uprating of child benefit. I must admit that when I heard that child benefit was not to be uprated I regretted that greatly. I assure the House that my wife regretted it even more than I. However, I hope that other hon. Members will ask themselves the question that I asked myself, "Should we as hon. Members, and as well paid people, indiscriminately benefit from uprating, regardless of our income and need?" I have a sneaking suspicion that my family and other better-off families should not necessarily benefit from the resources available to those in need.

Mrs. Beckett: I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises, in view of his remarks about child benefit, that although he refers to families "indiscriminately benefiting" from the award of child benefit, if instead of child benefit the money is put into tax allowances in relationship to children or in other areas, people like the hon. Gentleman would do a great deal better out of that than out of child benefit? It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman is crying crocodile tears.

Mr. Arnold: That intervention presupposes, if not giving an increase is deemed to be saving, that the resources thus saved are being ploughed back to those least in need. One can go into semantic arguments about the Budget and tax treatment, but when we consider the social security budget now and next year—the subject of this debate—it is significant to see where the increases are to be applied.

I do not see why well-off families should indiscriminately receive the same increase in the same benefit as those families that are most in need. Every hon. Member knows of needy families in their constituency. If the increase was to benefit those most in need, perhaps it would be justified. However, the families most in need which already receive income-related benefit would not benefit from an uprating of child benefit. They would lose pound for pound on their income-related benefits for the increase in child benefit. With the proposal not to uprate, we are not giving an indiscriminate increase to those in society who are better off, and we are not failing to give an increase to those who are at the bottom of the pile and rely on income-related benefit. Bearing in mind the assumption that the so-called saving will be ploughed back to the rich through the tax allowance, it is significant that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) did not take account of the fact that the concentration of benefit on those most in need in the next financial year is proposed to be £300 million. Against that, we should offset only £120 million for the amount that would have been spent on paying the uprating of child benefit. Not only is the saving going directly to families most in need, but the Government are applying additional resources. That is significant.

When the country, in all conscience, provides resources for families in need and adversity, it is vital to concentrate such resources on those most in need rather than carry out the impossible task of spreading money over the entire community, in the desperate hope that money will somehow find its way through to the needy. It is far more relevant to try to find humane and effective ways of getting benefit to families most in need.

7.51 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to speak tonight as the new Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central. Despite its difficulties, my constituency is well-kept, lively and diverse. Its tradition of inventiveness and skill is equally diverse. Our turbines and one or two beverages are famous. It is not generally known that my constituency gave Andrews liver salts and Lucozade to Britain. I have to report that the Lucozade factory was recently closed down. My constituency still retains a presence in many important aspects of research and enterprise.

The main problem that my constituency faces is under-employment. Those who are in work and those who are out of work are well qualified but are not performing at the level of their potential and capacity because there are no plans to realise it. Therefore, the assumption that those on benefits are part of a benefit culture, as the Minister expressed it last week — a sort of lost tribe of the feckless, the incompetent, the dependent and the incorrigible—is deeply objectionable. How can I explain to a highly qualified researcher in my constituency, who, after years of benefit, gets three hours of work a week in a lab and loses all her benefits under the full extent normal rule, that the present Government believe in incentives and the work ethic?

Many of those on income-related benefits do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled. Only recently, the Minister revealed that there are 4 million new supplementary benefit claimants each year. The total number of those on income-related benefits is only 8·5 million. The matter could not be clearer. Claimants are reluctant to claim. They stop claiming as soon as they can.

I am sure that many hon. Members will want to join me in wishing my predecessor, Piers Merchant, well in his new post as director of publicity for Northern Engineering Industries, one of our great Tyneside firms which, according to the statements made last week by the Secretary of State for Energy, is a sunrise industry — or so we hope. At almost exactly this time last year, my predecessor was engaged in his famous experiment of spending a week on the dole. He served his party loyally, faithfully and well on the Standing Committee which examined the Social Security Bill 1986. When his week was over, he said—all honour to him for saying it—that the key parts of the Bill and the present benefits system were a matter of regret to him.

His conclusions closely bear upon the regulations. He wanted the ill-named long-term rate of supplementary benefit—£12 a week more than the basic rate—to be a true long-term rate. That rate has always been denied to the able-bodied in that wonderful spirit of medieval poor law that is the true ancestor of the regulations. He did not want it to be confined to those who could be regarded as vagabonds. After only a week, Piers saw that extra resources were needed to restore the morale and motivation of the long-term unemployed and that the extra cash would not destroy their work ethic but preserve it.

Regulations 10 and 22 spell out all too clearly the Government's distrust of those on benefit — a distrust which finds expression in high marginal rates of taxation by benefit withdrawal, which have steadily increased during the life of the Government. Such high marginal rates of tax on the least well off are neither fair nor efficient in terms of the workings of the labour market. A Government who pride themselves on deregulation should surely be prepared to deregulate the least well-off. Cuts in single payments will mean more dependence on hostel accommodation and board and lodging, even in the face of the cuts in benefit to the under-25s, yet the possession of a permanent home is a key step to anchoring all of us in the community and restoring us to full membership in it.

Perhaps I should have said, a warm home. The regulations end all the heating additions on which many people, particularly those in the north, depend. My constituency benefits from one of the most sustained local authority heating improvement programmes in Britain. The regulations, on top of the cuts in heating additions of 1985, will make sure that many new radiators will stay switched off.

Piers wanted also to raise the earnings disregards from their present low levels. It is true that the regulations raise the disregards from £4 to £5 a week. That is the first increase for over 10 years. A special disregard of £15 is being introduced, but it is limited to those whom the Government are willing to spare the worse effects of their prejudices — the over-60s who have been on benefit for more than two years, the disabled, and the wonderful collection of special individuals: part-time firemen, auxiliary coastguards, persons engaged part-time in the manning or launching of a lifeboat and a member of any Territorial Army or reserve force. In the interests of simplicity, work incentives and labour market flexibility, why could not the disregards be extended to all?

After one week, Piers Merchant realised that the black economy might be the last refuge of enterprise and motivation for the long-term unemployed. The regulations end the disregard for child care costs, on which the incentive to work of so many low-income women depends.

The Government have already admitted that the projected cuts will introduce a marginal tax rate of 85 to 89 per cent. — 94 to 96 per cent. if national insurance contributions are included. That is how the Government seek to imprison people who are on benefit and punish people who have a few savings, a small work pension or

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a small income. Will somebody tell me where the 20·8 per cent. net return on capital that is implied in the tariff income schedule of the regulations will be obtained?

Since October 1986, 4 million people have signed on for unemployment benefit and 4·3 million people have signed off. There could not be greater proof that, even where unemployment is highest and of the longest duration, the will to work and some kind of grey labour market is still functioning. Even if it means losing the transitional protection from these regulations, thousands of my constituents will take up short-term employment and, as a consequence, lose their protection. Their lost benefits will swell the coffers for tax cuts for the most wealthy. The Government accord the wealthy incentives that they destroy for the least well off. Without this transitional protection, the structure of benefits makes 43 per cent. of present claimants worse off, according to Government figures, and that includes 700,000 families with children.

These regulations attack the incentives to work and basic neighbourly comforts and principles; they punish savers, deny the respectability of those on benefit and subject their pride and endurance to ever harsher tests.

Conservative Members are concerned about the future of Latin. They will know that radicals go to the root. The Tory radicalism implied in these regulations is tearing up the roots on which British Conservatism depends. As good Socialists, we shall vote against these regulations, but I hope that wise Conservatives who have an eye to the future will join us in destroying them.

8.2 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), for a number of personal reasons. First, it seems only a short time since I made my maiden speech; secondly, I have considerable affection for Newcastle; and, thirdly, he paid such a generous and extended tribute to his predecessor, Piers Merchant. It is some index of my newness in the House that I do not remember Piers, but the hon. Gentleman could not have quoted him or brought him to our attention more clearly. The hon. Gentleman made a model speech; it was clear, elegant and not without controversy. He was trenchant and put his points in a manner that we enjoyed. We shall look forward to hearing from him in the future.

Although she is absent, I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on her maiden speech. She also was clear and we look forward to her presence on the Social Security Bill in Committee as well as in the Chamber.

In the short time that I have been here I have spoken once on social security regulations. It was seasonally inapposite, because we were discussing the Christmas bonus in the middle of July. I hope to return to that subject in the future, but on that occasion I made some remarks about the principles of uprating.

I shall begin by discussing the issues on the uprating order and then make one or two more specific, targeted points about particular aspects of the regulations.

Uprating is bound to be our main concern, because it is our most expensive. This represents a straightforward, proper and adequately foreshadowed benefit increase, unlike the measure of tergiversation of system that afflicted Opposition Members when they were in government, as to whether to estimate in advance or rectify in arrears. In both cases they fell behind.

There have been two significant changes in our approach to social security upratings and overall upratings in particular. For many years—probably since 1909 and Lloyd George—we have been dominated by the Lloyd George model of retirement provision. We have considered matters in terms of a state-provided basic pension, without considering the overall income position of retired people. The position has changed with the growth of the occupational or state earnings-related pension. These additional elements now amount, on average, to about half the total provision for pensioners and have almost caught up with the basic retirement pension. In a year or two, they will cross over, which is why the real increase in pensioners' incomes of 2 per cent. per year has been greater than that of the population at large, although both have been significant.

When that happens, we will have to acknowledge that it leaves a problem for those who are dependent on the basic retirement pension. We all met such people during the election campaign, and we hear from them now. By definition, they tend to be older pensioners who have retired for a longer period. I hope that, in the long term, Ministers will consider uplifting pensions with that target category in mind. Perhaps we could consider an increase in pensions at the age of 75, when the chances of part-time work are reduced but when costs are increasing and mobility diminishing. Perhaps we could consider clawing that back on a tapered basis against occupational pensions.

The second general matter is the inexorable onward march of demographic factors. I received a helpful written answer from the Minister this week. I asked him about the number of pensions in payment and their average amount; the figures were rather striking. I asked the Minister to take the period 1979-80 and estimate its comparison with 1988-89 on the uprated basis. In the earlier period, among men, there were 3·04 million retirement pensioners receiving an average of £21·13 a week. There are now some 200,000 more—3·22 million—receiving £40·80 a week. Among women—these figures are not invidious but remarkable—the number of pensions in payment have increased from 5·47 million at an average of £19·94 a week to 6·12 million at an average of £38·40 a week. There has been a substantial increase in the number of retirement pensions. That partly accounts for the Government's problem of not being able to uprate more than to keep pace with inflation.

I shall put the figures on a weekly basis, because that brings out their salience for individuals and for the Government. The weekly cost has gone up from £179 million by 104 per cent., so that retirement pensions now cost £366 million a week. In 1979-80, the average payment was £21·01. A further 825,000 people now receive a pension, and the average payment is £39·22. If those people, God bless them, had not appeared on the scene and the money had been redistributed to the number of people receiving pensions in 1979-80, we would now be in a position to pay a basic retirement pension averaging out at £43·02 a week—which would put pensioners nearly £4 a week ahead in real terms.

Let me put those figures in global terms and annualise them. The cost of the completely unacknowledged, unvoted and inevitable increase in the number of pensioners has been approximately £1·7 billion a year in additional pension provision. That is why it is difficult for any Government to promise large increases in the overall retirement pension.

I come now to the more detailed points that I wish to raise——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The figures that the hon. Gentleman provided from the Minister's letter were extremely interesting. To give the House the complete picture, can the hon. Gentleman tell us the contributions that those pensioners made? After all, he is talking about a contributory pension scheme.

Mr. Boswell: That is a relevant factor because, as we all know, we pay as we go and have done since Lloyd George. the general issue is that, for a number of reasons—including reasons to which Opposition Members have drawn attention, although they may be less ready to do so today—the number of contributors at any one time has not increased. We are paying more, on a more or less static base. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the matter, the figures are in the written answer, to which he may wish to refer.

Let me again put down a marker regarding haemophiliacs infected with the AIDS virus. One of the requests of the Haemophilia Society is that there should be a measure of weekly payments to such people. As the House knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) has a prominent interest in the matter. With a number of supporters from all parties he has tabled a early-day motion as part of the pressure on the Government, to which there are now signs of a helpful response. I know from experience the arguments that officials will advance about the dangers of setting a precedent. I am certainly prepared to concede to the Government the principle that the settlement must take place but should be ring-fenced so that it does not create a precedent.

I note that the regulations provide for a proper regime of deductions direct from benefits in cases of debt—for example, to electricity boards, or electricity companies as they may well be in the future. I welcome that, while making the point that it is generally better to pay people their entitlements and get them to settle their obligations. We have a problem with my very go-ahead local electricity board, the East Midlands electricity board, which will supply card meters so that people can work out their budgets for themselves. Unfortunately, one of my district councils will not have the meters installed in its houses because it is frightened that if they are not recharged with a prepaid card the gas central heating system will be interfered with. The provision is a second best, but the Government are right to make it.

I have two points that have a bearing on various kinds of disability. I understand that there can be a substantial administrative delay in paying invalidity care allowance, which has a knock-on effect on social security. One of my constituents retired in August and his pension entitlement in respect of his wife was reduced because his wife had received an invalidity care allowance for a few weeks in February. For some reason, those payments were still in the computer and the local office had to make a temporary adjustment, but the matter has still not been put on a formal basis.

Finally, I refer to the problem of a constituent of mine in relation to benefit payable to people in nursing homes. The House will bear with me if I do not cite the details, for reasons that will become apparent. My constituent has, and had before retirement, spinal arthritis, and is effectively completely immobilised. She went into a home in my constituency in January. The DHSS was paying her the full uplifted benefit of £230 a week. Her son-in-law and family wished to move elsewhere. It was discovered, I think, in anticipation of that fact, that she should have been paid the lower rate of £175. There was no question of the local office—with which I have had no difficulty—reducing her benefits to the lower rate retrospectively, but the office properly said that it could not pay out benefit at an incorrect rate and wished to make the adjustment with immediate effect.

The lady was extremely ill and that would have meant moving her to another home and moving her again when her family moved elsewhere. The alternative was that the family be saddled with a debt of £55 a week. I am afraid that the problem was overcome by the expedient—if that is the right word—of recertifying her as terminally ill, which is why I did not wish to give her name. It would help if, without setting a precedent, such cases could be dealt with with some administrative flexibility in local offices, to avoid automatic deductions.

Social security is now a gigantic business. One third of our total budget is committed to it. The onward march of demography makes it inevitable that there will be an onward march of cost. We cannot find resources for additional measures such as those to which I have referred, without at least considering the possibility of making changes elsewhere, which may reduce expenditure in certain respects. If that is done because the needs have changed, I welcome it, and I welcome in particular the Government's readiness to grasp some of the nettles and make some necessary changes.

8.17 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I apologise to the House for not having heard the opening speeches, so I cannot really comment on them. No doubt the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) received a helpful reply from the Minister.

While I was preparing for the debate I sought some information from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I asked whether I could have a table relating to Northern Ireland such as has been supplied in respect of Britain. I received the unhelpful answer, "We don't have those figures in that form. We shall be applying the scheme in Northern Ireland in the same way as in England and Wales but with a little bit more emphasis on the family." That seems rather absurd, as I understand that social services are applied equally throughout the kingdom.

I recognise the last point made by the hon. Member for Daventry. It does not seem to be an isolated use of the practice of classifying people as terminally ill. That highlights one of the problems of our social security scheme. I know of a nursing home that had to increase its tariffs. The DHSS was not in a position to pay the higher rate until a kindly local doctor certified the resident concerned as terminally ill. I submit that we are all entitled to receive such a diagnosis because we are all under a sentence of death. That highlights a problem of equality and the proper use of funds in social service provisions.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on his maiden speech. He shared with us some insights into his constituency. I have

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

to admit that I would have preferred to see some of the other bottled stuff go to the wall rather than Lucozade. The hon. Gentleman's tribute to his predecessor was well made. I do not know whether I would be right in hoping that he might receive the same sort of promotion as his predecessor. I should like to think that the hon. Gentleman's argument on behalf of his constituents and the people who need social security will not merit the same fate at the polls as Piers Merchant received.

I see two particular problems. First, an increase of funding for social security has been mentioned and I understand that there seems to have been a fair bit of clawback in the past because funds have not been used. When we make apparent provision, are we really making sure that those who require it and ought to have it are receiving it? Secondly, how is it that so many of us in the House, especially Conservative Members, seem to be persuaded that we are benefiting the most needy in our society, when those who labour in voluntary societies and care groups tell us that it is at that level of provision that the most needy will be suffering?

During the Secretary of State's statement on the changes I asked him whether he thought it wrong that in April 1988 people would be worse off than they are now if they seek to make provision for the needy. He responded with a reference to the upgrading of the provision which a person is entitled to receive before becoming ineligible for supplementary benefit. However, I was dealing with a problem that I am convinced all hon. Members have had to face in the past and, I suspect, will have to face in the future. With the upgrading of the pension, some people will be brought out of the range of housing benefit and other assistance. Therefore, in April 1988 they will be worse off than they are now, but the Government have said that there has been an increase in inflation. Sooner or later we have to grapple with the problem of how we can provide for those in genuine need without penalising others and making them less well off.

It is nice in the Chamber when we talk about the provisions we make and argue that we do not need child benefit and so on. However, in the world outside, there are many who do need that. I hope that before long, as the scheme comes into operation, we will bend our minds in an effort to provide aid for those who need it and not clawback or make provision on the cheap.

Reference has been made to the clawback provision for invalid care allowance. A woman who provides support in the home is entitled to invalid care allowance. However, if her husband claims for invalid care allowance she will not receive it. Therein lies a failure of the past that should be rectified in the future. It is desperate that an enlightened society should say glibly that it is doing its best to help the needy in society. The best is not good enough. We ought to do better. When we are seeking to remove funds from some sections to help others I suspect that we face the condemnation of the Master himself who said:

> "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

I plead that we care for the needy.

8.25 pm

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): I should like to underline the comments made by the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. M. Smyth), who congratulated the two maiden speakers. The hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) both spoke with a confidence and composure that few of us can recall displaying when we made our maiden speeches in the House, whenever that was. I look forward to hearing from them both in the near future.

I endorse what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) about the state retirement pension. My hon. Friend the Minister made the point well that, as occupational pension schemes bite, as more people are able to make provision during their working lives for their retirement, and as the value of savings increases, so fewer pensioners are totally dependent on the state retirement pension. Perhaps I was just unlucky during the recent election campaign, but all the pensioners on whom I called happened to be among the minority who still depend solely on the state retirement pension.

One has to remember that in 1979 we told that group that the country was going through a difficult time, that we were trying to get the economy right and that we would uprate their pensions in line with prices so that there was no deterioration in their standard of living. Happily, things are now better. They can see that the economy has improved, and I hope that at some time in the years ahead we will enable those whose only income is the state retirement pension to enjoy the living standards that the economic policies have brought about and which nearly everyone else is now enjoying, but which they cannot enjoy because they are too old to return to work. The scheme floated by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry is worth exploring, because that section of our community is in danger of being bypassed by the economic prosperity that is beginning to flow over the rest of us.

I should like to concentrate my remarks on child benefit. I underline some of the reservations of at least two of my hon. Friends. The Minister made the best possible defence of the Government's decision to freeze child benefit, but it was incomplete, because, inevitably, he looked at it through the eyes of a Minister responsible for social security who has a large number of claims on his budget and is under pressure to keep public expenditure down. Therefore, he is obliged to try to "target" his budget as effectively as possible. It is wrong to look at child benefit solely through the eyes of such a Minister.

One has to look at the origin of child benefit, because it is not just a social security benefit. It was a child tax allowance. I was one of the two Front-Bench spokesmen for the Conservative party when the child benefit was introduced. In fact, it was the first leg of a tax credit scheme devised by the outgoing Conservative Administration in 1974. Certainly it was never in the minds of those who spoke for the Conservative party in 1976 that the new child benefit would be viewed narrowly, as it is apparently being viewed now as a social security measure, totally disowning its ancestry as a tax allowance.

The political litmus paper turns one colour if we say that the money is really a child tax allowance, and another if we call it part of public expenditure. We have become slightly confused by the fact that child benefit is lumped with social security. Its treatment is dealt with during the autumn public expenditure round instead of, as would have happened if it were treated as a tax allowance, in the more expansive mood that seems to come over the Government during the spring when they draw up their Budget proposals.

If we look at child benefit, we see both its tax parentage—it is tax-free and universal—and its social security parentage—it is a cash payment paid by the order book through the post office. My hon. Friend the Minister was right when he said that if it is a social security benefit it should be targeted. However, that prompts the question whether it was ever right for it to be a child tax allowance. I am very much of the view that it was.

It is a basic principle of taxation that no individual should begin to pay tax until he has managed to discharge his basic obligations to house, clothe and feed himself. Hence we have the personal allowance of about £2,500, below which no one should pay tax. When a person marries and his wife does not work he receives the married person's allowance, which recognises the additional obligations that he incurs if he has a wife to support. Child tax allowance was a wholly logical extension of that principle, recognising that a taxpayer with children had responsibilities and obligations, and that his ability to pay tax was less than that of another taxpayer with no such responsibilities. That important principle was maintained when we introduced child benefit — a principle of horizontal equity between taxpayers with children and those without. Now it is in danger of being eroded by the decision to freeze child benefit.

I understand that that was a pragmatic decision, in the rather narrow context of how we should spend the resources available within the social security system. However, there is no logic behind it. If we say that it is a child tax allowance, it should be uprated in line with the personal allowance or the married man's allowance. If, on the other hand, we consider it a social security benefit, we should target it and progressively phase it out. The party seems to be marking time while it decides on the future of child benefit.

While the money at stake this year may seem relatively small — 30p a week — there is an important principle behind it. Many Conservative Members share my anxieties. I hope that that principle of trying to secure equity between taxpayers with children and those without will not be entirely abandoned, because I fear that that would lead to inequity in our society.

I leave those thoughts with my hon. Friend the Minister, who, I know, fights his corner as hard as he can. Many of my remarks are addressed to the Treasury rather than to my hon. Friend. Nevertheless, as well as that 30p, an important principle is at stake.

8.32 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Let me begin by congratulating my hon. Friends the Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) and for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on their excellent maiden speeches. I was particularly impressed with their defence of people who will really need champions when the regulations come into force.

I listened carefully to the Minister when he talked about significant changes, which he said were necessary. I wish to challenge that: I think that they represent one of the most vicious attacks on the welfare state and the benefit system that we have witnessed since the war. There has been a steady erosion of benefits, coupled with growing unemployment and more people falling into poverty. For a time, there was a kind of consensus; now it has been broken. The Green Paper that led to what we are discussing tonight heralded the change. It warned us of the return to pre-war conditions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) highlighted a point on which I interrupted the Minister: the complicated nature of benefits. My hon. Friend observed that there were five different claims according to age. Yet, when I asked the Minister about the social fund, he said that it would be easier and simpler. I have been talking to social workers who are horrified at the proposed changes. They say, along with most of the groups representing benefit claimants — the Minister has not convinced me that they are wrong and he is right — that, although the present system is not perfect and is certainly far too complicated, it is at least possible to look up one's entitlement in regulation. That will not be possible with the social fund. Benefit will then be discretionary, and we shall become involved in definitions of the deserving and the undeserving poor. Let me give some examples.

I keep asking myself what the young have done that the present Government find so horrific. The attack on them is unbelievable. A young, unemployed single woman who moved into privately let unfurnished accommodation last summer, who was in receipt of supplementary benefit, had no savings and had previously lived with her parents, applied for a single payment for a cooker, bed and bedding. Her application was refused. Cookers, beds and bedding can still be claimed by those whom the Government consider deserving, but the young seem to be caught in the trap that the Government have set for them.

Another example brought to my attention concerns a woman confined to a wheelchair. She was a paraplegic, and she needed a new carpet. Wheelchairs wear out carpets very quickly. She was told that miscellaneous items such as curtains, floor coverings, tables and chairs must now be paid for out of the fixed £75 miscellaneous furniture grant, and that she therefore did not qualify. In 1988, when the regulations become law, we shall enter an era in which that will become more and more common.

The Minister talked about extra help for pensioners, but the reality is different. I have a note from the various groups who look after pensioners and the disabled. There is a list of seven groups: the Disablement Alliance, Mencap, the Spastics Society and other reputable voluntary organisations whose employees have devoted a lifetime to trying to improve conditions for the elderly and those with disabilities. The note says:

> "It is clear that many disabled people who register after April 1988 will be trying to manage on less money than those in identical circumstances who are claiming before that date. This is mainly because of the abolition of the long-term supplementary benefit rate and the weekly additional requirements payments, many of which are related to ill health or disability."

The next bit reminds me of what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston:

> "Working on the expected assumption that 40 per cent. of pensioners are disabled, disability organisations calculate from the Government's own figures that at least 40 per cent. of newly disabled pensioners and at least 15 per cent. of newly disabled younger people will be worse off under the new system."

The note then mentions a staggering figure:

> "236,000 newly disabled pensioners will lose up to £5 a week and 44 newly disabled pensioners will lose £5 a week or more."

When I first read that, I thought that it could not be true, but those are the facts. That will be the result of what we

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

are talking about tonight. That is the real world for hundreds of thousands of people who look to us in Parliament to do something for them.

The Minister talked about our sterile approach, and said that Labour Members were defending the status quo. I refute the former, but agree with the latter. The present benefit system is inadequate. Many millions of people have fallen into poverty, sometimes into dire poverty. Those who have served on local councils will have listened to the problems of many people with rent arrears. I once heard poverty described as being like standing up to one's neck in water: if a wave came, one drowned.

Anyone who hears a constituent blame his rent arrears on the need to travel to the other end of the country for a funeral will know that a rail fare can mean the difference between somebody coping and getting into debt. If Conservative Members came face to face with such cases and knew of the choices that people living on benefits have to make, they would have some understanding of their problems and would certainly join us in the Lobby tonight.

I took part in the consultation group for the Green Paper on the so-called reform of social security. Our council — a hung council — was persuaded that people should be alerted about what would be one of the most fundamental changes to the benefit system. Nobody whom we consulted thought that this so-called reform was a good idea, and, as the months and years have gone by, many more people have come to that conclusion.

Conservative Members have admonished the Minister for not uprating child benefit. It will be interesting to see whether they have cried crocodile tears or whether they will join us in the Lobby tonight. I am a great believer in people acting according to the beliefs that they have declared publicly. I may be cynical, coming from a hung council where I have had to listen to opposition parties who have always run my local council, at least for the past eight years, saying one thing in a public place and then voting the other way. It would be the height of hypocrisy if those Conservative Members who have spoken against these measures do not vote with us tonight. They have made their representations on behalf of many of their constituents who will be desperately worried because child benefit is not being uprated.

The Government's shameful treatment of young people has already been well outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South. The young are the precious seedcorn of Britain's future. They are the seedcorn upon which our very prosperity is based. What kind of values do we offer them, when we say that they are not even human beings in their own right but dependants? Young adults are being treated as dependants and that is shameful, as well as giving them a most undignified status.

I asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he had on the number of people who had died during the last year while an application for an attendance allowance was being considered or was in the process of appeal. I was told that that information was not recorded as a matter of course and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. I suspect that that disproportionate cost has meant death to quite a few people in that queue.

On behalf of the millions of claimants in Britain, I pledge that the Labour Party will fight these proposals every inch of the way. We will fight them line by line and we will expose Conservative Members' hypocrisy every time they stand up and say that they are in favour of uprating child benefit if they do not vote with us.

8.45 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on his eloquence. His sincerity was obvious. I found one part of his speech particularly interesting and I shall allude to it later.

The hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) is a caring individual. That was obvious from what she said. However, it is distressing to be told that the benefit system is inadequate. That allegation is always made from Opposition Benches. Whatever any Government do, it is always too little. I remind the hon. Lady that the system that the Government are trying to reform, with all its faults, is largely the system that previous Labour Governments have tolerated for years.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Have not the recent Social Security Bill and some of the regulations now being presented been introduced precisely because the Government failed when they passed the Social Security Act 1986? Members of the other place advised the Government that if they did not amend that measure they would have to revise it again and again. Is that not the source of the present discontent?

Mr. Day: No, that is not the case. That is the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of events. I was referring to the long history of social services provision in Britain, the bulk of which, in many areas, is as it was under various Labour Governments.

The regulations and the reforms that the Government have in mind are long overdue. I hope that Opposition Members will at least be able to agree with me on that. We need a much simpler system for claimants. Many of us know from our surgeries of the difficulties of our constituents in understanding the system, and, when they have mastered that, the difficulties that arise from making claims. We must do our best to alleviate such problems. One of the aims of the new provisions is to try to improve that situation.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): How will the hon. Gentleman answer his constituents who make claims on the social fund only to be told that, although their claims are justified, there is simply no money left? Many of us would be grateful for some advice, because we do not know how to answer such people.

Mr. Day: I should have thought that Labour Members would have no difficulty in answering such questions. They will undoubtedly exploit the situation to achieve the best possible advantage. When people come to see me and state such cases, I shall refer them to the local offices, which are extremely helpful about such matters.

I must add that one of the reasons why I wish the reforms to go through is that I have heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State describe the present system as intimidatory. That is one of its big problems. The system is difficult not only for people who wish to receive benefit but for those who work in the Department and deal with claimants on a day-to-day basis. They try to present to them their claims and benefits as they would wish them to be offered to them — as a civilised and humane service. The Bill and its reforms are important in that regard also.

Mrs. Wise: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Day: No, I am sorry, but I shall not give way again.

The new system will assist many people who are currently caught in the so-called poverty trap, which undoubtedly exists. It will remove the disincentives to working that result from that trap. I do not blame anybody who chooses not to take a job if he can gain more from benefits. We must be able to encourage people to take work if we can.

I have argued on many platforms, not least during the general election, that the benefit system should exist for those who need its services and not for the convenience of those who draft legislation and those who must work it. Too many of the present schemes that supposedly assist claimants have become almost sacred cows to many Opposition Members, sanctified not by their efficiency and effectiviness, but by the fact of their existence. Therefore, I welcome the Government's courage in setting about the reform of our benefit system in such a serious and, more important, practical manner.

It is an unavoidable consequence of any reform that some will gain but some will lose. The system has not yet been devised — it will never be devised — that provides extra benefits for everybody.

Mr. Battle: The hon. Gentleman has stated repeatedly that the system has not been revised, but his own Government make great play of the fact that they have given us the biggest review of the welfare state since Beveridge. These instruments simply implement the review. Either there has not been a review and we should start again or the hon. Gentleman is challenging his own Minister to say that the review was a failure, which is our point.

Mr. Day: If the hon. Gentleman has inferred from what I have said that there has not been a review, I must say that I cannot find anywhere in my address where I said that. That is a lax interpretation of what I have been saying.

As I have said, an unavoidable consequence of any review is that we cannot devise a system where everybody will gain. I am sure that, if anybody could have devised such a system, some politician somewhere would have thought of it. However, that is not the case.

When I consider the details of the reforms and the net beneficiaries, I am pleased to see that on the income support scheme nearly two thirds of claimants will gain or be materially unaffected by it; nearly one fifth — more than 750,000 people—will gain by more than £3 a week and nearly one tenth of claimants—500,000 people—will gain by £5 per week or more. That is important because the emphasis of the reforms is to see that the extra money goes to those who need it. I shall back that all the way. It is one reason why I shall support the Social Security Bill. It is right that the people who are most desperately in need should be the ones who receive the benefit. That is what the Bill is designed to do.

Although Opposition Members have said that 40 per cent. of pensioners will not be direct beneficiaries, 60 per cent. will gain or be unaffected. Despite what Opposition Members have said, I welcome that fact. More important, I welcome especially the proposal to increase from £3,000 to £6,000 the amount of savings that somebody is allowed to have and still receive benefit. That must be welcomed, because time and again people come to me who cannot receive benefits because they have been careful and prudent and saved for their retirement. One of the big problems that many pensioners face is that during the years of the previous Labour Government they found that their savings had reduced in value to almost nothing.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): You are joking.

Mr. Day: No, it is a fact. I am not joking at all. If Opposition Members are saying that they do not have many pensioners coming to see them to say that their savings have been destroyed, especially during the 1970s, pensioners must not be going to see them for some reason or another.

Mr. Frank Field: When pensioners come to our surgeries it will be useful for us to know the answer that the hon. Gentleman will give to those pensioners who have saved a capital sum but who find themselves now disqualified from housing benefit.

Mr. Day: Raising the amount will mean that many pensioners will be much better off. There are no two ways about that. I am not sure of the exact number who will be affected, but many pensioners will receive benefit who have not done so before because they were disqualified. That must be good, and I would support the change if only for that reason.

I welcome the fact that the Government have honoured and are honouring their pledge to maintain the value of the state pension. Conservative Governments have improved the state pension in real terms since coming to power in 1979. I am well aware of the criticism from Opposition Members — not least because they are concerned about pensioners — that we have not assisted pensioners. However, the facts speak for themselves. By and large, pensioners are almost 10 per cent. better off in real terms than they were when the Government came to power. That is taking inflation and everything else into account. Whatever criticism Opposition Members may have about that, the Government's record on state pensions stands the test against that of the previous Labour Government.

The Labour Government based their upratings of state pensions not on actual prices, but on the amount by which they expected prices to rise. As I have already mentioned, we all know what happened to prices under the previous Labour Government. Consequently, pensioners fell constantly behind. Indeed, it is tempting to reflect that the party that constantly accuses us of not caring has, in many areas of welfare, a worse record than ours. To say that one cares — I do not dispute for a moment that Labour Members care — is not enough. I believe that Labour Members should at least give us credit and agree that we also care although we may disagree about the ways in which to achieve the results that we should all like to see.

A Government who supposedly did not care would not have fulfilled their pledge to maintain the value of pensions or increase spending on benefits for the elderly in real terms by some 29 per cent. since coming to office. We may argue about the details, but it is an unchallengeable statement that the Government are spending 29 per cent. more in real terms. I notice that Labour Members rarely allude to that side of the equation.

[Mr. Day]

I applaud the regulations and the reforms, but there is one desirable provision that I feel has been omitted and I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will give some thought to it. I trust that the Government will look at the specific needs of the long-term unemployed, especially those who are of an age when they desire to work — I believe that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central alluded to this — and have the ability to work, but have only a slim chance of gaining work in anything except in a part-time job. However, in such a job they will lose the benefits available to them. In an age when we see a widening gap between the official retirement age, especially for men, and the effective retirement age, I hope that the Government will look at that problem in a favourable light.

9 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The Minister claims that the regulations will allow benefits to be targeted, especially for the disabled. I have studied the regulations and I have talked to disabled people — a teenager with spina bifida, a couple with two mentally handicapped children, a kidney dialysis patient, and pensioners with arthritis or bronchitis — who will lose. They are the very people at whom the Government seek to target benefits but all of them will lose if any claim is submitted after April.

On 27 October 1987 the Secretary of State made a statement to the House. When I claimed that disabled people claiming after April stood to lose substantial amounts, he said:

"disabled organisations . . . will have noticed that there is a substantial overall increase for the disabled from this restructuring." —[*Official Report*, 27 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 194.]

It is a pity that the Secretary of State is not here to confirm that he has received letters from such organisations repudiating his statement.

The Secretary of State claims that his proposals have the support of organisations representing the disabled, but not one organisation that has studied the regulations supports the Secretary of State, and the reasons are plain to see. From April, as a new claimant, an 18-year-old spina bifida sufferer in a wheelchair, currently eligible for help with heating, clothing, baths and laundry, will lose £5·90 a week from her personal allowance and £4·70 from the total package of incomes to which she is currently entitled. The Government call that caring.

Let us look at a pensioner couple. One has Parkinson's disease — there are quarter of a million sufferers — and the other has arthritis and bronchitis. Currently they can claim £113 a week, including paid help for a couple of hours a day. I have studied the Government schemes, and even at their most generous they will provide such a couple who claim after next April with £70.05. The Government are robbing them of £2,236 a year and call it targeting.

What are the Government going to do for the mentally handicapped? A couple with two mentally handicapped, hyperactive children, who are not disabled, can currently claim £110 in allowances. How much more will the Government give them under the income support entitlement? Will it be £5, £10 or £20? Sadly, no. That couple, claiming after April, will lose £15 for each child —£30 in all.

In effect, more than 1 million disabled people will lose. That is not my opinion, but that of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, Arthritis Care, Mencap, the British Deaf Association, the Renal Society and over 70 other organisations in the Disability Alliance.

On the day of the statement, the Secretary of State said that my points were reasonable. Perhaps he will now confirm that they are also true. In future years, new claimants will suffer considerable cuts. More than 360,000 people now receive laundry allowances. There will be a saving of £42 million if those are abolished. Sixty-nine thousand people receive allowances for baths; nearly £7 million will be saved by the Government cutting that. Sixty-three thousand people get help with clothing; more than £5·5 million will be saved. Six thousand people visit relatives in hospital, and £1·5 million will be saved on that. One hundred and sixty-four thousand disabled people receive heating help. That now costs the Government £49 million, and represents part of a £400 million cut. Two thousand eight hundred people on kidney dialysis receive help with their diets, and more than £1·5 million will be saved on that as part of an £18 million cut that is being forced on the disabled. Four thousand five hundred people and more will lose up to £48 a week for domestic assistance if the Government's cuts go through. Three thousand five hundred blind people will also lose.

None of this comes as a surprise to any of us. We know the origins of today's regulations. They are to be found in a book written in the 1970s — the bible of the blue rinses, the handbook of the hatchet men. It is called "Down with the Poor". Its author, the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), received a knighthood for services to his cause. He is the architect of Tory social security policy today. His hon. Friends are giving a clear message to the handicapped: "We cannot afford the costs of your disability." To the kidney patients on dialysis they are saying: "Your diet and laundry allowances are too costly." To the frail pensioner they are saying: "This country cannot afford your heating or your baths."

We say to the Government that people who do not have work want support, not suffering, and that people who are disabled deserve a decent standard of living. The Government are not providing that, and they have no intention of doing so. It is not that they do not have the money. They have funds with which to give shareholders a shelf and they have cash to cut taxes for the wealthy. They have pounds to promote privatisation, but nothing for the poor, the sick, the disabled or the elderly. That is why we reject these spiteful, penny-pinching regulations —and so does the country.

9.3 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I was interested by the reference made by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Griffiths) to a splendid book that I remember from the days of my youth — "Down with the Poor". It appears that he did not get much further than reading the title, which was taken from something said by George Bernard Shaw, who looked forward to the abolition of poverty. So my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) meant that he looked forward to the day when we could eliminate poverty altogether. That is the aim behind the scheme adumbrated in the book, and I believe that the Government's proposals go some way towards achieving it.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the title. Perhaps he would like to interpret the following statement:

"There is also encouragement for the lower paid with large families to become unemployed or to go sick".

Mr. Hamilton: Most people in this country would regard that as a commonplace truth. Even under the reformed regulations for social security, we still have what is called the poverty trap. There is a considerable disincentive to work at certain levels of income. It is still possible to be worse off in work than on benefit. It is a tribute to the vast majority of people in this country that so many of them continue to work when they might be better off on benefit. That is a great tribute to what we used to call the working classes.

I want to provide an even greater incentive for people not to be subject to what Mrs. Hermione Parker has called the "moral hazard" of being on benefits. What we are trying to do in the reforms that we have introduced, which I hope will go further, is to encourage greater independence and re-create what I believe to have been the great Victorian values of long ago, when people were able to look after themselves without being dependent on charity and could take decisions for themselves rather than receiving benefits in kind. The social security reforms that we have already produced go a long way towards achieving that.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman has said some things on which I might take issue as a matter of practice. If he feels, as I do, that it is wrong for people to be dependent on what is, in effect, charity and that they should rather have independence and rights, may I recommended that he reads the social fund manual?

Mr. Hamilton: I am sure that the hon. Lady's interpretation of the social fund manual would be slightly different from mine. We still have some way to go before we achieve the objectives that we have set ourselves. The problems with the welfare state is that we still adopt the blunderbuss approach rather than the more targeted approach. We have gone a great part of the way towards ensuring the efficiency of the welfare state by targeting benefits at those in greatest need.

We will never have a system of 100 per cent. perfection, but we have made significant improvements that will bring about a considerable rise in the standards of living of people on the lowest incomes. I welcome the income support regulations, because overall they will considerably benefit people on the lowest incomes. Nearly two thirds of them will either gain or be unaffected in real terms. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) said, almost one fifth — that is nearly 900,000 people — will gain £3 or more in real terms and one tenth — almost 500,000 people—will gain £5 or more in real terms.

These regulations target the benefits more to the needs of families with children. From the comments by the Opposition, one would never dream that we were doing that. One or two of my hon. Friends have also made such comments and I propose to devote some attention to them. We are targeting benefits more on families with children. The effect of what we propose is that 86 per cent. of couples below pension age and with children and 67 per cent. of single parents will gain in real terms or will be unaffected. That is a considerable achievement and a tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, whom I welcome back to the debate, and to my other hon. Friends in his Department.

The regulations will increase spending that would have taken place by more than £200 million. Therefore, we are doing a great deal more than simply uprating the supplementary benefit weekly payments, and that will be of great assistance to people on the lowest incomes. In addition, we will provide another £200 million to cover the transitional period. The scheme of income support is greatly superior to the scheme that it replaces, because it provides a real incentive to people to become independent of state provision. There was very little incentive for that up to now. However, people who still depend on state provision will receive it in a way that is not a considerable disincentive to work.

The principal change is the one for the calculation of benefit on the basis of net earnings rather than gross earnings. I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle said about the change in the capital regulations. For years, one has heard complaints about inflation from people in surgeries and especially from people one meets when canvassing on doorsteps. These are people with relatively small nest eggs built up in times when a pound was a pound. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle ably said, at one time a pound in one's pocket was worth a pound but we all know what happened to it in the 1960s and the 1970s, under Conservative as well as Labour Governments.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said that it was a joke to say that people's capital had been whittled away over the years. We know very well that today a pound is worth only a tiny fraction of what it was 40 years ago. Many pensioners have been able to save and accumulate a tidy nest egg in money terms, but its value has been whittled away almost to a valueless sum as a result of the inflationary policies of successive Governments — though, happily, not the present Government.

Mr. Heffer: The hon. Gentleman, like his hon. Friends, should take note of what hon. Members actually say. I said, "Is the hon. Gentleman joking?" I did not say that some people's money had been whittled down and that their savings had gone. Unfortunately, in the last few weeks some people who were kidded into buying shares have suddenly found that some of their money has gone. The people who will really suffer under these regulations are ordinary working people who by their labour and because of Britain's strength in the past have built up a nest egg. They have still ended up with no real finances. They are the people who will suffer because of the Government's policies.

Mr. Hamilton: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman. I am one of those whose net worth has declined in the past few weeks, having, with my usual efficiency, filled in my application for BP shares on the very day it arrived and posted it on the following Monday morning, before I turned on the midday news which announced the stock market collapse. I am now the proud owner of 2,000 BP shares which are worth less than when I applied for them. I therefore understand the force and vigour of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and agree with him, on that if on nothing else.

The child benefit regulations have caused some disagreement among Conservative Members, as well as,

[Mr. Hamilton]

among the Opposition. Today, we have seen an alliance of the baronetcy and the squirearchy, if I can put it in those terms. I am glad to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour). He must have been attracted by my name on the annunciator.

In alliance with my hon. Friends the Members for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham attacked the Government's decision not to increase the amounts payable in child benefit. I cannot understand why my right hon. and hon. Friends take such a view, because the enormous amount of money which is paid out in child benefit does very little to alleviate poverty. With the change in income support regulations and the introduction of family credit, it does even less today than it would have done formerly.

It cannot make sense for Conservative Members who give birth to children—my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) became a father in the past week, although I believe he was expecting an autumn election when he took that decision, but at least that demonstrates the importance of correct targeting in areas other than the welfare state—to receive child benefit as well as those on the lowest incomes in Britain. The higher one's income, the greater benefit one receives. It must make sense that benefit should be targeted in a better way.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hamilton: Time is pressing on, and I want to give the Minister a chance to reply.

I agree with my hon. Friends in one respect. I too believe that there is not a great deal of logic in freezing child benefit. We must make the decision one way or the other. We must either phase it out altogether and go back to a system of allowances—which is what I wish to see—or we should continue uprating it in order to preserve it. I propose that it should be retained as a cash benefit for those below the income tax threshold and phased out and converted into a tax allowance for those above that level. That would be a compromise which would attract support from both sides of the argument within the parliamentary Conservative party. It is only by targeting benefits more, and saving, in the case of child benefit, probably £3·5 billion, that we can contribute to lower taxes and higher tax thresholds, which would help many people put into poverty by the tax system, and to the greatest extent raise the living standards of those on the lowest incomes.

9.18 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): There is no doubt that the right way to measure the Government's income support package is to judge it against the words that I uttered in the Chamber a few weeks ago, when I quoted the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr. Fowler), the former Secretary of State for Social Services, who, on 3 June 1985, said:

> "We shall ensure that the structural changes will not result in cash losses by those who are now in receipt of supplementary benefit"—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1985; Vol. 80, c. 49.]

That is the measure. By that measure this package fails, because we have the abolition, not only of long-term supplementary benefit, but of the weekly additional requirements payments.

Additional requirements payments might be messy administratively, but there can be no doubt that they are related directly to ill health or disabilities. The withdrawal of those payments will mean that 40 per cent. of newly disabled pensioners and 15 per cent. of newly disabled younger people will be worse off. In addition, 236,000 newly disabled pensioners will lose up to £5 a week, and 45,000 will lose over £5 a week. That is indisputable.

The Government claim that newly disabled people will not lose cash. Of course not; they will not get it in the first place. The Government are proceeding according to the adage that what one never has one does not miss. Whether people already receive disability benefits, or whether they will be newly disabled after April 1988, the costs of disability will not disappear.

In contradiction of the words of the former Secretary of State for Social Services, we have those of the present Minister for Social Security and the Disabled. On 2 November he said:

> "People who would otherwise have received many additional requirements will receive less benefit than their predecessors receive at the moment. I am conscious of that. However, we are referring to very few people."

The Spastics Society has informed me that this provision will affect thousands, not hundreds, of people. Anyone who received £6·50 or more in additional payment under the old system will fail to qualify for severe disability premium and will be worse off, yet we are told that the new proposals are targeted at the very poor.

The only time that the Government are successful in targeting is when they target benefits for the rich. They do not talk about targeting when they talk about moving from direct to indirect taxation, or when they manoeuvre the income tax to give the greatest margin of benefit to those who donate to the funds of the Tory party. We are being asked to approve regulations before we receive details about how the severely disabled will be protected.

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled also said on 2 November:

> "However, I am seeking ways in which it may be possible to address the particular circumstances of that small group of people."—[*Official Report*, 2 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. 743.]

It is not a small group of people. The Minister should tell us tonight what he has planned for the severely disabled. The Government claim that most sick and disabled people will gain, but this rests upon their definition of disabled, which is

> "those who are of working age who are incapable of work."

That definition ignores pensioners, and 66 per cent. of the disabled are pensioners. Pensioners are not qualified to work, but they are not in the figure that the Government have bandied about.

The Government ignore children with disabilities, who are not capable of work, and disabled people who register as unemployed. It is not a few hundred, or even a few thousand, but half a million people who are likely to lose under the Government's arrangements. The Government have promised transitional protection for existing claimants, but the freezing of benefit levels until income support catches up will lead quickly to a drop in people's standards of living.

The Government claim that they spend more on the disabled. They claim that there has been an increase of £2·5 billion in real terms in aid to the disabled since 1979. I should like a breakdown of that figure. I suspect that most of that expenditure is the result of hard work through take-up campaigns such as the Merseyside welfare rights campaign and the work done by the metropolitan counties and Greater London council before the Government decided that they were being too successful in helping the poor, and abolished them.

The Minister said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) that there would be maximum publicity through leaflets and so on. I issue a challenge to the Government. They are good at advertising when it suits them. Not long ago they spent thousands advertising British Gas shares, and everybody, even the poorest pensioner, had heard of Sid. Let us have a comparable campaign, not to put more into the pockets of those who possess much, but to put some money into the pockets of those who are suffering.

Are the Government really suggesting that this package of measures on social security will improve things? Is it not the case that every Minister in the Government is an agent of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, and that the sole purpose of all the legislation is parsimony in public finance? I hope that the campaign that we are waging against these upratings, which are really downratings, will be carried on outside the House. The frontiers of poverty for the disabled are not from the Wash to the Bristol channel. There are plenty of poor people in the constituencies of Conservative Members. I hope that the voice of the Opposition will get through to those people and that they will realise what sort of Members they have elected.

9.27 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I am grateful for having been called to speak. My only regret is that the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is not here. I wish to present in two minutes the one lesson, that in life things do not always come as simply as one would like. Listening to the hon. Gentleman I was reminded of a statement made by, I think, Aneuran Bevan about Neville Chamberlain; if he did not make it, I am sure he would have done had he thought of it. He said that listening to the Prime Minister was like a trip round Woolworths; everything was in place and nothing was priced over sixpence. As we know, in life things do not come simply in nice little packages.

In the welfare state we cannot choose just one objective and ignore the others. Although the hon. Gentleman was right in saying that child benefit does not target—by definition it cannot target because it is universal—it has othe advantages. In the period when the Government may be reviewing the future of child benefit, Conservative Members have to weigh up the disadvantages that they see about non-targeting against some of the advantages. Child benefit will remain an important benefit and Ministers will have to defend it from the Treasury. I remind the House, the hon. Member for Tatton in his absence and Ministers of the advantages of non-targeting.

Hon. Members who are serious about creating incentives to work—a point on which the Prime Minister has fought three elections—will support the maintenance and improvement of child benefit because, as child benefit increases, the greater becomes the income of people in work compared with that of those on the dole. Child benefit is maintained when a person is in work, but is deducted from social security payments.

Hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, who attach importance to the strengthening of the family, should advocate maintaining and increasing the real value of child benefit. All hon. Members who want to see the increased independence of women in our society will also advocate child benefit because it is the only substantial benefit paid to women in their own right.

Those who are keen to eliminate child poverty, and not just talk about its elimination, know that this is the only safe way of doing so. We heard from the Government today that, even with the new super-benefit for poor families, four out of 10 will not claim.

Finally—this is the most important point that I can address to the hon. Member for Tatton and other Conservative Members—those who wish to maintain tax equity between those with children and those without know that the only way to increase the tax threshold for families with children is to increase child benefit. If we do not do that and come up instead with a measure which freezes child benefit and increases the premiums for single-parent families, an absurd situation will develop. A Tory party committed to normal families, as it calls them, would put families with only one parent at an advantage over those with two. That makes nonsense of the principles for which Conservative and Opposition Members stand.

9.32 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): We have had an interesting and constructive debate. I want to say a little about the claims and payments regulations about which most hon. Members spoke. I do not wish to invite the Under-Secretary to dwell on these matters, but I wish to draw the attention of the House to the strictures of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments about the way in which the House and another place have been given insufficient time for the scrutiny of the regulations. The strictures refer to the whole package of regulations, including income support. That may account for some of the more peculiar comments from Conservative Members who do not understand what the Government are doing, and who might have understood better if, as the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments suggests, they had had more time to study the matter.

I should like the Under-Secretary to elucidate a point touched on by the Minister who opened the debate. If I understood him correctly, he referred to the regulations put forward by the Social Security Advisory Committee and to the fact that the Government have accepted most of them in respect of the changes in the payment of benefits.

The SSAC recommended a series of proposed timetables for the handling of back claims. It does not appear to approve of the Government's proposal for some benefits to be paid a week in advance and others, including those to the most needy, to be paid a week in arrears. I am sure that the Minister did not intend to mislead the House and I may have misheard what he said, but I should like to hear confirmation from the Under-Secretary that, although the Government usually go for simplification, in this case they are happy with complexity. Do the Government expect to make savings through this change at the expense of the needy and, if so, to what extent will those savings be revealed?

I wish to deal now with the uprating regulations and to touch on one point raised only briefly in the debate—the lack of uprating for most of those people living in

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

residential care or nursing homes. According to the uprating statement, only two groups of people have been given any increase — the very dependent elderly, although an additional £10 may not go very far, and people with a mental handicap. Many hon. Members who have expressed concern about the inadequacy of the payment that the Government are willing to allow to people in residential or nursing care will, when they have had a chance to scrutinise the effects of these upratings, much regret that the Government did not feel able to be more generous.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made several clear points about the way in which the Government have been — to put it mildly — less than generous to pensioners. It is not easy to work out the overall sums that the Government are saving by ceasing to uprate pensions in line with earnings, and that takes no account of the fact that they have broken the commitment that was clearly intended at least to make an uprating from time to time. I believe that the savings that the Government are making in that respect must be running at about £3,000 million a year.

It is worth reflecting for a moment on that figure. It casts into some relief the way in which Conservative Members, the Prime Minister and her ministerial colleagues congratulate themselves on their generosity in spending about £400 million on heating allowances — leaving aside the fact that the Government have just abolished those — when we consider the sum of £3,000 million a year in savings. Clearly the Government are making substantial savings at the expense of many pensioners.

Of late, it has been the practice of Ministers to draw attention to the results of the family expenditure survey data which show that the average pensioner household is now doing rather nicely. It has been the practice of the Opposition to draw the Government's attention to the steps that they have taken to weaken that position. A recent study has shown that, apart from that argument, it is especially misleading of the Government — and I cannot help thinking that Ministers are aware of this — to use the figures for average pensioner households when they try to show that there is no problem in not uprating pensions in line with earnings because pensioners are doing very nicely, thank you.

Although the average for all households shows that pensioner incomes have risen, the top 20 per cent. have more than twice as much income as the 20 per cent. immediately below them and more than three times as much as occupational pensioners. Through the excessive gains that those at the top have made, they manage to create the impression that average pensioner households are doing better. People in the bottom 20 per cent. and even those in the 20 per cent. above the bottom section — where a poverty trap is created by the way in which benefits clash with small additional occupational pensions — are doing just as badly as many of us had feared.

The overall effects of the massive increases given to the best-off pensioners are skewing the average so that it gives a misleading appearance of the wealth or poverty of pensioners as whole. It is useful to draw attention to that while we are talking about the Government's refusal to uprate pensions properly.

We have had a particularly interesting debate on child benefit. I welcome the remarks of a number of Conservative Members who have had the courage to tell the Government that they are getting it wrong. They have drawn attention to the fact that, although the Government make much of the compensation that will go to some families who draw family credit, even on Government figures — and there will be another debate in which we can draw attention to the inadequacy of those — at least 40 per cent. of the poorest families in work will lose from the decision not to uprate child benefit. It would be invidious to single out more than one Conservative Member who spoke in defence of child benefit, but I am confident that those hon. Members are more at ease with their consciences than are many of those who spoke in other respects.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), I must tell the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) — who is still not present in the Chamber — that it is noteworthy that when Conservative Members such as he talk about the need to target benefits on the poorest, they are always very keen to see that switch coming from those who are slightly less poor. When it comes to asking them to vote for an increased family premium for which the resources might come from the wealthiest taxpayers, or when we ask them to vote for an additional premium for the unemployed, they have no interest. They always vote against such proposals and usually speak against them as well. Only when people on low incomes, and not people like Conservative Members, are going to pay are they in favour of targeting help and giving more to those in greatest need.

I want to consider briefly the cost of the simplification that the Government claim is one of the principal benefits for income support and also consider who is paying it. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) made one of the best maiden speeches that I have heard. It was equalled only by the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). They drew particular attention to the problems of the young.

It became clear throughout the debate that, when the age of majority has gone down to 18, there is no defence for the Government, in practice, through the system of income support, and, indeed, the concomitant benefits, raising the age of majority to 25.

There are particular problems for those in low-paid or part-time work. About 60,000 single parents — a group whom otherwise the Government seek to help, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead mentioned — in part-time work will lose substantially through the Government's decision not to allow them to take account of their work expenses before their benefit is calculated, as is the case at present. Such single parents are likely to lose around £19 or £20 a week. That is a substantial disincentive to remain in work. Indeed, for many, particularly young mothers, it is perhaps the loss of the last chance that they have to retain their contact with the labour market, their independence and their dignity, and to stay, as the Secretary of State would apparently wish, out of the benefit culture. The Government's action is forcing them into the benefit culture, instead of offering them the chance of independence which will take them out of it.

The decision to count the average hours of work that somebody puts in, rather than their average earnings, and the decision that someone with a partner in full-time work should not be able to claim benefit, no matter what their income is and no matter if the family income is well below the poverty line, are creating a further disincentive to work. Again, the Government are forcing people back on to benefits because the losses that are likely to be incurred in many cases are more than most families could sustain.

The problems of the disabled have been clearly highlighted by many of my hon. Friends and, indeed, by some Conservative Members, notably the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour). Whatever the Government may say about the number of disabled people who are being assisted by their overall scheme of income support, there are many serious and heavy losses, and not only—not that it is defensible—among the most severely disabled. The Government seek to suggest that they hope to tackle the problem, but they have had nearly two years since the proposals were first put forward and it is a little weak, to put it mildly—although it is welcome as far as it goes—that they should now argue that they can take that step.

When we discuss the losses that disabled claimants are likely to incur, the Government's answer is always that there will be transitional protection. By definition, there is no transitional protection for new claimants. It is no answer to the point that many disabled charities make over and over again about the substantial fall in the standard of living that will be experienced by people who become disabled after the regulations and the Act to which they refer are on the statute book to say that it will be all right for those who are disabled now.

To say to someone who, perhaps, moves into a new flat in which there is an expensive heating system and who has a couple of other minor entitlements to additional allowances, which is the experience of many people who are not particularly disabled, that they will lose £4 or £5 a week from their benefit, and to add, "But those who are already drawing benefit are being protected," is just not an answer. It has no relationship to the problems that they face. Their standard of living is significantly below that of disabled people. The Government have never attempted to deny that. All that they do is talk about people whose standard of living will fall only steadily over several years rather than at once being substantially below present levels.

Any severely or otherwise disabled person, perhaps such as those on kidney dialysis—many societies which deal with such people have drawn our attention to the problems that they are likely to face—who finds himself with a more serious patch of illness, as is most likely to happen, and has to go into hospital for some weeks, so that his circumstances change, will lose his transitional protection at a stroke, to coin a phrase.

The Minister of State and the Secretary of State drew attention to the fact that they hope to avoid the worst losses for the most severely disabled by inflation-proofing the domestic assistance addition, which is the most significant single sum that can be added to such a person's benefit. We welcome that, but it was disgraceful that it was not proposed from the beginning. Inflation-proofing the domestic assistance addition will be of no value to people who have a break in the benefit that they are claiming because they are going to hospital or for some other reason. They will lose the increase that the Government claim will be protected.

The then right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East, Mr. Francis Pym, said that the Government had begun from the wrong point. Unlike Beveridge, they did not set out to study the market or to see how claimants' problems could be met. They started halfway through, with a system of review, and considered the system as it then stood. The hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) said, "Yes, we are looking for a simplified system and an improvement, but not at the expense of the most vulnerable members of our society." The Government have claimed that they are making the most important reforms since Beveridge, as they are, but to make them at the expense of the most vulnerable in society is a disgrace.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): I congratulate the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo) on her maiden speech. She succeeded Michael Cocks, who will certainly be missed by Conservative Members. I was a little worried when the hon. Lady was elected, because she has a foreign surname that begins with a P and ends with an O. I could foresee confusion with the Post Office, but fortunately that has not occurred so far.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) on his maiden speech. His predecessor, Piers Merchant, will be missed, but we hope to welcome him back to the House shortly. While I am dishing out congratulations, I congratualte my hon. Friend the Minister on being able to claim another £7·25 a week, due to the arrival of a child.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) spoke at length about retirement pensioners and the Labour party's record. We heard the usual claims that the only way to give pensioners a decent standard of living is to uplift the basic pension in line with earnings rather than by matching price rises—a point that was also made by my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell). For pensioners, the state pension constitutes only one half of their net income. In 1985, on average, pensioners received incomes equivalent to about 60 per cent. of the incomes of those in full-time work. That proportion has increased significantly since 1979.

Pensioners' living standards have increased under this Government relative to the living standards of others. Under the last Labour Administration, with their policy of earnings-linked pension increases and poor control over the economy, pensioner living standards fell relative to those in work. That is a record of which the Labour party is proud.

Policies to assist elderly people that concentrate on the pension alone are doomed to failure. Between 1974 and 1979, the Labour Government increased pensions in real terms—a meagre 3 per cent. increae in total income after five years. Pensioners were particularly badly hit by rampant inflation under that Government, whereas under this Government inflation has been firmly under control. As a consequence, pensioners have done well.

Mr. Robin Cook: The hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that the tables in *Economic Trends* from which his figures are drawn show that the increase in occupational pensions is confined to the top quintile of pensioners and that the bottom 60 per cent. of pensioners derive 80 per cent. of their income from state pensions. It is the bottom 60 per cent. who have been cheated by this Government.

Mr. Portillo: I was clearly wrong to give way to the hon. Gentleman, as I was coming to exactly that point.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) thought she had discovered something. In fact, the figures show that the average annual increase in the incomes of the lowest quintile of pensioners was 2·8 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1985 against 2·9 per cent. for those in the highest quintile. That is the great point that the hon. Member for Livingston thinks he is on to—a 0·1 per cent. difference between the top and the bottom quintile. What really matters is the number of pensioners who now find themselves in the bottom quintile, and that has fallen from 38 per cent. in 1979 to 25 per cent. on the latest figures.

I sympathise with my hon. Friends the Members for Daventry and for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) in the argument about the needs of older pensioners. However, I emphasise that those pensioners, too, have benefited from the improvement in their savings since inflation has been under control. My hon. Friends should not forget that the over-80s are getting the special over-80 premium under income support—probably the sort of measure that my hon. Friends seek.

Today's debate seems to have been about the abolition of child benefit, which is not a matter before the House and does not arise from the regulations. There was a good deal of tilting at windmills, although my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton made convincing hidalgos and the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) made a fair Sancho Panza. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham said that he took a historical view. That is fair enough, but I would like to get the history straight. It is not true, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) alleged, that child benefit is now less valuable than child tax allowance and family allowance 20 years ago. For a person on average earnings, the opposite is true. Child benefit is now more valuable to someone in that position.

We have heard a great deal about the apparent drawbacks of income-related benefits and the advantages of universal benefits such as child benefit. However, we should preserve a sense of scale. We are talking about 30p—the difference between what child benefit would be if the Government uprated it from April and the £7·25 that it will be. The effect on the numbers receiving income-related benefits has been alluded to. It is a small effect. Perhaps 10,000 families that would not otherwise have qualified will qualify for family credit and perhaps another 5,000 will qualify for housing benefit. Therefore, hon. Members have been arguing that, for the sake of 10,000 families on the one hand and 5,000 on the other, we should have committed £120 million of public money to uprating child benefit in line with inflation.

I understand the arguments of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) about poverty traps, but I must say to him and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham that scale matters in all this. It is important to remember that we are talking about 4p per day per child on the one hand—that is what all the fuss is about—while on the other we are talking about the possibility of putting £200 million extra into family credits to help families that are particularly in need. I do not believe that those who have so passionately defended child benefit this evening are really concerned about that 30p. The truth is that they would like to have a very much higher level of child benefit and to use that increase as a way of floating people off income-related benefits.

That point of view is fair enough, but it needs to be examined. If child benefit were doubled next April, only about 80,000 families would be floated off income support, and some of those would still be receiving housing benefit. The net cost of achieving that would be £3·5 billion. I cannot agree that that would be the best use of £3·5 billion. I recognise the vital role that the state can play in helping families. The Labour party always makes the mistake of equating with cash the help that can be given to families. The help and support that the Conservative party gives to families is much more than cash support. We give vigorous moral support to the family; that is what is lacking from the Labour party.

There has been a great deal of talk about the position of the disabled under income support. They have benefited significantly under this Government. By 1986, 52,000 people on supplementary benefit were receiving mobility allowance and 181,000 people on income maintenance were receiving attendance allowance. A great deal of the debate this evening was conducted as if those two benefits did not exist and as if there had not been a tremendous increase in their take-up.

The revised figures we have published for income support show a real-terms increase, on average, of £4·80 for the 270,000 claimants receiving the disability premium. That implies increased spending of over £60 million, which is the figure to which we have alluded several times. It is better than the £50 million we quoted at the time of the technical annex published in 1985. In addition, we will be providing—these figures are not in the technical annex—a severe disability premium of £24·75 to about 7,000 claimants. That compares with about 4,500 people who currently receive domestic assistance additions whose average is only £6·35 at present. That is the comparison that the Opposition so signally failed to make.

It is important to bear in mind, as I have already said, that the benefits about which we are talking come on top of the payment of attendance allowance and mobility allowance. Someone receiving an attendance allowance will receive support of £68.45 if they are on income support and over the age of 25. Someone receiving the servere disability premium will receive £93.20 and in addition they could receive a mobility allowance and perhaps maximum help with rent and rates.

I would like to answer specifically the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham. I hope that he will not dispute, now that he has heard the figures, that in general the disabled will be benefiting from the package of measures that we are debating. He said that 40 per cent. of disabled pensioners would be losing under the reforms. That figure is based on a false inference. The implication of what he was saying is that all pensioners are disabled. *[Interruption.]* That is the way the figures have been drawn.

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: I will not give way, because I have only three minutes left.

The hon. Member for Bristol, South and several others mentioned the problems of the young. The hon. Member for Bristol, South rather surprised me. She said that she looked back to 1970 and wondered what opportunity young people under 16 and 17 had then. I can tell her the opportunity that they did not have. They did not have the opportunity of participating in the youth training scheme, which is a guarantee that this Government give to every 16 and 17-year-old. That is an important opportunity that she chose to ignore entirely.

The hon. Member for Livingston also chose to ignore the fact that 60 per cent. of young people under our new proposals will be gainers or will be unaffected in real terms by the changes we are making. He also ignored the fact that there are 200,000 young people who will be gaining £3 or more.

The Opposition have failed throughout the debate to say what they would do if they were in government. What they have done has been entirely negative, although the former Opposition spokesman for social services accepted that supplementary benefit was not a benefit that he wished to see continue. The attitude of the Opposition throughout the debate—has been confined to opposing the measures that we are bringing forward. We have had no coherent version of what the system should be. We are producing a better system, which is easier to understand and to operate. It will also be better explained to claimants, who will know what they qualify for.

I commend the changes to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security Benefits Up-rating (No. 2) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 3rd November, be approved.

INCOME SUPPORT

Motion made and Question put,

That the draft Income Support (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 10th November, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 247, Noes 190.

Division No. 69] **[10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David

Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Hood, James
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steinberg, Gerald
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N.
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

SOCIAL SECURITY (CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS)

Resolved,

That the draft Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987, which were laid before his House on 10th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to Supplementary Estimates 1987-88 may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Ryder.]*

Supplementary Estimates 1987–88

CLASS XIX, VOTE 16

BP Share Issue

10.13 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): I beg to move,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1988 for expenditure by the Treasury in connection with the purchase and sale of shares in BP plc.

First, may I welcome the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) to the Opposition Front Bench as a shadow Treasury spokesman. Secondly, may I explain the purpose of the Supplementary Estimate, because it is extremely narrow.

The purpose of the Supplementary Estimate is to provide for the gross cost of the Government's subscription for new BP shares and to appropriate in aid of this expenditure virtually the same amount of receipts from the sale of shares so as to enable drawings on the Contingencies Fund to be repaid. The net result of these two transactions is that the Estimate provides for no more than a token £1,000 additional expenditure. This is the minimum sum which the House is asked to vote tonight.

The subscription for BP shares arises from the decision to combine BP's rights issue of some £1·5 billion of new equity with the Government's sale of their remaining holding of BP shares. It would not have been sensible for these two exercises to proceed separately. A separate issue of new equity by the company could have clashed in time with the Government's sale, and would have been confusing. We therefore agreed with BP that it was in both our interests to have a combined offer.

As part of this offer the Treasury agreed to subscribe for BP's new shares on a fully-paid basis, and immediately to sell the shares together with the Government's existing shares. The cost of the subscription was more than offset by the proceeds of the first of three instalments from the combined offer. The decision to proceed in this way was announced to the House in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 21 July.

The Estimate that we are considering tonight covers solely the costs of the Government's subscription to the new BP shares—the rights issue—and the appropriation of receipts to pay for that subscription. It does not cover the sale expenses of the combined share offer, nor the Bank of England buy-back scheme announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 October. Those will be the subject of separate Supplementary Estimates. This Estimate is entirely about paying BP for the rights issue. In that sense it is a transfer. The Government's intention to present a Supplementary Estimate was made clear in my written answer on 21 July.

The Supplementary Estimate was laid before Parliament on 2 November, the first day of parliamentary business after dealings commenced in the partly-paid shares on 30 October, and after the underwriting agreements became unconditional. Since the Government were obliged to incur the expenditure of £1·513 billion immediately the BP offer went unconditional on 30 October, the costs were met, in anticipation of Parliament's approval, by an advance from the Contingencies Fund.

The statutory limit on drawings from the Contingencies Fund is 2 per cent. of the previous year's Supply Expenditure, which amounts to just over £2 billion. The advance for the BP subscription, together with other advances, accounts for a large proportion of this total. The Consolidated Fund Bill giving effect to the normal winter round of Supplementary Estimates usually gains royal assent just before Christmas. It would be imprudent to leave a relatively small balance in the fund to cover all contingencies until that time.

The Government will therefore ask the House to approve a special Consolidated Fund Bill, taken out of turn, to appropriate the funds to repay the advance from the Contingencies Fund for the BP subscription as quickly as possible. The Consolidated Fund Bill will be introduced immediately after this evening's debate. Further Supplementary Estimates will be presented shortly, and will follow the usual timetable and procedures for the winter round.

10.17 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I thank the Minister for his courteous welcome. When I transferred from my tutelage by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) I thought that I might escape late-night debates. I am sorry if I have brought the Minister bad luck in that regard.

The Opposition sought this short debate on the Supplementary Estimate because it provides an opportunity for hon. Members to raise matters connected with the BP sale and the provisions in the Estimate for repayment to the Contingencies Fund.

The Treasury has spent some £39 million of public money on marketing the sale. That makes it one of the most expensive share launches in history, at £144 per investor. One cannot help but wonder whether some of the investors would rather have just had the cash. That must apply particularly to the some 5,000 individuals who originally applied for BP shares, but have defaulted, mostly by bouncing their cheques. At some stage the Treasury must decide—I accept that the decision may not yet have been made—whether to prosecute those individuals to enforce the contract of sale. No doubt the House will be told that decision in due course.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): What about multiple applications?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman mentions multiple applications. I do not think that it is yet compulsory to make them, but who knows what may come? If individuals end up as unwilling participants in popular capitalism, it is legitimate to ask whether they will also receive direct mail-shot letters inviting them to make a financial contribution to the cost of developing the Conservative party's new strategic thinking. I offer the idea to the Minister, who may take it up—or not—as he likes.

More seriously, the Government still own about 69 million shares in BP, which were being retained for a loyalty bonus. They will not all be needed for that purpose,

[Mr. Brown]

and the Government will have to say at some stage what they intend to do with them. The redundancy of the loyalty bonus issue highlights a broader point. The number of British citizens who own shares is now in decline. The true figure is probably around 7 million, and falling. The failure of the BP launch is a tangible setback to popular capitalism. It is also much more than that. The psychological jolt that it has delivered will prove to be far more important in the long run. It will encourage speculators to be more discerning — I am not sure whether that is a good thing; I suspect not—especially between privatised monopoly utilities and privatised trading companies, to the trading companies' detriment.

Also abandoned is the philosophical approach of leaving matters to the market place without intervention by the Government. Whatever the arguments about the wisdom of the speculators' safety net, it is clearly a Government intervention in the market place. There are other problems with a safety net — not least those involving its withdrawal. It is difficult to tell how much of the present dealing in BP shares is deliberately short term, but, no matter how many times the shares are bought and sold, the Government guarantee to take them back into public ownership, even if that means paying more than their market value, which cannot be called popular capitalism. I hope that there is not chaos on the day before the safety net is removed, but the potential for trouble is plainly there, almost built into the arrangement. The resultant damage to BP's share value in the short term cannot be in anyone's interests — certainly not in the Government's, who would then be substantial shareholders again.

All this leads me to the possibly unworthy thought that the Government might seek to avoid the safety net coming into operation by authorising the Bank of England discreetly to deal in BP shares in the market place to help the price stay well above 70p. Perhaps the Minister will address that point.

Another point that needs clarification is the Government's attitude to bed and breakfasting in the BP sale. Bed and breakfasting is a tax dodge, whereby major share owners sell themselves their own shares at a loss, solely for tax purposes. Arguably, the Finance Act 1985 has made that easier, and the opportunities for abuse when the Government have fixed a minimum share price are self-evident. I hope that the Inland Revenue have the Government's encouragement to pursue such abuses with vigour.

A detail in the Estimate deals with a matter that was first raised in the House a fortnight ago. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asked:

> "Will the Chancellor take this opportunity to confirm—he denied it on Tuesday—that he has to pay for the rights issue from BP at 330p and that he will have to hand over the money tomorrow?"—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 436.]

The Chancellor replied:

> "The right hon. and learned Gentleman raised the last point on Tuesday and, as he knows, he is wrong."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1987; Vol. 121, c. 436.]

In spite of that, we are today debating an Estimate which, in part II, under the heading

> "A3 Subscription for new shares"

states:

> "As announced on 21 July (Official Report column 111) the Government subscribed for new BP shares, fully paid, conditional on the sale of new and old BP shares under the offer. When this condition was met, upon completion of the sale, payment was made to BP for their new shres at the UK fixed price."

The Estimate sets out the sum paid, and by dividing that sum by the number of shares purchased—which I can just about manage—we arrive at a figure of 329·7p per share. The implication of the question asked by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East was that the Chancellor was buying the shares for more than the price at which he intended to sell them. The Chancellor refuted that by saying that of course he was not.

I accept that 329·7p is not quite 330p, but if that is all that the Chancellor meant when he vigorously denied the purchase, he was being less than straightforward with the House. The truth is slightly different and the point that my right hon. and learned Friend was trying to make was correct. It would have done the Chancellor more good if he had acknowledged that fact instead of retreating behind what I can best describe as mathematical semantics. I do not know whether the Minister wishes to intervene to clarify the point once and for all, but perhaps he will do so if I have got it wrong. The matter needs to be clarified because, as it stands, its substance reflects badly on the Chancellor.

The Conservative party is proud of being the party that best understands the City and knows about financial management, yet it managed to sell Britain's best-known company at the wrong price and at the wrong time. The 5 per cent. Kuwaiti shareholding provides an opportunity to commemorate the Government's involvement with BP by changing the name from BP to KP—after the nuts.

10.27 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I suspect that the House will need to return to this matter on more than a few occasions. It is obviously appropriate for the Government to start to give us some idea of what might be in store. At this stage nobody really knows.

I reiterate what I have said on numerous occasions, that it certainly gave me no satisfaction to see the BP share offer getting into difficulties. As I think the Government know, I and members of my party supported in principle the sale of the BP shares and were certainly in favour of the objective of wider share ownership that it was designed to achieve. A couple of matters arise from that and go back a few years in the privatisation programme.

The stated and glorious objective of the Government to achieve wider share ownership, which if done the right way I can fully support in principle, was subordinated to the realisation by the Government that they could secure substantial sums of money that were transferred from the private to the public sector. They realised that they could use that money to finance their tax cuts and/or their public spending requirements. It is regrettable that, when it became apparent that the BP flotation was in difficulty, that commitment by the Government to secure extra revenue and the necessity to overlook their previously stated first objective of wider share ownership.

Clearly, wider share ownership could not be achieved by the flotation at that time and has not been achieved. The proper thing for the Government to do was to suspend the flotation in spite of the difficulties that that would cause. The Chancellor came to the House and, to great acclaim from the Government Benches, produced what was apparently a salvation formula for the share offer. The full implications have not yet worked through.

The Bank of England has undertaken, up to the extension of the deadline for the safety net, to buy any shares that are offered to it at 70p, against a part-paid value of £1·20. I would appreciate it if the Minister would confirm that, on the day that the safety net is withdrawn, it is conceivable that all the shares will be offered to the Bank of England and it will be obliged to stump up the full 70p for them, which I calculate to be about £1·4 billion. That is only the beginning of the problem, because it means that that money will be tied up within the Bank of England and the bank is stuck with the problem of when to offload those shares. That will depend on what happens with the stock market and for how long it moves in the wrong or the right direction.

The Government are taking a substantial gamble, involving large amounts of public money. I appreciate that the £1,000 in the Supply Estimate is a technical device, but I think that it will be an ironical £1,000 compared with what might happen at the end of the day. It is a complex and difficult matter, and I do not confess to understand all the interactions and inter-relationships that follow, but it seems to me that the public are being stung twice—first as taxpayers, and secondly as contributors to savings or pensions schemes.

It is suggested that the loss on the shares is restricted to the 255,000 people who were either so farsighted that they had a different view from the rest of society, or so stupid that they did not realise the commercial realities that they were entering into. The reality is that millions of people suffered a loss on the flotation of BP because the institutions were either directly or indirectly underwriting it. That loss is built into the consequent adjustment to unit trusts and pension funds.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) mentioned the Kuwaiti interest that has been acquired. It would be appropriate if the Minister advised the House what safeguards there are in the system to prevent a substantial increase, given the depressed state of the market, in foreign shareholdings in BP, not all of which would be regarded as necessarily friendly in intent. The middle eastern interest in BP is a fairly obvious one.

I now raise a serious constituency matter, which I regard as poor custodianship by the Government on behalf of other shareholders of BP. British Petroleum is the largest employer in my constituency. It has its North sea operational headquarters there and approximately 2,700 people operate out of that office. We are glad to have those headquarters there. BP is one of the major oil companies operating in the North sea and Aberdeen area. It is regrettable that BP is in the process of transferring 300 technical staff from Aberdeen to the City of London, contrary to all intelligent market interpretations, at a cost to its shareholders of tens of millions of pounds.

A new office block has had to be acquired in addition to Britannia House in the City of London, where the Minister will know that office rentals are about 12 or 15 times the cost of office accommodation in Aberdeen. In addition, all removal costs, legal expenses and any loss incurred by the staff on their houses will be paid for by BP, and, therefore, indirectly by its shareholders. I resent more than anything the extent to which BP's actions have adversely affected the property market and many other people in Aberdeen who do not have the advantage of a company to step in and pick up the financial consequences of such a decision.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Is there not a case for saying that a company the size and stature of BP should at all times retain an office in the City, where it can be on top of current issues?

Mr. Bruce: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has no knowledge of the background to what I am talking about. BP has a huge office in the City of London, bigger indeed than those of most of the banks. Quite why an oil company needs to have so many engineers based on the most expensive square mile of office accommodation in the United Kingdom beats me. If the company was not so big, and if its shareholders were not so complacent—this is the context in which I am criticising the Government—questions might have been raised as to whether that expenditure was in the best interests of the shareholders. I suggest that it was not.

What happened when the Chancellor came up with his rescue operation—if I may call it that—for the BP share flotation will be seen as a turning point for what has been known, even by the Prime Minister, as Thatcherism. A major share flotation got caught in a bear market and the Government had to change tack. No more will hon. Members on the Opposition Benches or people outside the House take self-righteous, smug, complacent lectures from the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the merits of non-intervention, about letting the market operate or about not using taxpayers' money to bale out companies, individuals or communities when they get into difficulty.

We are discussing a potential investment of billions of pounds of taxpayers' money which has been triggered by direct intervention in the market by a Government who claim that such proceedings are not acceptable and are not the way to operate in a free market. This will have implications for further major share sales. As and when we come to the privatisation of electricity, I believe that the Government will be forced to carry that out in a much different way from previous flotations. It would be absolute madness to try to float the electricity industry as a one-off, single sale like British Telecom or British Gas. It would be a disaster.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House how the Liberal party would privatise the electricity industry?

Mr. Bruce: This debate is not about how we would privatise it. It is the Government who are proposing to privatise it. We have made it clear that the Government have made no case so far that convinces us of the merits of privatising electricity. The Government themselves do not know how they are going to do it. That was revealed only a week or so ago. This is a serious point. If the House does not appreciate it, I am sure that people outside, especially those employed in the electricity industry, do. If an £18 billion flotation were to come to the market in a single tranche after the experience of BP it would mean that the Government had learnt absolutely nothing from this exercise.

The Government will have to think seriously about how the programme continues. Regrettably, the BP share sale was not in that category. One of the mistakes that the Government have made is in selling public monopolies in

[Mr. Bruce]

one, centralised unit as private monopolies, without proper competition or regulation, at a discount, with accounts massaged and underwritten by the taxpayers. Some of us have different priorities from the Government about the need to spend money. For instance, we believe in providing adequate benefits for the poor. The Government tell us that the money is not available and that we are irresponsible to call for such expenditure. Yet here we are debating what could ultimately lead to a massive investment of public money to bale out the failure of the Government's share deal.

I conclude as I began, by saying that that failure gave me and my hon. Friends no pleasure at all. The way in which the Government have responded, and the open-ended commitment that they have entered into, may mean that they will have to come back to the House on many occasions, and it could cost the public, savers and investors very dear indeed. I hope that the Minister can answer some of the points that I have raised, but I realise that many of them he cannot, because he cannot see into the future any more surely than I can.

10.38 pm

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am sorry that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) feels that the share sale should have been suspended and I am surprised that that is his view. Given the fees that had been paid to the underwriters, not just on this privatisation but on so many others, it would have been a grave mistake for us to suspend the sale. It would have called into question the whole purpose of underwriting if, when the markets were in difficulty, the underwriters had been let off the hook. We have been criticised time and again for the size of the fees paid to the underwriters and it is extraordinary that in this case we should be urged by the hon. Member for Gordon to let the underwriters off the hook.

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): Does my right hon. Friend recall that when Labour sold 50 per cent. of BP shares in 1977 there were headlines that stated

"BP shares bungle costs millions"?

Labour sold 50 per cent. for £600 million and indemnified the underwriters against loss; for 35 per cent. of the shares we get £6 billion. Surely that is how we should deal with our investments in British Petroleum.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and makes an extremely good point.

The hon. Member for Gordon asked whether it was true that the Bank of England might have to buy back all the shares that have been offered. In theory, that is the position and in theory I suppose that we could end up owning what we owned of the company before, plus a bit more from the rights issue, but at a much lower cost. That is why it was described as one of the greatest short sales in history. However, we do not expect that to happen.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) asked about the Bank of England's involvement and whether it might be discreetly buying BP shares to keep them above the 70p limit. Under no circumstances will the Bank buy BP shares other than under the arrangement announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) raised the point about the bouncing cheques——

Mr. Lamont: I am coming to that.

Mr. Allen: When the Minister comes to the bouncing cheques, can he tell us what will happen to those who have bounced those cheques? Does he have more sympathy for those who bounced cheques or for the poor unfortunates who did not bounce them?

Mr. Lamont: I am doing my best to answer the specific points raised by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and I will come to them one by one. He suggested that there was evidence of a decline in the past few weeks in the number of people owning shares. I believe that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has written a letter to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor——

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): He has not replied.

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure whether the letter has arrived. We cannot pick up a newspaper without reading about the hon. Gentleman's letters. Some of them arrive and some do not. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is joining the Liberal party, because letter writing is normally a tactic employed by Liberal Members. However, I think that the particular letter alluded to by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East may have arrived. I can tell him that we have no evidence, on the basis of the surveys that we have carried out or the figures that we have announced to the House, that there has been a decline in the number of people owning shares. The hon. Gentleman was quoting from a different survey based on different assumptions. However, even the hon. Gentleman's figures in the letter show a considerable increase in share ownership in this country. We profoundly welcome that and intend to pursue that aim.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East referred to bed and breakfasting. Of course I cannot comment on the affairs of individual taxpayers. Bed and breakfasting is perfectly legal provided that it complies with certain criteria. Where it appears that it has not been done on arm's-length terms or at open market value, the Inland Revenue may make inquiries. We have all noted the recent press reports, which I am sure are what inspired the hon. Member's comments.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: My comments were inspired by concern for the Inland Revenue. There were clear opportunities for abuse. I am seeking from the Minister a clear commitment that the Government will encourage the Inland Revenue to look for and clamp down on abuse, particularly in the context of the BP sale.

Mr. Lamont: I do not think that the BP sale has given rise to anything that is not already perfectly legal. Even without the Bank of England scheme, there were large losses and opportunities for bed and breakfasting. Bed and breakfasting must fulfil certain criteria, and I am sure that the Inland Revenue will note what the hon. Gentleman said and the recent press reports.

The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Gordon mentioned an alleged 4·9 per cent. purchase by the Kuwaitis' investment office. I have no information about that; it is a matter for BP. There is no limit in BP's articles of association on individual or foreign holdings. It was with BP's agreement that the Government did not retain any share in the company.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) asked about stopped cheques. When investors signed their application forms they agreed not to revoke their applications, so they should not have stopped their cheques. Those who did so have been asked to pay, but if they do not we shall consider what action to take.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East raised a point that was made by the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) about the BP rights issue and the 330p price. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor understood that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was asking whether the Government had to buy at the price of 330p from BP, whether the sale was pulled or not. My right hon. Friend said that that was not the case. If the hon. Gentleman studies *Hansard* he will see that that was what his right hon. and learned Friend's words appeared to mean. If he is saying that the question concerned the price of 330p rather than whether the Government were obliged to pay, I should tell him that 330p was the price for the rights issue and also the Government's sale price. I do not think that there could be any implied criticism, even if the question were answered on the basis of what the hon. Gentleman says that it meant, in buying the shares at 330p from BP because, like the other shares, they had been underwritten at that price. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that the shares were worth something else the implication is that BP should not receive the money that it wanted to raise through the rights issue. I am sure that, on reflection, the hon. Gentleman would not seek to imply that BP should not receive the agreed price that had been underwritten. I hope that I have clarified the matter and explained what my right hon. Friend meant when he answered the question.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I understand the right hon. Gentleman's point perfectly. I am sure that he is right about the 330p, but I am not so sure that he is right about what the Chancellor meant. The Chancellor said:

> "The right hon. and learned Gentleman"—

my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)—

> "then asked me whether it was true that the Government were obliged to purchase a large number of BP shares at 330p per share. I can tell him, of course, that it is not true."—[*Official Report, Tuesday 27 October 1987; Vol.* 121 c. 171.]

I agree that that bears the possible interpretation that there was no obligation to buy if the sale did not go ahead. Of course I accept that. However, it also bears the interpretation that there was no possible commitment to buy at 330p a share. While I accept that the way in which the question was phrased on the Tuesday was ambiguous, the way in which it was phrased the following Thursday during Treasury questions was not ambiguous. Still the Chancellor brushed it aside. He had had two days to read the debate and to consider the Government's position. He must have known that the question would be put again and it would have reflected more credit on him had he said that the Government were not obliged to buy if the sale did not proceed but to set out — as the right hon. Gentleman has correctly set out—the position if the sale did go ahead.

That is important because the thrust of my right hon. and learned Friend's argument was that the Government were purchasing shares at a price higher than that at which they intended to sell shares. That argument should have been met on its own terms rather than having a different interpretation placed upon it.

Mr. Lamont: I am not sure that the point is worth pursuing but I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Chancellor interpreted the question in the way that I described. I assure him, too, that my right hon. Friend was aware of the price at which the shares were being sold; it would be pretty astonishing if he were not.

Question,

That a supplementary sum, not exceeding £1,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1988 for expenditure by the Treasury in connection with the purchase and sale of shares in BP plc.

put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolution by the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. John Major, Mr. Peter Brooke, Mr. Norman Lamont and Mr. Peter Lilley.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Mr. Norman Lamont accordingly presented a Bill to apply a sum out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the year ending on 31 March 1988; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 44.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 9 of Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of Public Business) and the Order of the House of 30th June relating to business of the House, the ballot for Private Members' Notices of Motions which are to have precedence on Friday 27th November shall be held after Questions on Tuesday 17th November.

That, at the sitting on Monday 16th November, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) (b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall put the Questions on the Motions in the names of Mr. Secretary Walker and Mr. Secretary Rifkind relating to Public Health not later than one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

EDUCATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Education Support Grants (Amendment) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 16th July, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question agreed to.

BUILDING SOCIETIES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Building Societies (Provision of Services) (No. 3) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Rating Reform

11.54 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to present a petition on behalf of Dunfermline district council in the name of the provost, Councillor Mill. The petition protests against the proposed implementation of the community charge, or as it is properly known, the poll tax, which is considered unfair, unjust and inequitable in my constituency. It will make 30,000 of my electors worse off, is a clear intrusion on the civil liberties of those electors and has no supporters in Scotland outside the Conservative party. The petition states:

> "Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House shall take immediate steps to repeal the legislation which introduces the poll tax-community charge and remove the burden of unfair taxation which the people of Scotland firmly rejected in the June 1987 election and replace this proposed regressive tax system with a method for raising local revenues to meet the justified needs of local expenditure more in keeping with justice and with equity."

It gives me pleasure on their behalf to bring the petition to the House and ask that the Government take seriously what is said within it.

To lie upon the Table.

Disabled People (Transport)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.55 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I wish to discuss the transport needs of the disabled in Greater London. I should like to say how grateful I am to Mr. Speaker. I know that Mr. Speaker chooses the subject for the Thursday night Adjournment debate, so I am extremely grateful to him. I pay tribute to his interest in the subject. I know of his close involvement, as a constituency Member of Parliament, with Dial-a-Ride in Croydon. I believe that what I have to say will earn support from both sides of the House. Many colleagues representing other constituencies in Greater London have said how much they welcome the debate. In particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has asked to be associated with what I have to say.

Much has happened in recent years, but that does not mean that we cannot discuss what has to happen with the various schemes and the availability of transport for the disabled. Now is the time to assess what is available for the disabled and what growth in services is feasible and desirable for them.

Why do we need to consider the matter at all? Anybody who has tried to go on a journey, or has been on a journey with a disabled person, particularly a person in a wheelchair, will recognise that preparing for any journey —journeys which most hon. Members would take for granted—is like planning a military exercise. One has to know everything about every aspect of the journey to be undertaken. Taking two trains or two buses is not on the cards for many of our fellow Londoners. Many of those people are still trapped in their houses. If one speaks to the people who have been able to take advantage of Dial-a-Ride, taxi-card or the mobility buses, they will say that they have experienced a sense of freedom that has been absent for them for many years, and for some of them for all their lives. Some of the people who wanted to attend this debate from my constituency and across London cannot do so, not because they could not get in to hear the debate, but because they simply could not guarantee that they would be able to get home afterwards. That is something that any other Londoner would take for granted.

Dial-a-Ride has been with us for only a short time, but it has made a huge impact across London. It was started initially by the Greater London council and is now financed by the Government. I and other Conservative Members have never been slow to point out the dreadful atrocities carried out by the GLC, particularly its rate increases, but it is because of the GLC, especially the then chairman of its transport committee, Mr. Dave Wetzel, that the scheme got off the ground in the first place. We should never be too ungenerous to give credit where it is due.

It is the volunteers who substantially run and organise Dial-a-Ride who deserve the credit, and I hope that the House will pay tribute to them for their work. It is almost entirely because of their efforts that the previously housebound have seen their horizons extended and their lives transformed. Because of that, Dial-a-Ride has become the victim of its own success. It simply cannot keep up with the demand.

Dial-a-Ride has 50,000 members, yet London has about 250,000 disabled. No one can say exactly how many disabled there are. One survey last year even put the number as high as 500,000, and 30,000 Londoners are permanently in a wheelchair. Yet of those, only 38 per cent. of the transport handicapped have even heard of Dial-a-Ride, and only 2 per cent. have used it, according to a 1986 survey. In short, its facilities have been swamped.

The telephone booking system, under which each Dial-a-Ride has only one telephone and tries to take all the bookings for its vehicles, has put people off. In particular —if I may allude to one group that feels itself frozen out of Dial-a-Ride—the elderly frail, having tried and tried to telephone Dial-a-Ride, simply give up in the end and become housebound once again.

Two questions arise. How much money does Dial-a-Ride need to improve its service, and what is the demand? Nobody can answer those questions specifically. One must consider the demand on a regular basis. If we gave Dial-a-Ride in London extra money to buy, say, one vehicle per Dial-a-Ride and to improve the telephone system, how much difference would that make?

The taxi card was also initially the responsibility of the GLC, and it now comes under the local authority. It has come in for a lot of criticism because it is expensive, but I want to make it abundantly clear that it is good value for money. Its maximum subsidy of £6 is only half that of the average subsidy for Dial-a-Ride, yet a 1986 survey showed that only 6 per cent. of London's disabled had a taxi card. In my borough, and I think in most London boroughs, there is a waiting list of the disabled who want the taxi card service.

Why does taxi card have its opponents? It is simply because it is an open-ended financial commitment for the boroughs and it is subject to abuse. Yet, as I have said, it is vital to those who use it. Most people use it sparingly, and less than half use it more than once a month. I urge every London borough council to have patience with taxi card, to recognise what it is doing for the people who live in their boroughs and to recognise that they must continue to make a financial commitment to it.

Some taxi drivers feel that taxi card holders are sometimes more able bodied than they expected when they pick them up. One hears stories of a taxi turning up at a house and a theoretically disabled person bounding out of the house and jumping into the taxi. Whether such stories are far-fetched or true is not for me to say, but those who feed on such stories must recognise that, for instance, multiple sclerosis sufferers have good and bad days. One day a sufferer may be in a wheelchair and the next day be walking fairly satisfactorily. We cannot deny assistance to those people simply because they are better on some days than on others.

Thirdly, I want to talk about the impact of public transport. London Regional Transport in particular, and British Rail, have worked hard recently to improve access to their services, to promote new services and to publicise what is available. Improving access is extremely important, and only today my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has launched—if that is the right word—the new airbus service that takes five wheelchairs between Victoria station and the airport. The service from Euston to the airport will be available from about next January and will be of tremendous help to many wheelchair-bound people who want to go on holiday.

There are 260 new double-deckers with a lower and easier entrance and exit steps, and existing buses are being altered. There are also better handrails on buses and at underground stations. Visual signs accompany the bell to help the deaf. There are talking bus stops—that sounds like something out of a child's book—but they are extremely important to those who cannot read what is printed at the bus stop. Induction loops at station booking halls help the hard of hearing. Audible door buzzers have been installed on new central line trains. Most interestingly, the docklands light railway has wheelchair access from station to platform at every station.

Why, then, does only one underground station have the same facility? It is essential for London Regional Transport to consider the shallow run lines especially and have a core system of stations so that disabled people know that they can get to the trains at some of the stations, and that they can get off at a selected number of stations. I recognise that the deep lines would be more difficult, and that some of them would be dangerous, but more could be done on the shallow lines than has been done up to now. We must see some progress.

So far as new services are concerned, the mobility buses have made a big impact by taking people from outlying areas to the shopping areas. Equipped with lifts, they now operate in eight boroughs. I should like to see those services running in all boroughs, including in my borough, where people would perhaps like to go to the new shopping centre on a particular day of the week.

Dial-a-ride could work with the new mobility buses. It can and would like to be able to feed the mobility buses. For example, if one knew that on a Thursday, a bus would run from one's estate at 10 o'clock in the morning to the shopping centre and return in the afternoon, Dial-a-Ride could pick up people and take them to that mobility bus and collect them in the evening. Such a service would transform the lives of many people who are now trapped in their own homes. It could be cost-effective and improve the cost-effectiveness of the Dial-a-Ride service.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): Is my hon. Friend aware of the considerable interest in the debate that he has initiated, not least in the London borough of Ealing, and that Ealing Dial-a-Ride is anxious to try to meet more of the demand that it is facing. Towards the end of his speech, will my hon. Friend make some suggestions about how the voluntary organisations might be able to meet more of the demand if they had more resources?

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. He is my Member of Parliament. I voted for him, and he is a very good Member. His interest in and concern with such matters is well recognised in the area where I live. I hope to deal with the point that he made, and if I do not I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with it in his speech.

There is plenty of scope for new services and an imaginative approach by London Regional Transport, and the voluntary sector could come up with new ideas that would be cost-effective. The advice that London Regional Transport gives to its drivers recognises that there is a big market to be tapped. Its "Information for Drivers" leaflet states:

[Mr. Hughes]

> "Elderly and disabled people . . . bring revenue to London buses . . .
>
> Lots of these passengers are regulars; they travel every day, and really are grateful to staff who help them."

It is important to recognise that the fact that people are disabled does not mean that they are not customers. They must be dealt with as customers. They are also ratepayers and taxpayers and deserve their share of what is happening in transport.

The other area in which the public transport services have helped is information. There is no point in putting on a service if a customer does not know whether he will be able to use it. There is now a proliferation of information leaflets and large print maps have been produced by London Regional Transport and British Rail. The disabled passenger unit at London Regional Transport encourages input by the customers on what is planned.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton about the voluntary organisations. The big thing about Dial-a-Ride is that it is customer orientated and is run by customers. They have had a huge input into what has been achieved. We must not lose that input in any of the changes that may be sought.

We are seeking a co-ordinated future. Demand will grow and the supply of money must grow with it. We must recognise that, at present, we can see only the tip of the iceberg. As more people are able to use the services, the demand will grow and people will want to use them on a regular basis. In the long term, I hope that the Government and the Department of Transport will accept that we need to increase, in a staged manner, the amount of funding given to the organisations involved and the amount of money put into the services. In that way we will be able to see a real return, not just in terms of value for money, but in the effects on the lives of Londoners.

London Regional Transport and the Department of Transport must co-ordinate all the services, and LRT is in a good position to do that. One service affects the others, and LRT and the Department must take that into account when considering the pressure to bring in different services.

The telephone system for Dial-a-Ride is inadequate. Currently there are 1,724 members per telephone, and what we need is a sub-regional exchange system so that members can ring more easily and get their call answered. We must price the improvements schemes and ensure that staged growth takes place. When considering the different Dial-a-Ride schemes, we must not be too limited in setting the ground rules. Traffic speed and density influence the cost of each service, and we must not be too rigid.

We must set a date by which new taxis are able to take wheelchairs, and we must urge taxi and mini-cab operators to grasp the commercial opportunities that are available, by buying suitable vehicles. We must ask voluntary organisations—as the Harrow Association for Voluntary Services is doing—to raise money to convert taxis so that we can increase the number of taxis available locally.

I do not ask my hon. Friend for answers to all these matters tonight, but I hope that he will consider them in the long term. No one must assume that what has been achieved is enough. No one must assume that he can assess what the real need is or will be. I hope that my hon. Friend will show his customary open-mindness to future developments and recognise that we have only scratched the surface of the problems. If the Government recognise that and act upon my recommendations, they will transform the lives of Londoners in a tremendous way.

11.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): First, may I congratulate you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on being here for this important debate. We are aware that in your service to your constituents you would echo many of the things that have been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes).

I recognise the support that my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West has had from colleagues on the Conservative Benches. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) is interested in the subject even though he represents an out-of-London constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has been here throughout the debate and my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), although he is not contributing to the debate, has a keen interest in the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) has contributed. I also acknowledge the help that has been given by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), who has a keen concern about all transport issues also and who has the interests of the disabled at heart. I would list the hon. Members on the other side of the House if they were present.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West has done a great job in continuing his services to Londoners, formerly as a member of the Greater London council, and now in this House. He has raised a subject that is seriously considered and supported by most hon. Members who have either the eyes to see or the personal experience to know what it is like to be immobile because of some physical or mental attribute. Such mobility handicap does not apply only to those who are conventionally recognised as disabled. It can be argued that 10 per cent. of us suffer from a mobility handicap at some stage in our lives. It may be because they have children, or have a physical disability—permanent or temporary—or it may be due to fraility or age. There are many reasons why many of us pass through a stage of difficulty with moving around. So, making sensible and greater provision for that is important.

I propose to start by discussing Dial-a-Ride, and then cover other issues if there is time. Perhaps we can cover more of the subject during another debate in the future, because it deserves more than the half hour that it is now receiving through the good offices of my hon. Friend. The Department of Transport has been well served by Sir Peter Baldwin's committee, which now has a statutory responsibility to advise the Secretary of State. My hon. Friend paid tribute to the work of London Regional Transport's unit for disability, and I am sure he will not mind my adding the disability unit of the Department of Transport itself, which could be described as the sometimes unseen link between all of us with an interest in the subject.

I also pay tribute to the work of the people who established Dial-a-Ride, and to London Regional Transport, which, through its specialised unit, is promoting the effective development of Dial-a-Ride services throughout London. I do not want to spend too much time tonight on the one-trip-a-week campaign.

Those who read the London Regional Transport report—issued last month—will see that there are almost 10 times as many journeys as there are people registered for the scheme. I do not rest any case on that, as, obviously, more people could be registered, and we could probably discover, as the LRT report on taxi card shows, that if one culls through the list of those who are registered, one may also discover a fair number who have dropped off. We should not play the numbers game if we are trying to meet and increase the demand, because information is important to meeting people's needs in a cost-effective way. No one would wish to pretend that the level of Dial-a-Ride services that is currently available is sufficient to meet all the transport needs of the people who depend on them, let alone the growing number who are likely to become members.

It is worth noting that, besides asking for more money, we must go for improved efficiency. If I had been able to announce an increase in Dial-a-Ride funding of 10 per cent. a year ago, with a further 10 per cent. this year, most people who support or use Dial-a-Ride, would have said that that was welcome. The Government did better than that; they provided a 20 per cent. increase a year ago, and that accelerated funding has made it possible to obtain extra vehicles and put money towards the capital investment in the communications system to which my hon. Friend referred. The LRT report shows that there are six Dial-a-Rides whose cost per trip is less than £10, and three whose cost per trip is more than £15. That scatter is not fully explained by the different geographical location or history of the organisations. There are substantial efficiency gains to come, and I hope that all those who work for Dial-a-Ride, in the management committees and for LRT, will work together for continued efficiency improvements. That is the best way of getting the best value for money now and of justifying future increases. We want to approach Dial-a-Ride development in an incremental way, so that at each stage we can ensure that the best possible service has been provided for the greatest number of people.

Let us examine the future development of the other services that are available in London. London has the best overall provision for people with mobility handicaps of any capital city in the world, not only because of the LRT introduction of the airbus service, which has been adapted so that people in wheelchairs and frail people can now travel from Victoria to Heathrow on the ordinary buses—although that is important. However, I shall use that example to demonstrate how value for money can play an important part. Alder Valley sensibly introduced a Careline service so that people in wheelchairs could go from London railway stations to Heathrow. It found that it was not possible to continue the service, which was costing £7,000 a week. There were calls for that service to be funded directly by central Government. I pay tribute to people in British Airways, in the British Airports Authority and in British Rail and to the many groups of people, including the Baldwin committee, who came together on the problem.

It was discovered that London Regional Transport could adapt the ordinary airbus fleet to enable people in wheelchairs to travel in integrated transport. That bus conversion takes eight seconds and in that time the lift can be opened and the stair lowered. I pay tribute to LRT for its training and for the positive way that its drivers are carrying on the work pioneered by Alder Valley. That kind of service helps.

The work that the Department of Transport has done towards adapting the conventional London taxi means that not only is a reasonably low-cost conversion available for the FX4, but that the Metro-Cammell taxi is now available. This means that the converted FX4 and the Metro-Cammell can now take wheelchairs. It is not just a matter of trying to concentrate all the demand on Dial-a-Ride. We must also try to make the ordinary services more easily available to those in wheelchairs.

My hon. Friend spoke about the adaptations to the London buses. New London buses have many simple changes — differences that may not be noticed by everyone comparing the new buses with those made 10 years ago. On the new buses there is a lower step and the grab rails are in the right place and in distinctive colours. There are some other changes, but I do not have time to go into them in detail. These things show that those who hold the stewardship of transport for Londoners are trying as far as possible to make it available to all Londoners rather than just to those who are fit and able.

My hon. Friend spoke about the difficulties of converting the London underground, or at least the trains on the deep-line services. He recognised, for example, that the docklands light railway has such adaptations. They are built in. It is always better to build things in than bolt them on, but where things are not built in, perhaps we can bolt them on.

More changes are coming and we must praise those who have brought them about, as well as look for better ways of moving forward. The fundamental change is the recognition in London, throughout the rest of the United Kingdom and, indeed, throughout Europe, that people with disabilities are a legitimate part of the travelling public. That applies not just to them as passengers but to them as customers. More taxi drivers are seeing the benefits of the taxi card service.

It is also worth recognising, as the number of taxis to take wheelchairs increases, that the average cost of a taxi card ride is less than £6 and the average cost of the Dial-a-Ride service is, I think, getting on for £12. Perhaps we can move some of the demand presently met by Dial-a-Ride to a cheaper and more effective service that can overcome the limitations of 1,000 people trying to ring the same telephone number—even if more telephones are installed. We must try to get the pattern dictated by the customer rather than have the service dictated by the form of provision often set up by disparate groups. The present levels of provision are a tribute to the people who have been working in this area for longer than I have.

I have said that when we talk about disabled people we are not talking about a small minority or exclusively about people confined to wheelchairs. Anyone who has used a bus or the London underground while carrying luggage or heavy shopping or with small children with prams or pushchairs, knows what it means to be mobility handicapped. Transport providers have now recognised that getting it right for people with disabilities means that they are getting it right for a larger group of people with mobility handicaps.

Some people need more specialised provision and, of course, Dial-a-Ride is important in that respect. I suspect that we shall meet a growing demand every time that we make more forms of transport available to people with a

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mobility or a disability handicap. We will find that Dial-a-Ride's places will be more than taken up by people who have not yet had the information or the confidence or are not yet within reach of Dial-a-Ride.

Having put Dial-a-Ride into the broader context, I now look forward not only to growing use of previous innovations but to further innovations. There may be many things that we do not yet know how to achieve, but the opportunity will come and, if we take it, we will find that we have done our job better and that more people will have opportunities to move around.

I again thank my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West. I can tell the House that we intend to circulate information on self-propulsion to millions of people. MAVIS is not one of my girl friends but our advice centre at Crowthorne, Berkshire, for people who want to be able to drive. Many disabled people who have the ability to drive have not yet found a centre. MAVIS is not the only centre that can provide assessment, because there is a centre in Banstead and centres in other places. However, MAVIS is probably the best-known one.

People can come to those centres for assessment to see whether they will be able to drive themselves. Using either their own money or mobility allowance, they can go for self-propulsion. That option is not open to everyone, but it is possible for more people.

I hope that we shall be able to return to this subject and have more time to cover it in more detail so that we can carry out our responsibilities better and spread knowledge of what is already available. I am glad that London is doing better.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-five minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 13 November 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

M4 (Crash Barriers)

9.37 am

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): I should like the House to accept a petition. It arises out of the tragic accident on the M4 in June last year, in which 13 people, some of them my consitutents, lost their lives. The accident was exacerbated, or aggravated, by faulty crash barriers on the motorway. Consequently, my constituents and some 28,000 other persons are petitioning:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House urge the Secretary of State for Transport to set up a Public Inquiry into the safety of the central reservation crash barriers along the length of the M4 motorway; and this inquiry to ascertain responsibility and accountability for the sub-standard works carried out by nominating contractors which did not comply with the Department of Transport specifications thereof.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

The Commonwealth and South Africa

9.38 am

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): I beg to move,

That this House reaffirms its support for the Commonwealth; is conscious of the benefits which membership of the Commonwealth confers upon the United Kingdom; regards with sympathy and understanding the efforts of poorer members of the Commonwealth to raise standards of life, liberty and government for all their citizens; pledges its support for a high level of trade and economic aid, within the Commonwealth; regrets that the United Kingdom appears to be out of step with all other members of the Commonwealth on the subject of sanctions against South Africa; condemns the continued application by the South African Government of policies based on the evil doctrine of apartheid, the cause of incalculable suffering, cruelty and bloodshed among the non-white population of South Africa and the source of violence and instability elsewhere in Southern Africa; welcomes the constructive contribution towards a solution of this problem made by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group whose conclusions if adopted could prevent a greater tragedy; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government, in consultation with the Commonwealth and the European Community, to take such measures, in addition to the economic and other sanctions already in force, as will be effective in persuading the South African Government to initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across the lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to the early establishment of a non-racial and representative government.

The Commonwealth was born out of the British empire. How that empire evolved is a matter of history, but I believe that, when the history of the British people in the 20th century is written, the transformation of a mighty colonial empire into a free association of 49 independent sovereign states will be regarded as their finest achievement. That transformation came about after two world wars, in which the United Kingdom was supported loyally by its colonies and former colonies. Some joined our cause voluntarily, others automatically at our behest; but all were staunch allies throughout the conflict. They sacrificed their blood and treasure, as we did ours, for a common, righteous cause.

That common origin explains a great deal, but future historians will find it hard to understand why hundreds of millions of people in an empire that straddled the globe, speaking many different languages and practising different religions and cultures, should still want to be associated together internationally on a level different from that of the United Nations and to call one person their head after they were independent.

The reason, I believe, is partly due to the way in which the empire was administered. The relationship between rulers and the ruled was singularly amicable. The British empire was governed by consent, not by force. There were never enough soldiers to rule by force. In Nigeria alone —a country then of about 30 million people—we never had more than 300 administrators and, comparatively, a handful of soldiers. We relied on the co-operation of the local chiefs. We could never have held it by force. We always knew that self-government and democracy would come and that one day we should have to leave. We had no choice. We taught the Nigerians to expect self-government. We trained them in the best system of government that we knew — democracy. It was inevitable, therefore, that one day they would want to operate it themselves.

The result was a quite different relationship with Africans from that which applied, and still applies, in

[Mr. Ivor Stanbrook]

South Africa. At the independence day celebrations, held in Lagos on 1 October 1960, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the new Prime Minister, said:

> "The British came as conquerors. They stayed as masters, then as teachers and finally as partners, but always as friends."

That was the spirit of the British empire. In this motion I am asking the House to proclaim its faith in its child, the Commonwealth, to restate our objectives in belonging to it and to examine the biggest problem that it now faces.

The Commonwealth sometimes needs to be explained, even to politicians who cast doubt on its value and who should know better. There are many links in Britain with Commonwealth countries. Here, in this House, we have our own link, in the shape of the United Kingdom branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It enables us, as parliamentarians, to keep in direct contact with our colleagues in Commonwealth legislative assemblies, to visit them occasionally and to act as hosts to them when they visit Britain to enjoy our common heritage. Unfortunately, however, there is still a great deal of misunderstanding and prejudice on both sides, much of it deriving from press reports about the meetings of Commonwealth leaders.

By its nature, the Commonwealth is not a homogeneous institution. Its versatility is its strength. The other 48 independent states of the Commonwealth are at different stages of social, economic and political development. Some are as advanced in all these ways as we are. Some—such as the old dominions—are almost as British in character as we are, even if, like us, they have recently absorbed many immigrants from overseas. Some, unlike us, are poor in terms of natural resources and are handicapped by climatic and physical features that make it difficult to provide a satisfactory standard of living for all their people. Some—such as India which is rich in human and economic resources, with its own traditions of government that have been enhanced by contact with British administrators — contend, as we do, with problems of inequality, tribalism, corrupt or incompetent politicians and natural disasters. Some—such as those in Africa, without our traditions of long-established democratic government but accepting and profiting from our example—strive towards the democratic ideal with intermittent success. The Commonwealth includes them all.

We are not entitled, we have no right, to blame any of them for not yet having reached those standards of life, liberty and government that we in Britain take for granted, but what we are entitled to offer and what they have a right to demand is sympathy and understanding in their efforts to solve their problems—the more so as we, having been responsible for so much of their history and having benefited from our past association with them, cannot now stand aside and refuse to give them the help and advice that they need.

I speak from a background of personal experience—initially as a colonial administrator in Africa—but I believe that my conclusions apply equally to elsewhere in the Commonwealth. In the past 40 years Africa has undergone a rapid transition. Not long ago, the whole of the continent was colonised except for two countries—Ethiopia and Liberia. Now, everywhere in Africa, except in South Africa and Namibia, Africans are governing themselves and learning from their mistakes. They are adjusting the European model of democracy to suit their own local conditions—conditions of poverty, ignorance, disease, corruption and the misuse of power on a scale far greater than the evils with which we contend.

If there are grounds for complaint about human rights, at least we should take that background into account. There can be no excuse for Europeans in either Europe or South Africa, who have a long tradition of civilised government, behaving badly towards their fellow men. We all learn by experience. The experience of African-elected politicians began, comparatively speaking, only yesterday.

The evil in Africa and elsewhere in the Commonwealth is tribalism. We in Britain suffer from it—in the antics of the Scottish and Welsh nationalists and most tragically in Northern Ireland. In Africa it is the biggest handicap of good government. Tribalism must be overcome before the benefits of unity, peace and order can be enjoyed. Tribalism hinders progress everywhere. It contributes to famine in Ethiopia and the Sudan, it led to civil war in Nigeria, and it is the cause of the violence in Sri Lanka, Uganda and elsewhere. It hinders progress in Zimbabwe and it has forced Fiji out of the Commonwealth. In Africa it is positively encouraged by the multi-party system that we think is a necessary part of democracy.

In Zimbabwe, things are balanced on a knife edge. In my opinion, Robert Mugabe is right to seek a one-party system, embracing both the Ndebele and the Shona, as a means of achieving national unity. The Westminster system, with Government and Opposition parties ready, willing and able to form an alternative Government, is the product of our long experience. It is not the only badge of a democratic society.

Nigeria suffered so much from tribal politics that its 1979 constitution permitted only those political parties that could show substantial support in all three main regions. They still had a plethora of parties and the old evils reappeared. That system collapsed in 1983. Now it is proposed that only two parties should be allowed to provide Government and Opposition. Africa is working out its own solutions to problems that have bedevilled Europe for centuries. We should encourage them, not disparage their efforts to find systems of democratic government that suit them.

We can help developing countries to break out of this cycle. We can provide them with aid, technical advice, professional co-operation and the training of their students to raise standards. Students are the vital factor. In 1979 the Government made one of their biggest mistakes when they decided to deprive Commonwealth students in Britain of the privileged status that they formerly enjoyed with their college fees. At a stroke we cut off the supply of British-trained recruits to their intelllengentsia, to leading members of Government and society and to the ranks of our overseas friends. Relations with Britain—especially Malaysia, which was hardest hit—have suffered ever since.

If some of my hon. Friends insist on a return on our undoubtedly generous aid to the developing countries of the Commonwealth, such as those that were abused during the Vancouver conference, I would say here it is. Investment in Commonwealth students in Britain will produce a huge profit, to the advantage of British industry and commerce, in years to come when these students become the rulers of their countries, or leaders of their professions, as our more generous past policy has proved.

At the time of the Vancouver conference, the British press indulged in one of its hate-the-Commonwealth moods. The use of statistics to discredit Canada over sanctions was pretty deplorable and unworthy of the British Government. But given that signal from the Prime Minister's office, the British press went in for a campaign of lies and exaggerations about other members of the Commonwealth, which must have done us great damage. For example, completely untrue things were said about Nigeria—a case about which I have personal knowledge and can testify to — about the numbers who were executed after the change of power.

Sir Ian Lloyd (Havant): Is my hon. Friend saying that the Canadian statistics that were used by the Prime Minister were inaccurate, or that they should not have been used?

Mr. Stanbrook: I am not saying either. I am saying that statistics were used to discredit Canada over sanctions.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My hon. Friend said that they were lies.

Mr. Stanbrook: With regard to Canada, I rest on the complaint that I have just made, but in relation to others, especially the Commonwealth countries of Africa, downright lies and distortions were told.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The point about the statistics is that they were accurate but they were 1986 statistics. Everybody knew that the 1987 statistics were dramatically different.

Mr. Stanbrook: That may be so, but I deplore one member of the Commonwealth denigrating another, which is what happened.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: No, I must continue.

I strongly deplore the tendency of some of my colleagues to suggest that the Commonwealth is of no value to us and that we should not allow ourselves to be pilloried regularly by other members for shortcomings when they themselves do not come up to scratch. That is a blind, foolish argument, which we may hear echoed in the debate. It ignores the golden opportunity that we have, because of our history, to influence the way in which one quarter of the world is governed. Millions of people in the Commonwealth look to Britain for an example of what is best in many sectors. It would be contemptible if we were to throw that goodwill away, yet we are in danger of doing so by the way that we treat the Commonwealth.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): If one were an apologist for apartheid, would not the easiest way to mask it be to spend one's time criticising Commonwealth countries?

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend has made a valid point.

I have already referred to Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first leader of independent Nigeria. He, like that most magnanimous of Nigerian statesmen, General Yakubu Gowon, never doubted British sincerity and integrity.

It is noteworthy that it was Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who, as Nigeria's representative at the Commonwealth conference of 1961, said that South Africa's continued membership of the Commonwealth was incompatible with its principles. The biggest and most powerful independent African state could not be a member of a club which included one that kept its African citizens in a state of permanent economic and political subservience.

In 1959 the British Prime Minister, Mr. Harold Macmillan, went to Cape Town and told the South Africans that they should heed the wind of change. Twenty eight years later no significant change has occurred. There has been a change to what a former South African ambassador to Britain once called, "classic apartheid". It is now of a different sort, but apartheid, by whatever name it is called, is still the basis of the policies of the South African Government towards the African people. Apartheid, by whatever name, is an insult to the integrity of every self-respecting African. It has not been removed and they still refuse to give the African population the right of elected representation. They still refuse to allow Africans to live and work where they choose. They still refuse to devote to them the share of national resources that the number of Africans justifies. Most despicable of all, they claim to justify this treatment by a theory of relationship between human beings that implies the inferiority of one race to another.

At a personal level, the theory of racial superiority can be innocuous. Racial prejudice exists everywhere in the world, including Britain, but here we legislate against it. In South Africa it is enthroned as an offical legal justification for discrimination, which is why it is so vicious. In South Africa a man's rights depend on the colour of his skin. No wonder the relationship between the South African police and the African population is characterised by cruelty and brutality. The young Afrikaner policeman has been brought up in a system that teaches him that all African and coloured people are inferior. Is it any wonder that he thinks that he can treat them in a way that he would never dream of treating his own people?

Like many Conservatives, despite my acquaintance with Africa, I was prepared for many years to believe that all South Africa needed was time. I thought that South African Governments were doing their best to make the system humane and responsive to the needs of the vast majority of their subjects. I was wrong. I realised that I was wrong when Steve Biko was murdered while he was in police custody after he had been subjected to appalling and inhumane treatment. Nobody concerned in that affair should have been allowed to escape justice, yet no one was found responsible or punished. Even the police doctors concerned were exonerated, until one courageous doctor insisted that they be arraigned before their own professional tribunal for having betrayed their oaths. That case made my blood boil. I and I dare say many other Britons gave up hope for the South African Government after that.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Apart from that appalling incident, does my hon. Friend agree that since the latest emergency began in 1985 many thousands of people have been killed by the South African security forces in the name of this detested regime? Many people, including children, are still detained. Many have been ill-treated. Steve Biko stands out as a particular name and beacon for the future. None the less, we have to focus on those many unknown people, try to get them out of incarceration and bring to justice the criminals who committed those acts.

Mr. Stanbrook: I agree that things have got worse. That case illustrates perfectly that the South African Government have no intention of conceding any of their power on a democratic basis to the African popultion.

For years, Commonwealth countries, especially those with borders abutting South Africa, have tried to persuade us to bring pressure to bear on South Africa to stop its hateful ways. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) has pointed out, the internal situation has steadily grown worse, but has been kept under control by the use of draconian emergency powers. South Africa's neighbours hate it, but they can do virtually nothing because South Africa dominates their economies. Of course they are unwilling to apply effective trade sanctions if the biggest trading blocs do not apply them. The efforts of individual groups based outside South Africa are promoted unofficially with sympathy by those Governments, but they are countered by vicious raids across the frontier by South African troups or by surrogates of the South African Government posing as freedom fighters in Mozambique.

Within South Africa the African National Congress tried for many years to act the role of a constitutional opposition but was driven out. I am glad to read in today's press that representatives of the ANC are seeing Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials today. ANC representatives have previously seen my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, no matter in what capacity he saw them—he saw them all right. They also saw my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, who saw them in her own capacity. Despite what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said about terrorism, if no constitutional opposition is permitted, how can we avoid the emergence of violent opposition? How can we condemn it?

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: I am making my point.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is wrong to say that the ANC is a terrorist organisation like the IRA. It is not, as its reception at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office today testifies.

Sir Ian Lloyd: The point about the resemblance between the ANC and the IRA is of fundamental importance. Those of us who believe that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is ill-advised to receive the ANC take the view that in their methods, objectives and justification of violence by "state violence"—a very convenient phrase—they are exactly identical to the IRA in every respect. We do ourselves no good by negotiating with them.

Mr. Stanbrook: That is untrue. The IRA has an opportunity to carry out constitutional opposition to the British Government. The IRA has the ballot box and the ballot box alone. The IRA chooses not to use it. It could. Instead it uses violence against peaceful men and women in Northern Ireland who want only to live in peace and get on with their jobs. The difference is fundamental.

In South Africa the legitimate representatives of the African people have been oppressed and driven out. They are not able to make their voices heard in South Africa. We know about that every day from every news report from South Africa. There is no possibility of constitutional opposition by Africans within South Africa. Fortunately for us, that opposition is being carried on constitutionally by the white parties. Nevertheless, there is no opportunity for an African to express his opposition to the white rulers of South Africa.

Sir Ian Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. Stanbrook: I shall not give way again.

The white rulers of South Africa are determined to maintain their racial supremacy and control of South Africa. That is the difference. The ANC has been driven to violence. Who can condemn the ANC for that in those circumstances? If my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) does not understand the strength of that distinction, he does not understand anything.

Sir Ian Lloyd: My hon. Friend has made a personal attack on me——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has said that he is not giving way again, so the hon. Member must desist.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am told that I made a personal attack on my hon. Friend the Member for Havant, so I had better give way again.

Sir Ian Lloyd: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend. This is a matter of profound importance. My hon. Friend argues that there is a fundamental distinction between the position of the ANC in South Africa as it is today and the position of the IRA in Northern Ireland as it is today. I accept from my hon. Friend the qualification that the opportunities of the ANC, or of any African political organisation, to present its views in South Africa are not as ideal as any hon. Member in the Chamber might assume—*[Laughter.]* This is not a matter for mirth. Is my hon. Friend seriously arguing that a man of the character of Chief Buthelezi and many other Africans in similar positions have no opportunity to speak their minds? That is not true. I concede that their opportunities should be much greater, but it is wrong to say that they have no opportunities.

Mr. Stanbrook: It is clear, as I have said, that my hon. Friend fails to see the difference in essentials between the two situations.

Mr. Adley: Before my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) disappears in a cloud of self-generated steam—

Mr. John Carlisle: I wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) would disappear.

Mr. Adley: I am sure that my hon. Friend wishes that I would, too. Will my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) allow me to remind the House that the difference between the IRA and the ANC is clearly understood by anyone who understands the problems of people who are not allowed to live in the land of their choice, to live in the part of the country they choose, to vote or to stand for election? Until recently, the coatpeg next to mine downstairs in the Members' Cloakroom was taken up by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Adams) who has not taken his seat. That is the difference between the IRA, which has opportunities to carry out democratic opposition in the United Kingdom, and the ANC, which has been driven to utter despair after 75 years.

Mr. Stanbrook: I agree with my hon. Friend. The African people of South Africa are the vast majority of its population. For them to be without democratic rights and any system of representative government—even Chief Buthelezi does not have the right to vote—is a human rights problem transcending all the others about which complaints have been made in the rest of Africa.

Sanctions of one sort or another are inescapable. I disagree with those who say that economic sanctions do not work or that they did not work in Rhodesia. Too many Members of Parliament, including Front Benchers, are fond of saying that about Rhodesia. It is not true. Sanctions may not have been the decisive factor in Rhodesia, but they were effective in damaging its economy, as the governor of the Central bank told my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) and me when we visited Salisbury in 1978.

It was internal violence more than, and in addition to, economic sanctions that caused the manager of Edgars, the department store in Salisbury, to spend 20 days in every month away in the bush doing his duty as an auxiliary policeman. It was internal violence that brought Rhodesia to its knees.

Universally applied, economic sanctions would certainly be effective. The only tenable objection to them is that voiced by the Prime Minister, who argues that they would do more harm than good to the Africans' cause if they seriously damaged the South African economy. That argument implies that they would be effective, but we should have to take the risk of causing a serious economic collapse, perhaps with worldwide ramifications. We should also remember—and Ministers should remember—that some economic sanctions are already applied.

The question is, what sort of sanctions—other than those which would be too costly—could we apply which would be effective in forcing the South African Government to come to terms with their African population? The last two meetings of Commonwealth Heads of Government have seen the strongest attempts yet made to use the Commonwealth as a means of bringing pressure to bear upon South Africa to change its policy. Most other Governments — indeed all other Governments, including those of Australia, Canada and New Zealand at Vancouver—now believe that economic sanctions would be justified. The Prime Minister maintained her position at Vancouver but she cannot be pleased with the sight of the whole Commonwealth arrayed against us on a question of international relations. That sort of posture may pay dividends in the European Community when everyone is fighting for a bigger share of the cake but it is destructive of the spirit that animates, or used to animate, the Commonwealth. The trouble with the Prime Minister's stance over South Africa is that she appears to damn sanctions more than she damns apartheid. The question that my right hon. Friend has to face is this: if economic sanctions will not bring about change in South Africa, what will? We need an answer to that question. One option was tried at Nassau.

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): More investment.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend says "More investment", but if we adopt a policy purely and simply of increased investment in South Africa the rest of the world will think that we have gone mad. We shall have stood the sanctions policy on its head and we shall have told the whole world that we are hypocrites and do not really mean what we say when we condemn the policy of the South African Government.

At Nassau the Commonwealth leaders agreed to send a mission to South Africa. It was unfortunate in its title, but its members were people of distinction.

Mr. John Carlisle: My hon. Friend said that if sanctions were applied rigidly conditions would deteriorate dramatically, and he referred to economic devastation. Does he agree that the changes that would come out of such conditions would not be desirable to the rest of the world? Is he really saying that South Africa has to burn if there is to be any change? My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) suggested further investment to improve economic conditions. Would not that, rather than the economic disaster that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister fears, create the best conditions for change?

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend was not listening carefully enough to what I was saying. I was not approving of comprehensive economic sanctions that would damage the South African economy and perhaps affect the world economy. Of course I would not advocate that. However, something must be done. We are already indulging in economic sanctions and the degree to which we apply them may be important. However, there are many other things that we must do if we are to prove the sincerity of our abhorrence of the South African Government's policy.

The Eminent Persons Group went to South Africa and reported to the review conference in London in 1986. It was rebuffed by the South Africans. No one who reads its careful, sober conclusions can be in any doubt that without further, more drastic measures against them the South African Government will not budge and the sickening spiral of violence will continue.

We should consider carefully the option of positive measures as suggested in the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1985. That report considered the option of greater investment—the policy advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner). The Committee came to the conclusion that that could not be done without a great many conditions and restraints to ensure that the benefit of such investment was restricted to the African population. How one could achieve that without insulting the integrity of a sovereign state beggars the imagination. I am sure that any such assistance would soon find itself strengthening the economy operated by the South African Government.

I admit that I did not originally approve of the Gleneagles agreement because I thought that the more people who went to South Africa to tell the South Africans that they were wrong, the better. However, the Gleneagles agreement is proving worth while and effective because it brings home to white South Africans, some of whom care more for sport than for the economy, the opinions of the rest of the world. That is why I approve the sporting boycott of South Africa. We could do more to show white South Africans that the world detests their Government's policies.

Unfortunately, we cannot reasonably expect the valiant efforts of Chief Buthelezi in Natal to bring about reconciliation and constitutional progress to have much success. The fatal factor of tribalism is at work there, too. If the communal violence does not destroy the chief's noble experiment, the South African Government will not let it succeed.

The people of South Africa, black, brown and white, yearn for the peace and order without which they cannot

[Mr. Stanbrook]

prosper. Apartheid and the consequent treatment of non-whites constitute an affront to everyone. How can the African countries restrain their young men from enlisting in secret armies to fight the common enemy? Would we not do the same in similar circumstances?

South Africa has brought the violence on itself. It may already be too late to end the agony without a most appalling tragedy. The South African Government must talk to genuinely representative Africans about a settlement soon, and we must insist on their doing so. Otherwise, Britain, which has immense prestige and influence in both camps, will bear responsibility for the consequences.

10.18 am

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The election of the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) to this House caused me very particular anguish. I remember vividly that I was in the BBC studios in 1970 when the result was announced and my old friend and colleague, Eric Lubbock, the Liberal Whip at the time, was defeated. Therefore, it gives me special pleasure to say that I thought that the motion presented by the hon. Member for Orpington was constructive and careful—as indeed one must be in these matters if one is serious about progress—and liberal as well, although I am aware that the hon. Gentleman's liberalism is not comprehensive. Indeed, his speech was fair, positive and brave.

I want to concentrate upon South Africa and the Commonwealth response and the effect that finding a response is having upon the Commonwealth. It is inevitable, as the hon. Gentleman said so lucidly, that a multiracial organisation such as the Commonwealth should respond with a special detestation of the institutionalised racism of apartheid. That strikes at the very core of its justification. Inevitably since the empire has changed into Commonwealth, we have had more disputes about race than about anything else. Those disputes have ranged from the departure of South Africa from the Commonwealth in 1961 to the whole issue of UDI in Rhodesia—and I remembr with pleasure attending the Rhodesian elections that gave birth to Zimbabwe in the company of the hon. Member for Orpington and I learnt a lot about his experience in the colonial administration of Nigeria. I believe that that experience quite clearly shone through in the informed humanity that characterised his contribution today.

I want to concentrate on more recent events. More recently the meeting was held in Nassau and an agreement was reached in response to the then deteriorating situation in South Africa. It would be valuable to remind the House what the Commonwealth accord sought South Africa to do in Nassau in 1985. Five brief points were made:

> "the system of apartheid will be dismantled and specific and meaningful action taken in fulfilment of that intent.
>
> Terminate the existing state of emergency.
>
> Release . . . Nelson Mandela and all others.
>
> Establish political freedom and specifically lift the existing ban on the ANC"—

That was a specific point to which we agreed and it is all the more extraordinary that the Prime Minister should state in Vancouver that the ANC is a terrorist organisation with which one can have no dialogue. The last point stated:

> "Initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representative government."

In effect, that was a stick and carrot approach. The stick represented the fact that there was a threat of a series of measures to show the earnestness of the Commonwealth opposition to apartheid and the carrot was the establishment of the Eminent Persons Group which proceeded to visit South Africa.

The Prime Minister acceded to those points although she preferred to use the word "signals" rather than "sanctions". I remember that the Prime Minister of New Zealand remarked:

> "One woman's signals is another man's sanctions."

Whatever word one uses, there was no doubt even then that the Prime Minister was very reluctant in her approach. I wondered at the time what distinction could be made between that approach towards sanctions with all the difficulties—and I do not deny those—and the approach towards sanctions against the Argentine. To a large extent, I suppose that they were signals rather than any immediately effective action although we demanded a lot from the Italians then. Indeed, I wonder what the difference is between that and sanctions against Poland.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Or the Soviet Union.

Sir Russell Johnston: And indeed the Soviet Union.

The Eminent Persons Group was accepted by Pretoria because of the background threat of sanctions at the time. As the hon. Member for Orpington said, the group produced an excellent report which clearly exposed the paucity of the policy of constructive engagement and pointed to the need for further international pressure. It was an unparalleled diplomatic exercise. Credit must go to the South African Government, who agreed to allow the Eminent Persons Group to have such extended meetings as they had even with Nelson Mandela. The negotiating concept which the Eminent Persons Group formulated remains valid and represents a positive and potentially unique contribution to ending apartheid.

It was particularly significant that Lord Barber, formerly a Conservative Cabinet Minister, who at that time was chairman of Standard Chartered, the largest British bank operating in South Africa, felt driven by his experience to endorse the group's findings despite the considerable personal difficulties that that undoubtedly created for him.

The Nassau meeting in 1985 was followed by the London review meeting in August 1986. That considered the Eminent Person Group report and accepted its logic. It accepted, in the absence of negotiation and conciliation, that there was a need for increased pressure through the imposition of additional measures. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister, while she ostensibly accepted the report, showed no signs of appreciating its analysis and long-term effect. At that time, Britain stood out from its six partners in refusing to accept the package of proposed sanctions. However, I remind the House that we did agree to three further "signals"—if I may use that word:

> "a voluntary ban on new investment in South Africa . . . a voluntary ban on the promotion of tourism to South Africa, and accept and implement any EEC decision to ban the import of coal, iron, and steel and of gold coins from South Africa."

It is fair to say that the Commonwealth action had a very important trigger effect in producing results from the American Congress and the Nordic countries.

Most recently, there was the meeting in Vancouver. The hon. Member for Orpington rightly criticised the British press for the picture that it conveyed to the British people of the meeting. It was a meeting that was largely free of acrimony. It would be best if I quoted from a speech delivered by Sir Shridath Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary-General. On 10 November he delivered the Montague Burton lecture in international relations at the university of Leeds. He said:

> "What is more, despite some media suggestions to the contrary, the agreement to disagree with Britain on those six points was, on the part of the majority adopting the Statement, free of contention and hostility. Other Commonwealth leaders were so sure of the way forward at Vancouver that they did not find it difficult to agree to disagree with Britain. They felt that Britain was wrong. They were sad about this; but, as 48 of the 49 Commonwealth leaders saw it—and as President Kaunda later said to the press—they had to accept 'Britain's right to be wrong'.
>
> Such contentions as arose were to do with media briefings, responses to media projections and responses to what many regarded as highly distorted media presentations."

Indeed, those presentations caused great offence, as the hon. Member for Orpington has said. In the end, they produced an outcome which was a diplomatic defeat for the United Kingdom. I should remind the House that Canada has a Conservative Government; it no longer has a Liberal Government. Very particular offence was taken in Canada to the issue of the trade statistics for 1986. All my contacts have told me that Mr. Bernard Ingham was both aggressive and rude. The British press is perhaps getting used to that, and certainly they reacted in an extraordinarily supine way. However, the Commonwealth press was appalled and officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office saw much of their good, hard work dissipated.

We were given the impression that the Prime Minister had orchestrated everything, but the opposite was true. Perhaps tired of isolating herself only in the European Community, she was determined to do the same in the Commonwealth. The outcome was entirely the wrong message to Pretoria. *The Toronto Star* correspondent in Johannesburg wrote:

> "British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is the toast of South Africa for blocking further Commonwealth sanctions against the Pretoria government.
>
> Newspapers nationwide hailed Thatcher as the Iron Lady who scorned 47 nations at the Vancouver summit . . . with headlines such as 'Maggie Foils the Club' and 'Alone Again' . . .
>
> Johannesburg's pro-government daily, the Citizen, devoted an entire editorial page column to Thatcher's stand, and applauded her for publicly labelling the African National Congress—the main guerrilla group fighting Pretoria's rule —a 'terrorist organisation'."

An editorial in *The Toronto Star* stated:

> "British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, steel spine and condescending manner firmly in place, is right in one respect. The Commonwealth conference that ended Saturday in Vancouver produced not one additional sanction against South Africa. But don't blame Prime Minister Brian Mulroney or the other 46 government leaders whose search for ways to end apartheid in South Africa preoccupied them during six days of meetings . . .
>
> Thanks to Thatcher's intransigence, Commonwealth leaders made no progress on putting further pressure on Pretoria."

That is not good for us at all. I accept, although this is not the majority view of the Liberal party, that there are considerable practical difficulties about sanctions and their efficacy, but I entirely support the approach of the hon. Member for Orpington that the selective sanctions being proposed can be made to work and produce the kind of political pressure that the Government themselves regarded as appropriate and necessary in relation to Argentina, Poland and the USSR.

Mr. John Carlisle: With regard to the distaste expressed by Mr. Mulroney at the way in which the facts were presented to the Canadian press, I remind the House that when sanctions were imposed by the free world against the USSR at the time of the Afghanistan invasion Canada joined other grain-producing countries in imposing sanctions but within minutes of the agreement being signed by President Carter and other western nations the Canadians were selling wheat to Russia and in that year increased their trade beyond all previous levels. One might therefore view with some suspicion the protest that the facts were distorted and offensive to Canada, given that Canada was the first to break sanctions against Moscow.

Sir Russell Johnston: The fact that something happens once does not mean that it will happen a second time. The statistics were used in an extraordinary way. The British delegation had just arrived and had not even gone through the usual diplomatic niceties. The first real intimation of the delegation's arrival received by its hosts was the presentation of those adverse critical statistics which, as I pointed out when I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Orpington, were extremely unfair in the way in which they were produced.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) is concerned about sanctions against Russia in relation to the war against Afghanistan—a war which I entirely oppose—yet in relation to South Africa he not only opposes sanctions but uses every possible opportunity to put the South African Government's point of view.

Sir Russell Johnston: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. That is a most logical point. I suspect, however, that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would wish us to leave Afghanistan at this stage.

The second point to which the Minister must respond with clarity and perhaps at some length is the Prime Minister's dismissal of the African National Congress as a terrorist group with which we could have no dialogue. In this respect, I cannot improve on the clarity of the comments of the hon. Member for Orpington, especially in his exchange with the hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd). That grave statement by the Prime Minister was apparently almost carelessly made. As the hon. Member for Orpington has said, the Foreign Secretary has met Oliver Tambo. I was unaware that officials of the ANC were meeting the Foreign Office today, but if that is true it is a good thing and we shall be anxious to hear more about it. However, it does not tie in with the Prime Minister's statement. That must be clarified. Turning away from the ANC means turning away from any hope of peace. Refusing to speak with anyone in the leadership will merely bring in the next level of leadership in the townships—much harder men, who will be armed from the east—so all the arguments deployed by Right-wing Conservatives about the strategic importance of South Africa will come back in their faces.

[Sir Russell Johnston]

Those two aspects overshadow and are in direct contradiction with the constructive attempts to help the front-line states. Where is the logic in training Zimbabwean soldiers or improving the Mozambique infrastructure while almost consciously distancing oneself from any attempt to prevent South Africa's campaign of destabilisation in the southern part of the continent?

Two developments emerged from Vancouver which are bad for the Commonwealth in the long term. Both can be laid at the door of the United Kingdom and perhaps of the Prime Minister personally. We excluded ourselves from the standing committee of Foreign Ministers. I understand that the Prime Minister referred to this dismissively as "Not another committee." For the first time ever, Britain has not involved itself in a committee set up by the Commonwealth. That is a very bad precedent.

Secondly, due to the multiracial and multilingual nature so accurately described by the hon. Member for Orpington, the Commonwealth has had to operate on the basis of consensus. There is really no other way. In 1986, consensus failed for the first time. It failed again in 1987. It is always easier to fail a second time. The Prime Minister must take direct responsibility for that extremely depressing development. She claims to be acting in defence of United Kingdom interests, but I do not believe that that is so. I believe that she is wasting our good will for no return. Unlike the hon. Member for Orpington, I believe that the same is happening in the European Community. That is sad and bad for Britain.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Orpington for giving us the opportunity to debate these matters on the basis of his very constructive motion.

10.38 am

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): First, I must apologise to the House and especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) if I cannot remain for the whole of the debate as I have a constituency engagement later.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington on the selection of his motion, but my congratulations are somewhat tempered by the consideration that the compass of the motion is too great. There are two extremely important issues involved—there is the question of the Commonwealth itself and this country's relationship with it. There is also the vast, worrying, deeply difficult problem of South Africa and what the United Kingdom does about it. In my brief remarks, I hope to separate the issues and talk first about the Commonwealth.

As someone who has spent much of his professional life seeking to play at least a small part and make a small contribution to the furtherance of good international relations, I hope that I may claim to have total loyalty to any instrument that improves the conduct of such relations and fosters amity between nations. If one is in such a profession, one quickly becomes aware of the self-interest, the grinding of personal axes, the hypocrisy and all the rest—in any organisation with which one has to deal. The Commonwealth is not exempt from that malaise. Nevertheless, I set out as someone who wishes and hopes that the Commonwealth works, and works well. There is no doubt at all that it is an extraordinary phenomenon. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington, with his deep knowledge based on his Nigerian experience, has dealt with that.

Many parliamentarians who have experience of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association are aware of the links of culture, education and language. Sometimes one is tempted to include the links of sport, but, sadly, sport tends to embitter relations. That is not exclusive to the Commonwealth. We all wish the Commonwealth to work. We all recognise that the evolution from the empire into the Commonwealth is remarkable.

It is important that, as a nation, we do not allow emotion to cloud our clear thinking about reality. I would be the last person to say that emotion is not an important factor in politics and international relations, but it cannot be the only factor. As someone who has been quite directly involved in many aspects of the Commonwealth, I sometimes find it depressing to consider the regard that other Commonwealth Governments have had for the British Government. I am not talking about the latest debate on, and differences of opinion about, South Africa. It is a phenomenon of many years' standing. Again, I am not talking about relations at the personal, individual level. We all know about them. I am talking about Government-to-Government relations.

I wish that, in many Commonwealth capital cities, the British high commissioner stood rather higher in the diplomatic pecking order than he does and has done for many years. In Ottawa, Canberra, New Delhi or wherever, other countries, and not only the superpowers, often tend to come first. In a way, we should not complain about that because countries have national interests. Governments have a duty and a right to pursue their national interests, and we must have regard to that. That is an element in Commonwealth relations which some of us in this country—particularly those of us in the House and, perhaps, even on Conservative Benches—seem to forget. The old instinctive, altogether admirable Commonwealth emotion floods through and overtakes important political, economic and strategic realities. I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington and others who speak and think as he does to bring such insight to the Commonwealth.

When we talk about the political developments and problems in Commonwealth countries—my hon. Friend is the last person to intend this—there is a danger in implying double standards and, indeed, being patronising about the achievements or lack of achievements of democratic systems and failures to overcome tribalism, racialism and all the other problems. We have had 900 years' experience in this country. We must be conscious of our advantages, but we must not allow double standards in regard to the defence and exculpation of failure to prevent us from achieving the highest possible standards of other Commonwealth countries. That is an important point. We must not talk down to the Commonwealth. We must not allow Commonwealth countries to discriminate against us in many ways. Put in that light, we would do no service to our Commonwealth friends.

We often hear about education of overseas students and what benefits are returned to this country. I would be the first person to urge the Government to continue to allow Commonwealth students—indeed nationals of many other countries—to study in this country. Let us not fool ourselves about the commercial spin-off. My hon. Friend was careful to add that they could learn English here, and, who knows, it could lead to contracts for British companies. There is no statistical evidence to justify that statement. We should examine the increase of exports to Nigeria, the country of which my hon. Friend has had much experience. I have not looked at the figures recently, but I should be surprised if they have changed. The rate of increase of exports from France and Germany to Nigeria is much greater. Of course, ours started very low. It started years ago. It is a natural development. Countries make purchases and strategic and political decisions on the basis of hard reality.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend seriously contend that the "Buy British Last" policy that was implemented by the Malaysian Government after our steps regarding overseas students did not have a serious, damaging, lasting and quantifiable effect on our trade balances with Malaysia?

Mr. Whitney: I would be the last person to seek to defend Dr. Mahathir on the "Buy British Last" policy. I ask my hon. Friend to study the facts. It is an example of emotion. Although we can start off with a basic willingness to want people to study in Britain and carry away with them a good feeling for this country, we must understand that the reality is that there is no direct correlation between that happy phenomenon and a great splurge of buying British, nor indeed should there be. I hope that there will be, but it does not happen. There is no consequential relationship, and all the statistics prove entirely the opposite.

Sir Russell Johnston: If there are no statistics that prove the correlation, presumably there are no statistics that prove the opposite.

Mr. Whitney: Yes, there are. I do not wish to be rude to the hon. Gentleman, but had he been listening, he would know that there are. If we examine the Nigerian statistics and the rate of increase, we will find that the rate of increase of Germany and France is out of sight above ours. I agree that it is from a different base, but they are statistics. There are not many statistics in this respect, but such as there are, to put it mildly, go in the opposite direction.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend made my point for me. In reality, African Governments have a far greater say in the economy than do European Governments. Decisions about Government contracts are made by Ministers. For the most part, they are politically inspired. Therefore, Ministers who arrange the placing of contracts have political considerations in mind when they do so. That is why we have lost trade with Nigeria and elsewhere.

Mr. Whitney: My hon. Friend has changed his ground. Earlier, we heard that a great cultural swirl of goodwill was allowing contracts to be placed. Now we are told that a small handful of politically motivated gentlemen, to coin a phrase, are placing contracts. My hon. Friend cannot have it both ways. I do not object to either course. I have always asked for a degree of clarity and slightly less emotion to be brought to the issue of Commonwealth relations.

I turn now to the extraordinary and horrifying issue of apartheid. I have visited South Africa twice. The first time was in 1978 when I was horrified to see the "Whites only" notices as I left Jan Smuts airport. That was a most disturbing experience. I remember a sign on the beach at Port Elizabeth that stated:

"This beach reserved for whites only".

It was signed by the town clerk, whose name was Mr. Human. It was strange to find one homo sapiens saying to another, "You cannot come on our beach."

I hope that the debate — and indeed that between Conservative Members — deals with the argument of how best we can ensure that the change comes and that the move that had started continues. There was movement, and some of the sanctions have been effective but the worry is how much?

In exchanges with my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington left me confused about what he was seeking. He accepts that this country, along with our European and Commonwealth partners and the Americans, has imposed sanctions, unlike the Soviet bloc which is increasing its trade with South Africa. My hon. Friend wants us to impose more sanctions, but not too many because he rightly recognises the evil effect that would result if the South African economy collapsed. However, he did not make it clear where that mythical point is of "not too little and not too much, but just right", as the Erasmic advertisement used to put it. We are beyond that point and do not wish to pursue it further.

I turn now to the economic effects. When I was in South Africa in 1978 I was there on behalf of a major British international company to seek to ensure that the European code of conduct was being applied, but applied to the power of two, as it were. That was to apply to all the leading international companies that were operating in South Africa. From that extremely dark situation, I brought back one glimmer of hope that an African class was emerging that had a commitment to the prosperity of the country. It was being trained in leadership and had a sense of responsibility. I am talking not about politics and being Left or Right wing, but about genuine African people who understood the situation and had training and confidence. I saw some hope in that, although not a lot because of all the other political issues. However, such co-operation at a commercial level in economic development was good.

I remember one old man who was a black driver. He was delighted that his son had been to university and was now a junior executive for a multinational company. The terrible thing is that such progress has been checked and is probably being reversed for two or three reasons. The first is the black on black terror such as necklacing and all the other horrors that we have seen. Although I do not know, I suspect that that man's son would no longer be involved in that company because he would be terrorised by other blacks.

Mr. Dykes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the main reason why progress is being set back is that the South African Government show no intention of relinquishing any of their primacy or of negotiating, in any political terms, for a modern, reformed South Africa? I know that I have probably interrupted the other things that my hon. Friend was going to say, but is he aware that the segregation to which he referred earlier still exists in full effect? My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and I sat on a South African railway station for three hours watching all the trains that were going in and out. Not a single train was desegregated, although the South African Government say that they now are.

Mr. Whitney: I do not want to delay the House and shall come to that in a moment because it is obviously important.

The economic effect of the slowing down and probable reversal of the integration and development of that level of black society is a disaster. As international companies have checked and even withdrawn their business from South Africa, that has been another deep blow to the economic development of black South Africans. I do not deny that those economic effects are slow-acting. Indeed, they were slow-acting in Rhodesia, but the fact is that no economy can withstand total sanctions. It must be remembered that in many respects South Africa is a Third world economy, with a young and rapidly rising black population. Although it has its strengths, of which everyone is aware, it also has fragilities. There is a danger that it could crack and, if it did, the already great suffering of the black South Africans would be worsened.

I should like to refer briefly to an article by the leader of the Progressive Federal party, Mr. Colin Eglin, who wrote in November 1986:

> "I have yet to hear anyone advance a valid argument for why economic recession, combined with social instability leading to black white conflict, should cause a beleaguered white group to move in the direction of reform. Damaging the South African economy will not bring down the Botha Government but it will retard the process of fundamental change and, with this, weaken the economic mescle blacks are starting to use."

That is a real danger and we must have regard for that concern. We must ask where we stop and that is something at which the Commonwealth is not looking. We have created an economic and political polarisation that is much worse than it was before. It is now the Conservative party in South Africa — I mean that in South African terms — that is the major opposition party. That demonstrates the effect of the sanctions and international attitudes that South Africa has directed against itself.

I have a long list of reforms that the South African Government have put into practice since 1978——

Mr. Dykes: No.

Mr. Whitney: As my hon. Friend says, some of those reforms have been put on the statute book but do not exist in practice. They must be put into practice and more must be put on the statute book. At the moment the effect of the international pressures of the past three or four years has been a political and economic polarisation and that way lies disaster. The House and the Commonwealth should recognise that.

10.57 am

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I congratulate the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on raising this subject because it is most important. I know from the wording of his motion that he holds strong views, is deeply concerned about the problems of South Africa and wishes to see a positive end to the policy of apartheid.

I speak as one of three hon. Members who visited South Africa in May and early June last year, having been sponsored by the churches to see exactly what the situation was. Since that date I have maintained close contact with a number of people in that country, from all communities, who wish to see an end to apartheid. For security reasons I cannot name some of those people. Some of the contacts must be made indirectly because direct mail from some of those people would not reach me in the normal way. At times writing back to those people has to be by indirect methods.

Immediately after I left South Africa last year, the state of emergency increased, as did the censorship of the press. No steps can be taken to end apartheid by incresing the state of emergency, the censorship or the control of that system within the country. Those are not positive steps. One welcome sign has been the stance taken by the Dutch Reform Church, but it has split and it remains to be seen what emerges.

When I visited South Africa a general election was expected there; it was eventually held earlier this year. The result gave no hope of achieving a political solution to the problems there. As the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) rightly said, instead of the Opposition being opposed to the policy of apartheid, they believe that the Government's policies have gone too far and they would like to regress. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is absolutely correct in saying that in recent years the South African Government's claims to progress have been token rather than real. They claim to have ended segregation on trains, but when I was there, although there were certain carriages in which anyone could travel, there remained carriages which only whites could use. Therefore, the Government have not ended segregation on trains.

Mr. Adley: As the trains run to and from segregated areas, that is in any case a pointless exercise. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that language is important and that when he uses phrases such as general election in relation to South Africa, *Hansard* should be invited to put those words in inverted commas?

Mr. Pike: That, too, is an important point and what the hon. Gentleman says is true.

People in South Africa who hoped for positive political steps to end apartheid increasingly tell me that Parliament does not control South Africa and that even President P.W. Botha is no longer worried about Parliament. The military and security forces increasingly have the power to say what is done there. Many people in South Africa have told me that if the so-called general election had resulted in a Government who were willing to negotiate a settlement, there might well have been a military coup.

Mr. Dykes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the leading members of the military and security forces continue to hold strong Fascist views akin to those held in the Third Reich and, indeed, that they moved in to scupper the Eminent Persons Group inquiry just as it was on the verge of creating the concept of negotiation, because they were so alarmed that there might be a surrender by the so-called democratic Government?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman is certainly near the mark. When the hon. Member for Orpington said that the Eminent Persons Group had been rebuffed, I thought that he had perhaps understated the case. It was torpedoed, as the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) described. Efforts were made to ensure that, whatever the group's conclusions and however constructive its suggestions, they would be destroyed before they could be considered and implemented.

It must be remembered that in the tricameral Parliament the system ensures that the president's council, which is all white, exercises complete power. Therefore, the other racial groups which have their so-called Parliaments and elected representatives are not much better off than the blacks who have no Parliament. We wish to see some genuine progress there.

The United Kingdom has a major role to play because of our place in the Commonwealth and the EEC, and because of our relationship with America. We are an important trading partner with South Africa, despite the application of limited sanctions, and we continue to have the biggest foreign investment in South Africa. For those reasons we are vital to the South African economy.

Time after time the Prime Minister condemns apartheid and declares her complete opposition to it, but even if we believed her for one moment—I must say that I have my doubts—and gave her the benefit of the doubt, how do the blacks in South Africa see her position? Clearly, they see our Prime Minister as the strongest supporter of the apartheid system and the greatest ally of P. W. Botha. I see the Minister shaking her head, but the whites in South Africa also see the Prime Minister as his greatest ally. Because she has that relationship with the president, whether we like it or not, she has a role to play and can use her influence positively and to a greater extent. Indeed, she must use it.

If there is not a negotiated settlement, if those concerned do not sit round a table and sort out the problems and if a solution is achieved through bloodshed, the Prime Minister, the Government and this country must accept their fair share of responsibility for not using their influence to force negotiations. Mandela must be included in any negotiations; the South African Government cannot determine who should be the elected representatives for the blacks during negotiations.

The Prime Minister condemns all violence and believes that President Botha is right to expect the ANC and Mandela to renounce all violence before he is released, but the United Kingdom has not condemned violence on all occasions. I detest and deplore violence and wish to live in a world where violence is not necessary, but I am sure that the House does not condemn the violence of the French Resistance during the second world war. There are parallels there with South Africa. The overwhelming majority of the South African population are black and have no voice in the Government. For them, it must be like living in an occupied country where a small minority have power.

It is essential that Mandela is released at the earliest possible date, together with other political detainees. The South African Government must stop their violence against interned children, women and men. There is clear proof of that violence and if hon. Members, such as the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), who defend the South African Government, do not believe that that is true, they are kidding themselves. There is clear evidence to show that that violence exists. It must be condemned and should not exist in any civilised society.

Many hon. Members wish to speak, so I will bring my remarks to a close. The Government and the Prime Minister must use their influence. We must have sanctions because only sanctions can bring pressure to bear. Mandela must be released. We must have talks and we must move as speedily as possible. Once negotiations start and there are signs that apartheid will end, all countries must make it clear that they will help South Africa to overcome its problems when apartheid ends. There will be major problems in raising the health, housing and, most important, educational standards of blacks. The United Kingdom and other western countries have a major role to play, because even when apartheid is ended those problems must be resolved. We must act positively and make it clear to those who are genuinely seeking to end apartheid that once it is ended we shall help solve those important problems.

11.9 am

Mr. Mike Woodcock (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I shall speak briefly about a country in southern Africa where many of the problems found in South Africa no longer exist, and whose citizens were once members of the Commonwealth. It is a country that never decided to leave the Commonwealth but is now excluded from it, and could point the way to the resolution of many of the problems in South Africa. Yet it is Commonwealth countries more than any others which are preventing that happening.

There can be no consideration of the problems of South Africa outside the wider context of Africa. We must remember that many of those problems were created by colonial administration. The United Kingdom was the largest colonial power and created many problems. We must also remember that many African countries are now military dictatorships. It is a continent where the majority of countries are one-party states and political opposition is often not tolerated. Presidents are appointed and some presidents and Prime Ministers come to power through the gun and not through the ballot box. They tend to hold office for life and racial prejudice is rife. Eastern bloc countries are increasingly active, and many countries base their political systems on undemocratic ideas and pursue economic policies which seem to ignore economic realities.

South Africa is surrounded by several of those countries—Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania and Zambia—but I speak of a country in southern Africa that offers a stark contrast to them. That country has a black Government, and there is almost complete racial harmony. There is a black President and a Government supported by white Ministers. The Government are violently anti-Marxist and support free enterprise. It is a country that has a largely Christian population and where democracy is practised in a way that is unusual in the rest of Africa. Elections are free and fair and opposition parties and candidates take part in them. Indeed, the opposition party gained ground in the recent general election there.

Mr. Anderson: Will the hon. Gentleman mention the human rights record of Bophuthatswana?

Mr. Woodcock: I will indeed. There is a first-class multiracial university. It is a country where free speech is encouraged and which sent thousands of troops to help us in the second world war. There is still respect and admiration for British values and British justice. It is a country where the standards of discipline, behaviour and religious instruction in schools would be the envy of many British parents. That country is Bophuthatswana.

Mr. Stanbrook: It is not even a country.

Mr. Woodcock: That country gained its independence in 1977.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my hon. Friend tell us who recognises it?

Mr. Woodcock: That is exactly the point. In four weeks it celebrates its 10th anniversary. It was formerly part of South Africa, and lies within the borders of that country. There are 100 Members of Parliament and an executive President. It has a population of 1·75 million, two thirds of whom are Tswana. The Tswana live in the region to the north of southern Africa which was formerly British Bechuanaland and the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Through a political decision made by the United Kingdom, and largely because of the presence of gold and diamonds, the Tswana found themselves one third in Botswana and two thirds in South Africa. Another artificial line was drawn by a colonial power. Ten years ago, South Africa offered independence to the two thirds of Tswanas who live in what was then northern South Africa, and the republic gratefully took its independence.

Since then, it has made fantastic progress in industrial development and has become self-supportive in basic foods. It has set up the first comprehensive scheme in southern Africa for retirement pensions, accident compensation and medical care. It has acted, and could act, as a catalyst for change in South Africa by demonstrating that aparthied is not necessary. It is a country which South Africans now visit to escape from apartheid.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Like Sun City.

Mr. Woodcock: I recently visited Bophuthatswana and I also visited Sun City. I met President Mangope and most of the senior Ministers. There are both black and white senior Ministers. I was impressed by their obvious belief in democracy and by their economic realism.

Mr. Boateng: Who invited the hon. Gentleman?

Mr. Woodcock: The Bophuthatswana Government invited me.

Mr. Winnick: Who paid for the trip?

Mr. Woodcock: I went there with an open mind and made my own decisions about what I saw.

I visited the largest industrial employer there — the Impala platinum mine which employs 40,000 people. Although the senior management are white, there seems to be complete racial harmony and industrial relations which would be the envy of the British mining industry. I visited a hospital where standards of equipment and care were equal to those found in many hospitals in the United Kingdom. I visited irrigation and agricultural schemes to turn the desert into fertile land. I visited what I considered an excellent university where students are encouraged to discuss political issues freely and openly. I visited a high school in the capital where the standards of discipline, dress, politeness and enthusiasm among the children were far above anything I have seen in schools in the United Kingdom. It was a real pleasure to join in morning assembly at 7.30 with children who start their journeys to school as early as 4.30 or 5 am. I visited a school in a rural area that was closed for a public holiday, but the classrooms were full of children who had come into school voluntarily to help each other learn without the aid of teachers.

Mr. Boateng: Does the hon. Gentleman have any brochures?

Mr. Woodcock: The record of the country speaks for itself and I was impressed by what I saw. Whether the hon. Gentleman likes it or not, what I saw represented a small light burning in the darkness which represents much of Africa today.

In the midst of so much injustice and instability in Africa, would we not expect the nations of the Commonwealth to have welcomed the emergence of that nation, and the hand of friendship it offered, and supported the development of a friendly nation? That country asks only that Commonwealth countries, and the United Kingdom in particular — which created the problem in the first place — now recognise this new nation.

Recognition would enable Governments to send expatriates to help. It would secure investment from international corporations and it would open up Bophuthatswana to air travel and tourism. Instead, Britain and the rest of the Commonwealth steadfastly refuse to recognise that country. We refuse to accord diplomatic status to its representatives in the United Kingdom. By refusing to recognise that country we deprive it of United Nations development aid.

At the same time we recognise dictatorships throughout Africa, give aid to countries which are Marxist, and recognise Governments who come to power through violence and terrorism. We show little obvious concern for Communist influence and build-up in countries to the north of South Africa. The Tswana people cannot understand how a country for which they hold such respect and which professes to support the same democratic principles can turn its back on them.

Even if we are not prepared to recognise that country, the Commonwealth should be developing trade relations with it. Trade is the best way to help any developing country. It would help Bophuthatswana and it would help the Commonwealth. Britain, by its encouragement of disinvestment in South Africa, is helping to create disaster for the people of Bophuthatswana. In the words of President Mangope:

> "Nothing is more unkind to us, it is cruel."

The Commonwealth is depriving the people of that country of vital investment, and that is fuelling unemployment.

What are the reasons for the Commonwealth rejecting Bophuthatswana? The only reason that I can discover is that it offers, in part, a solution to the problems of southern Africa. It is claimed that that country is a product of apartheid. Indeed, some hon. Members would say that it supports the South African system and that it undermines the efforts of the front-line states. However, in reality it is a sensible solution to part of the problems of southern Africa. It is certainly a more sensible solution than the policies pursued by many of the surrounding states.

Why do we refuse to support Bophuthatswana when that country stands for the values that we profess to support? Are we afraid to stand up to the front-line states? The tragedy for the country is, perhaps, that it achieved its independence by negotiation and peaceful means. Had a few hundred whites been murdered in a bid to gain independence, it would have been recognised immediately by the Commonwealth and it would now be receiving aid.

Since the demise of Britain's role in the world, this House has become, quite rightly, more and more occupied with domestic issues. Perhaps, 20 or 30 years ago, hon. Members took a greater interest in foreign affairs. However, today that is not the case and it is easy to forget that many of the political problems in Africa are the result of past policies of United Kingdom Governments. It is also easy to forget that many of those countries still look to the United Kingdom for help and support. It is easy to criticise some of the events in southern Africa—indeed, it is fashionable to do so. It is a great deal more difficult to try to understand southern Africa and to support those initiatives that will genuinely help towards a resolution of the problems.

The United Kingdom Government are taking a pragmatic approach to southern Africa, but not to Bophuthatswana. It is time that they took that country seriously. We should recognise that it is in the interests of southern Africa and the free world to support a country that upholds our values and is one of our true friends in Africa.

I ask the Government to do what is right and not what is simply politically convenient. I want them to look on Bophuthatswana as an example of what can be achieved in southern Africa. That would be much more important than the rhetoric of front-line states. It would be much more important than imposing sanctions that simply would not work. The people of Bophuthatswana were Commonwealth citizens. It was not their decision to leave the Commonwealth. It was simply that when South Africa left the Commonwealth the citizens of Bophuthatswana ceased to be members. It could be argued that they never left the Commonwealth; it could be argued that they should be readmitted. After all, they have much better credentials than many other African countries that are members.

The United Kingdom Government have been bold in resisting Commonwealth pressures to impose sanctions on South Africa. I want them to be equally bold in taking the lead in recognising Bophuthatswana and influencing other Commonwealth countries to do the same.

11.23 am

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The officials who invited the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woocock) to Bophuthatswana must now be satisfied that they made a wise decision.

I wish to apologise to the House and to the Front Bench spokesmen because, due to a long-standing engagement, I will not be here for the reply to the debate. I am glad that the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) initiated the debate. Both sides of the House recognise him as an independent-minded Member who holds strong views on a number of subjects, not least on South Africa. I hope that my comment will not do him too much harm.

These days, no Conservative Member actually defends apartheid. No matter how much they argue against sanctions or any steps being taken against South Africa, to my knowledge no Tory Member actually stands up and says that the apartheid system is justified. Indeed, all hon. Members pay lip service to opposition to the South African system. The real question is: what is to be done by both Britain and the international community to undermine and help to end the apartheid system in South Africa, and thus bring about a fundamental change in that country? As the hon. Member for Orpington said, that is the crucial issue.

Just as no hon. Member defends apartheid, there are now fewer hon. Members—although I cannot say no Conservative Members—who argue that we should not interfere in the internal affairs of South Africa. The Opposition have held the view for 40 years or more that the internal affairs of South Africa are of worldwide concern. Fortunately, most countries take that attitude. Even the British Government, if somewhat reluctantly, accept that the racial tyranny that excludes the majority of people playing any part in the central administration of their own country cannot be dismissed as of no interest to the outside world. Hence the role played by the Commonwealth and the EEC in debating what should be done about this long-standing problem.

The report of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group last year clearly spelt out the meaning of apartheid. The seven leading personalities saw for themselves what was happening in South Africa, and their report said about apartheid:

> "it is awesome in its cruelty. It is achieved and sustained only through force, creating human misery and deprivation and blighting the lives of millions."

That echoes the views that Labour Members and the British Labour movement have held for so long about the racial tyranny in South Africa.

Some Conservative Members—although not the hon. Member for Orpington—argue that important changes are taking place in South Africa. If the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, no doubt he will tell us about some of the changes that he believes have taken place. However, much of what has occurred is cosmetic, and even the minor changes that have taken place during the past two or three years have come about only as a result of international pressure.

There are those who argue that there is no need for sanctions on the ground, that because of the changes that have already taken place and to which Conservative Members give far more importance than I do there will be other changes that will undermine apartheid. Those hon. Members should remember that President Botha said only this week, when addressing a party rally, that no major changes were intended; that apartheid would be reformed, not ended, and that it would be reformed after his own fashion. I think that we have a pretty good idea of what he meant by that.

It should be recognised that President Botha and his party are constantly concerned about the even greater extremists who are accusing his Government of selling out the whites. Of course, it is the whites, and only the whites, who, in essence, have the vote in South Africa. So clearly is President Botha concerned about the white backlash and his party losing out to even greater extremists it is one reason, among others, for the pace of change being so slow. It is why the Opposition have no real optimism that there will be any fundamental change without sanctions.

It comes as no surprise, I am sure, that Opposition Members favour comprehensive economic sanctions against South Africa. It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister is the most determined opponent of such a policy towards South Africa. That came out clearly at the recent Heads of Commonwealth meeting in Vancouver. The British Government played a most dishonourable role in Vancouver. They did their utmost to smear the other Commonwealth countries and were far more concerned about that than about combating apartheid in South Africa.

I believe it was my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) who questioned whether the Prime Minister opposed apartheid. I do not know the answer to that question, but I am willing to accept that she probably does

[Mr. David Winnick]

but is not willing to do anything about it. It is difficult to imagine that the right hon. Lady feels so passionately about the subject or that she puts it at the top of her agenda. I may be wrong, but before she became Prime Minister I do not remember her making any remarks on this subject. I doubt whether she made any remarks to her constituency party or on any other occasion on this subject.

Mr. Anderson: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend. I have a copy of a book entitled "In Defence of Freedom: Speeches on Britain's Relations with the World 1976-1986", which is written by somebody called Margaret Thatcher. Characteristically, it shows her standing to the right of President Reagan with Churchill in the background. In this paeon of praise, there is no mention of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Winnick: That is very interesting, and it confirms my view that, if the Prime Minister opposes apartheid, she hardly considers it to be a matter of the utmost concern. No Conservative Member would claim that she is passionately concerned about what we believe to be an awful racial tyranny which, in so many ways, is founded on the same principles as Nazi Germany. As shown in Vancouver, the right hon. Lady is playing a squalid role in these matters.

The Eminent Persons Group report pointed out that, if the South African authorities concluded that South Africa would always remain protected against effective economic measures, the process of change was unlikely to increase in momentum. It warned of massive violence that would increase without any major changes in that country.

The Prime Minister closes the doors on economic sanctions. I hope that it will do no harm to her when I say that we have a great deal of respect for the Minister of State, but, on this occasion, although we support the views of the right hon. Lady, they are not likely to be heard too much in today's debate. She will obviously echo the Government's official line. If the right hon. Lady were making a speech from the Back Benches, it would differ, I would imagine, from what we shall hear later on.

The Prime Minister closes the doors on economic sanctions and then denounces the ANC as a typical terrorist organisation.

Mr. Pike: Is it not true that the Prime Minister would rather reform apartheid than end it?

Mr. Winnick: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right. It is interesting to note that, despite the Prime Minister's remarks that the ANC is a typical terrorist organisation, officials of the ANC are, quite rightly, meeting Foreign Office officials today. There is an obvious contradiction between what the Prime Minister said and what she did to smear that organisation and today's meeting. She is playing directly into the hands of President Botha and she knows what she is about by denouncing the ANC.

The hon. Member for Havant (Sir I. Lloyd) made the false comparison between the IRA and the ANC. There is no comparison at all. The only people who get any satisfaction out of such a comparison are those in the IRA. In Northern Ireland the IRA is quite capable of putting forward its views through the Provisional Sinn Fein in a constitutional way. No one in Northern Ireland is denied the right to vote because of their religious or political views. There is no justification for the outrages which take place in Northern Ireland. We know that is so but, in South Africa, all representative organisations of black people, such as the ANC and the PAC, are outlawed. It simply cannot be argued that there is a comparison. No one can deny that the overwhelming majority of black people in South Africa are denied the right to vote and to play any role in the government of their country. It is hardly surprising, considering the massive violence of the South African authorities and events in Sharpeville in 1960, that the ANC turned to violence. The comparison made by the Prime Minister was dishonourable.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): There is a considerable comparison to be drawn between the ANC and the IRA. The ANC would not be a banned organisation in South Africa if it renounced violence, and Nelson Mandela would be free today if it were prepared to do that. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the ANC is a typical terrorist organisation because much of its violence is directed not at the state apparatus in South Africa, but against other blacks? The bestial killings through the necklace method could not be supported, even by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Winnick: I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman is among those who are keen for fundamental changes in South Africa, but I will answer his point directly and quote from the Eminent Persons Group report. The ANC came into existence in 1912, and has just celebrated its 75th anniversary. For most of that time, including the period after 1948 when the nationalists came to power, it pursued a policy of non-violence. It is interesting to note that, despite all the restrictions, it has pursued that policy. It came to a different conclusion as a result of what happened in 1960. The report says:

> "By 1960 it was plain that the apartheid state was determined to put down by violent means peaceful protest of any kind and to clamp down on any organization which sought to mobilize black opinion. It is against this background of total repression, in which all avenues for legitimate protest and non-violent opposition were denied, that the decision of the ANC and the PAC finally to turn to armed resistance must be viewed. At a time when blacks in the United States were able to achieve equality through asserting rights already guaranteed to them in their Constitution, blacks in South Africa were being systematically denuded of any such rights and the opportunity to seek them".

That is the most effective answer that I can give to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Russell Johnston: It might be a good thing to remind hon. Members that, not only was Lord Barber a member of that committee, but it was co-chaired by Malcom Fraser, the Conservative Prime Minister of Australia.

Mr. Winnick: I do not know whether that will persuade those who are so fundamentally opposed to the ANC. The hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is hardly known as someone who wishes to see fundamental changes in South Africa, but he said that there was a good deal of violence between blacks.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *rose—*

Mr. Winnick: I shall not give way because other hon. Members wish to speak.

Unfortunately, there is a great deal of violence between blacks, and I deplore that. Like the hon. Member for Orpington, I would be the last person to justify or act as an apologist for the necklace killings. I am not in that group, and, like any other hon. Member, I would not wish to defend such crimes.

Why should Africans, particularly black youths, not want change and some say in the running of their country? If they are denied political leadership, their organisations, the ANC and the PAC, are outlawed, and Nelson Mandela is held in prison, it is hardly surprising that violence occurs in view of the violence used by the authorities in South Africa and those who are allied to them it is a fact that such violence and such deaths have occurred as mentioned by the hon. Member for Tatton. What has happened demonstrates once again how essential it is for the ANC to be allowed to operate legitimately and lawfully. Above all, it is essential that Nelson Mandela be released. I am not in any way boasting, but when he was sentenced for the last time in 1964, I was one of the many in this country who protested outside the South African embassy. Some years ealier the local authority of which I was a member boycotted goods from South Africa. Labour's stand against the tyranny in South Africa is of long standing.

I am worried too at the apparent close and continuing collaboration between the intelligence services of South Africa and Britain. I hope that the Minister will deal with that because it is causing the utmost concern that, despite the attitudes struck by the British Government in opposing apartheid, there is apparently active collaboration between the two security services. That should be brought to an end.

I understand that the ANC officials meeting Foreign Office officials today are worried about their safety in this country. Reports have appeared in the press to the effect that, apart from the recent court case, South Africa is willing to hire contract killers to take terrorist action against leading ANC personalities. I hope that Ministers will ensure effective security and protection for the ANC people. There is no reason why we should allow the South African security service to carry out illegal and indeed terrorist actions on the streets of Britain.

We shall have no doubt many more debates on South Africa. It is essential that the British Government drop their hypocritical attitude. They say that they are against apartheid, so let them take action. The most effective action would be to impose economic sanctions against a regime which is recognised throughout the world as one in which millions of people are excluded for reasons of colour alone. Such a regime should be destroyed at the earliest opportunity.

11.42 am

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): I am happy to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on choosing this subject for debate. The topic deserves to be aired. I have no quarrel with the eloquent testament that my hon. Friend made for the Commonwealth ideal, although many countries fall short of it.

I agree with the final part of my hon. Friend's motion which states that we are looking for

> "a process of dialogue across the lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to the early establishment of a non-racial and representative government."

However, elsewhere in the motion my hon. Friend goes badly wrong. Although he seems to express some doubt about the degree of sanctions that he would like imposed, he undoubtedly calls for further sanctions or disinvestment. That is the kernel of the debate.

I hope to show that the British Government are right to resist the further application of sanctions, since they are totally counter-productive in ending apartheid. The motion criticises the Government for being out of step with the remaider of the Commonwealth. There is nothing wrong with being out of step when the march is in such a self-defeating direction.

My hon. Friend referred to the close family ties between Britain and many Commonwealth countries. There are some strong personal ties between this country and the Republic of South Africa too, and a unique trading relationship has been built up over the years. We have a right to point to our great experience and, indeed, to the direct personal experience which many of our citizens have of South Africa's problems.

We should acknowledge the hypocrisy in the claims of many Commonwealth leaders. I shall not dwell on the contradictory policies applied by certain Commonwealth states in Africa itself, but let us consider the Australian Government's support for sanctions. They argue for sanctions against South Africa's fruit and wine, as well as coal, but one must remember that Australia has a special self-interest in such sanctions being applied.

What have sanctions achieved so far? I can assess it only on the basis of my experience gained from visits to South Africa. My first visit was in 1979 when the reformist sentiment was stirring, but it was evident that it had a long way to go. What a change I noticed on my next visit at the beginning of 1985 when I spent three weeks in South Africa. Enthusiasm for reform was evident on all sides. We hear reference to the wind of change and in 1985 it was blowing all around.

Mr. Adley: Did my hon. Friend meet anyone from the UDF or the ANC?

Mr. Gardiner: I certainly did not meet anyone from the ANC. That would have been very difficult. I am talking about people who were in charge of the country as well as business men and black residents.

Mr. Adley: The establishment.

Mr. Gardiner: I certainly do not regard black business men or leaders of the black townships as members of the establishment, and my hon. Friend would agree if he talked to them.

The setting up of the tricameral legislature was the first great breach in white political supremacy. However, an obvious weakness was that there was no political representation for blacks. But that was then part of the strategy.

Doctor Van de Merwe brought to my attention the statement in an official pamphlet called, "Constitution '83 in a Nutshell". That official document stated:

> "The problem of political rights for Blacks and their economic and social position is much greater and more complex. . . For this reason it is important to implement the new dispensation for Coloureds and Indians as soon as possible so that all our attention and energies may be devoted to the greater problem."

Dr. Van de Merwe drew a lesson from that. According to the official report of the South African Parliament for 9 May 1986 he said:

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> "That was a clear declaration of intent to give immediate attention to the question of the political rights of Blacks as soon as the dispensation which includes Coloureds and Indians had been implemented."

Then—in early 1985—that was part of the strategy. At the same time, all manner of reforms were being talked about and promised. Some Cabinet Ministers I spoke to even envisaged a reform of the Group Areas Act.

Sure enough, the reforms rolled forward through 1985 and into 1986. City business districts were opened to all races. The Immorality Acts of 1950 and 1957 and the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act were repealed. Forced removals relating to the old homelands policy were ended; freehold land ownership rights were extended to urban blacks; the Government publicly committed themselves to power sharing, and indicated their willingness to negotiate with black leaders.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend has listed all those magnanimous gestures. But can he understand the feeling of non-whites in South Africa who are told that even the amendment—if I may use my hon. Friend's word—or, indeed, the abolition of the Group Areas Act would be a monumental achievement? Unless and until the Population Registration Act, which segregates people by law, is removed from the statute book, non-white people will not even begin to feel that they have a fair share in their own country.

Mr. Gardiner: I was outlining the steps that were then being taken, with increasing rapidity, to remove many of the onerous aspects of the apartheid policy. Of course, the effort was by no means complete.

In 1986, the influx control of blacks moving into urban areas was ended; provincial councils were reinstituted as multi-racial councils; and, most symbolic of all, the hated pass laws were scrapped. What remained of apartheid—I agree that it was a significant remainder—were the final bastions: no political representation for blacks in the governing of their country, and, of course, the Group Areas Act. Yet the rest of the world turned a blind eye. It did not even want to know.

While that great reform programme was under way, the ANC seized the chance to institute a reign of terror in the townships, egged on by leaders such as Winnie Mandela, who actively gave encouragement to the vile crime of necklacing. As one ANC leader put it:

> "We aim to make the deaths of collaborators so grotesque that no one will risk such behaviour."

The second development that came to a head in 1986 was the international sanctions pressure—through the Commonwealth, the EEC and, most significantly, the disinvestment programme in the United States. It certainly had its effect. When I visited South Africa again for two weeks in September 1986, I saw a very different picture from the enthusiasm for reform that I had seen earlier.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Is it not a fact that the South African Government paid for the hon. Gentleman's various visits to that country? Is it not true that he and others go there quite often, and that the Government pay for their visits? Does the hon. Gentleman not realise the logic of the racialism that he is clearly defending? Hitler was a racialist, and many of us had to put down what we were doing to deal with him. South Africa attacks the nations around it, and the only concessions that it has ever made have been due to the pressures, internal and external, imposed by others who—unlike the hon. Gentleman—fight against racialism.

Mr. Gardiner: I resent the hon. Gentleman's assertion that I am not concerned in the fight against racialism; I certainly am. But let me answer his first point about how I get to South Africa. Not all of my visits have been paid for by the South African Government. In one instance, I paid my own fare out there, and the South Africa Foundation then arranged the interviews for which I had asked before I went. I see nothing wrong with accepting the offer of a foreign Government to visit their country. If I were offered the same by Zambia or Zimbabwe, I would take it up, because visiting a country increases one's knowledge of it. This debate would be a good deal better if some of those who lecture us from the Opposition Benches on what is happening in South Africa had taken the trouble to go there and investigate for themselves.

When I was in South Africa in September 1986, when all the sanctions pressure was being mooted, I saw a very different picture. The reform programme had almost been shelved, and the question asked everywhere was, "How will we survive sanctions?" The South African business men who had been the instigators of reform in previous years were forced back into defending their very existence. Meanwhile, President Botha was having to look over his shoulder at the growing strength of the Conservative party, a more Right wing-party in South Africa than the Nationalist party, and at the undoubted and growing white backlash.

I have no doubt that the achievement of sanctions has been to kill off that momentum of reform, and to put back the whole process for at least five years. Let us look at the process more closely. The first effect of sanctions pressure was to incite violence; there is no doubt about that. Blacks in the townships had been offered the mirage of a quick solution to their problems. Many saw their protest and their sacrifice as something essentially short-term—the last heave, perhaps, that was needed to gain what they wanted. How else can we explain the folly of the school strikes and the assertion that political change must come before education, when education of the blacks is essential if they are to take over more of the running of their country?

In response, the Government took emergency powers, many of which were distasteful to many of us. It must be said, however, that no Government in the world would sit back without acting against what was clearly an attempt at revolution. As Elliot Mgwena, an unemployed black dock worker from Guguleti near Cape Town, said in the *Washington Times* in December 1986:

> "We have been duped by the priests and the politicians. Tutu and Bosac made it sound like the Government would fall down as soon as there was disinvestment and sanctions. If that had happened, I would have said sanctions and disinvestment were good, but they failed to change things. All they are bringing is more suffering for us blacks."

That false hope of emancipation through violence was the most cruel deception of the South African blacks, and the sanctions lobby must take a great deal of the blame for it.

I remember the pleas of blacks and coloureds on my visit for me to exercise what little influence I have as a Member of Parliament against the sanctions policy. I remember the pleas from black leaders who had managed to keep their townships running despite death threats; from parents who had managed to organise patrols to get their children through to school; from black business men in Soweto and from Incata, which has 1,300,000 black members; and, indeed, from the agricultural workers in the Cape. The Cape contains about 250,000 people who are dependent on the fruit industry. Every time I go out to buy South African sherry and wine — not only because it is a good buy—I am very conscious that I am helping those coloured workers in the Cape, against the sanctions lobby and others in the world who seek to drive them into starvation.

Another achievement of sanctions and disinvestment has been to encourage political extremes in South Africa. On the black side, they have lent credibility to the ANC, and they have put moderates such as Chief Buthelezi on the defensive.

On the white side, they have caused a growing swing to the parties of the far Right. Many white South Africans ask, "What is the point of reform when the rest of the world still tries to drive us into extinction?" Sanctions have almost destroyed the middle ground in South African politics. However, it is only by negotiation among moderates that peace and universal suffrage will come to South Africa.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington said that we should not disparage the efforts of Commonwealth countries to achieve a form of democratic government suitable to them. I understand his point. I hope that he will extend the same tolerance to those in South Africa who are seeking to work out a democratic, power-sharing solution that is appropriate to South Africa.

We have to consider also the effect of sanctions on the outcome of the elections on 6 May. The National party stayed in much the same position, but the Liberal PFP went right down the drain and the Right-wing Conservative party became the official opposition. What a credit, what an achievement for sanctions that has been. It has obliterated the party in South Africa that was campaigning most vigorously for reform and increased support for the party that resists reform. If the sanctions and the disinvestment lobby increases its impact, I shudder to think what will happen in the next elections in South Africa.

The only way to secure black advancement is by more and better education in South Africa. There must also be better housing and better health provision. That can be brought about only by an expanding economy. It is important to encourage, not to lessen, investment in South Africa. That would help to bring about more speedily the end of apartheid. I hope that this Government will soon scrap the sanctions against investment in South Africa, because they work contrary to our Government's own goals.

There are hopeful signs in South Africa. Those of us who want black advancement to continue are encouraged by the fact that its growth rate is recovering. We have the example of the Kwa Natal Indaba, which is one of the most encouraging developments in South Africa. White and black leaders have come together to work out a multiracial state within South Africa.

Mr. Anderson: But it has been decisively rejected by the state president.

Mr. Gardiner: It has not been rejected. I was in South Africa before the election on 6 May. I dare say that I did what the hon. Gentleman has never done. I attended a rally of the National party addressed by President Botha. I had to sit through a speech of which 80 per cent. was delivered in Afrikaans, but from what he said in English he made it clear that he was not against the indaba procedure, which would be considered after the election.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock) referred to the encouraging signs from Bophuthatswana where a Government, dominated by blacks, are governing without apartheid within a free enterprise economy and are delivering the goods to their people. There is not a great deal that we can do to help the moderates in South Africa, but we should give whatever encouragement we can to Chief Buthelezi and to President Mangope, who must be part of the final moderate solution that is negotiated in South Africa.

I do not criticse my right hon. Friend the Minister for her contacts with the African National Congress. It is wise to keep a line open to an organisation that plays a part in the process even though it is such a negative part. If the Broederbond can keep open a line to the ANC, I would not deny it to my right hon. Friend the Minister. If, however, on this day of all days, the ANC has been invited to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, I think that it displays a remarkable degree of insensitivity.

I hope that when my right hon. Friend replies she will be able to tell the House a little more about that. I hope that she will say that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is to renew contacts with Chief Buthelezi and other moderate leaders when they come to this country. We must throw all our weight behind those who believe in peaceful change in South Africa. As the South Africans resume the path of reform, we must encourage them to return to the council chambers and the sports arenas of the world. If the British Government refuse to go down the destructive sanctions path, history will prove that they were both politically and morally right.

12.6 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The House owes the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) a debt of gratitude for tabling this motion. It is a call to conscience, but there have been many calls to conscience in relation to South Africa—all with too little effect. Moreover, it is a call to action, and it is to be welcomed as being a call to action that is based on the recommendations of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. It is a widely-based group that commands respect across both international and political boundaries and we should do well to listen to it.

That group went to South Africa with an open mind. It listened and it talked. Unlike the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner), it did not quaff large amounts of South African sherry as a gesture of support for those who oppose sanctions.

We have heard of toy boys. Today Conservative Members have fallen over themselves in wishing to tell the House about how often they have visited South Africa. We have heard about frequent visits and about ticket boys. The hon. Member for Reigate is a new breed of ticket boy. Not only is he a ticket boy; he is a bottle boy. We should recognise the remarkably distinctive contribution that he makes to the debate, but I hope that hon. Members will not emulate it because it would lead to disastrous results, as the quality and nature of his contribution showed.

Mr. Gardiner: I shall not bother to answer the hon. Gentleman's charge about bottle boys, but has he ever

[Mr. Gardiner]

been to Zambia, been entertained at a state banquet and discovered that one was being served generously with South African wine?

Mr. Boateng: No, I have not; but I have been to Zambia and I shall come to that point in due course.

There is a call to action that is based on the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group. The House should heed that call, because effective economic sanctions against South Africa represent for the House, the world and South Africa the last hope for a peaceful settlement of the problems that are tearing it apart. They threaten not only South Africa and Namibia but the stability and peace of the region. It is the last non-violent option. We cannot afford to disregard it, mock it or declare it to be irrelevant.

Conservative Members found difficulty with the motion of the hon. Member for Orpington because he did not specify the level of economic sanctions that should be taken against the Pretoria regime. It is true that the Eminent Persons Group, which, like the hon. Member for Orpington, has acted with great responsibility, declined to make a specific recommendation about the level of sanctions. It recognised the importance of flexibility in the response to events in South Africa. However, one matter on which we can all be united is that those sanctions should be more than the teeny-weeny level of sanctions that the Prime Minister held up to the world as being our solution to South Africa's problems when she last addressed her mind to the issue. In that one gesture—when she held up her hand — she brought the reputation of the House and Britain down to an all-time low in international relations, and that should be deprecated. No hon. Member, despite our different approaches and solutions to this problem, should take any joy out of that one teeny-weeny piece of action by the Prime Minister.

When examining this issue, we must look within South Africa and Namibia to find the glimmer of hope, the opportunity or seed for the creation of a non-racial South Africa in which it is possible for white and black to live side by side. We must look for that seed and glimmer of hope, but where shall we find them? We shall find them in the churches, where men and women, young and old and of different colours, come together to pray and worship. They come together to work for a South Africa in which men and women, black and white, can live, work and pray together in peace and harmony.

The churches hold out that hope. They present the opportunity to create a non-racial state in a multitude of ways. We have heard from Conservative Members about the importance of health care and education. Who in South Africa is holding the torch for non-racial health care and non-racial education? It is the churches; they are doing it on the ground. They, black and white together, are showing that there is a way to make a non-racial contribution to the development of that country.

What do the churches say to us about the creation of a non-racial South Africa? What do they have to say about the way forward for that land? They tell us, as they told the Eminent Persons Group, that sanctions present the last non-violent solution. They do not pretend for one moment that there will not be suffering by or damage caused to blacks as well as whites and the Pretoria regime by sanctions. They recognise that; but they recognise also that sanctions hold out a hope for peaceful change. Despite the difficult position of the churches in southern Africa, they call upon us to take that action. Theirs is a moral call — a call for black and white together. We cannot simply turn our backs on it. Honourable Members must listen and lead. Day in, day out, church members face the risk of arrest, harassment and attack for taking a stand on a non-racial South Africa. They must be heard here and in the world.

We hear the responses of the Prime Minister and some Conservative Members ruling out sanctions. This is accompanied by oft-stated concern about the importance of education in South Africa. I am sorry that the Minister of State is not here to hear me speak specifically about education, but I am sure that my remarks will be reported to her.

If the Government are to continue their obduracy on sanctions, we are entitled to ask them, "What positive and creative action are you taking to address these issues? You say that you believe that education is important and that it is important to promote in South Africa a large number of people within the majority population with the skills and qualifications to contribute to the creation of a non-racial South Africa and to bringing about a peaceful transformation in that society which you maintain you support. What are you doing practically to assist in the education of those people?"

What is the attitude of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and of the Department of Education and Science to the issue of grants to students from South Africa? What special provision is made in terms of the activities of the British Council and other agencies to enable students from townships to be educated? Conservative Members who seem almost to apologise at times for the South African regime talk a lot about the suffering in the townships. Let us talk about that and see what we can do in the House. What are we doing to bring people from the townships and rural areas here so that they can obtain educational qualifications in a non-racial setting?

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): My hon. Friend makes an important point, not least since the British Council has three offices in South Africa whereas it does not have even one in the Caribbean. There is absolutely no excuse for the actions mentioned by my hon. Friend. Is my hon. Friend aware that another aspect of the poll tax is that it will be a further burden on and further disincentive to overseas students coming to this country?

Mr. Boateng: We are entitled to an answer to that question.

It is right that we should be aware of the work of organisations such as the Canon Collins trust, which are starved of resources. Such organisations seek to build up the group of young people who so desperately need these qualifications to contribute to the creation of a non-racial South Africa. The Canon Collins trust and the defence and aid fund receive direct assistance from numerous Governments in Europe to enable them to do their important work in educating young people from southern Africa. We are entitled to ask Her Majesty's Government likewise to give assistance to the Canon Collins trust. Will the right hon. Lady meet a delegation from the trust and the churches to discuss how we may contribute practically to the development of a non-racial southern Africa?

If the Prime Minister and her Government adhere to their present line and continue to refuse to pursue a policy of sanctions, Opposition Members must and will continue to urge the Prime Minister to change her mind while at the same time demanding evidence that they are actively pursuing alternative and supplementary ways forward. When we hear an answer and see signs that the Government are, indeed, taking the issue seriously and giving it the attention that it deserves, we shall at last see a way forward to a time when this House, after years of wringing its hands and showing its conscience to all and sundry, will take positive measures to bring peace and justice to southern Africa.

12.21 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) whose approach to the debate was moderate and balanced. Let me join, too, in the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on bringing the matter before us and in the manner in which he introduced the subject. He did so in the best traditions of this House. He stated his views clearly and unequivocally and, although some of my hon. Friends may not have agreed with him, there was no varnish on anything that he said. He was clear and positive.

My hon. Friend's subject is the Commonwealth and South Africa, and for me the two are inevitably intertwined. I first went to South Africa on my way to the Commonwealth conference in 1976. I am glad to say that although I went on the Commonwealth ticket the South African Federation took me round. I suspect that I was the first parliamentarian to go into Soweto after the riots of 1976, to see the devastation in the township and understand something about apartheid. What stayed with me was not petty apartheid but the way in which 1 million people—it is now 3 million—were kept in Soweto for use in Johannesburg. There was a system of transportation to move them to Johannesburg to work but they were denied a transport system in Soweto itself. The South African Government wanted the money earned by those in Soweto to be spent in Johannesburg and so blacks were allowed to spend their money in shops in Johannesburg on certain days. However, there was no shopping centre or development in Soweto through which blacks could generate and develop their economy. That is the fundamental point. It is the way in which people are used. They are switched on like gas or electricity. They are wanted at one moment and not wanted at the next. That is the root objection to apartheid and all that it stands for.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) said that we should be objective, clear-thinking and without emotion when discussing the Commonwealth. I agree that we should try to do that with South Africa, too. The Commonwealth is a unique international institution. Apart from the United Nations, it is the only international group which brings together in a genuinely non-racial spirit representatives of the developed and developing nations in a forum for the discussion of major world issues. I agree with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that the Commonwealth is bigger than the issue of apartheid. Even though we as a nation may be isolated as a minority of one at the moment, the family is big enough, strong enough and responsible enough to conduct this debate to a more positive conclusion.

If we think clearly about the Commonwealth, it is interesting to note that Commonwealth countries still collectively account for a substantial proportion of Britain's overseas trade. For instance, in 1984, Commonwealth countries took 39 per cent. of net new outward investment by United Kingdom companies and contributed 38 per cent. of total United Kingdom earnings from outward direct investment. The comparable figures for South Africa were 2 per cent. and 5 per cent. respectively. In 1985, trade with the Commonwealth represented about 10 per cent. of total United Kingdom external trade and the figure for South Africa was 1 per cent. The United Kingdom also runs a substantial trade surplus with Commonwealth countries of £1·1 billion according to 1985 figures. When we think clearly and unemotionally about the Commonwealth, we must recognise those facts.

While I object to any suggestion that Her Majesty's representatives in Commonwealth countries are not given their proper due and position, it is important to accept that the Commonwealth is so much stronger and deeper than just Heads of State contact. From my point of view, the Commonwealth represents millions of valuable contacts over the years at all levels. It represents a common understanding. I would like to recount a small anecdote involving my recent visit to Ethiopia. I visited Dire Dawa in southern Ethiopia looking at a refugee problem. The representative of the United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees from Gambia said that they wanted to have a Commonwealth occasion. He invited me to what he described as a "Commonwealth party" in Ethiopia. He invited the Nigerian representative and other representatives of different United Nations and non-governmental organisations to a very moving and worthwhile small gathering in the outskirts of Dire Dawa. He saw that as a Commonwealth occasion. That is a sign of what the Commonwealth stands for.

I want to consider the whole question of sanctions and South Africa and the effect of those sanctions. I was lucky enough to be a member of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs during the last parliamentary Session. One of the most valuable things that we were able to achieve on the issue was to take evidence from virtually every shade of opinion possible from South Africa. We took evidence from the ANC, from Oliver Tambo. He came before the Committee even before my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, made her contact. His evidence is there for all to see. We also talked to business men and to the Opposition and in particular we spoke twice to Chief Buthelezi. We spoke to representatives of all shades of opinion within South Africa. A former Member of the South African Parliament, Dr. Denis Worrall, who sadly was not elected in the last parliamentary elections, also gave very persuasive evidence on behalf of the South African Government.

On the basis of that evidence, there is much in the Select Committee report for my colleagues to trawl if they were not fortunate enough to be members of the Select Committee. I suggest that those who have not read the evidence in the report should do so. The Select Committee must make its findings based on the evidence.

We found that there was no disagreement about objectives or about the Government's policy and objectives. No Opposition Member would disagree with that. The Government's statement reads:

[Mr. Jim Lester]

> "We seek an end to repression; the lifting of the state of emergency; the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners; full negotiations with acknowledged black South African leaders and with leaders of the other communities. We have impressed upon the South African Government the urgent need for fundamental reform to remove discrimination and to prepare the way for the establishment of a system of government which commands the support of the people of South Africa as a whole."

No one would disagree with that Government policy statement.

I have travelled frequently in South Africa, especially in black Africa, and I have found the whole issue of sanctions particularly confusing. The perceived view of the Government's policy is that there is no sanctions policy. However, that view is wrong. Some 14 sanctions are in place, some of which have existed since 1963. Whether we should have a sanctions policy is not a new argument. We have such a policy. The argument is whether we can extend that to a general economic blockade.

Both the Select Committee and the Eminent Persons Group considered this carefully and objectively and, for the same reasons, reached the conclusion that if an extension of sanctions was thought to be effective and possible we should back it, but that on the evidence it would be impossible to implement and would thus be no more than an empty moral gesture which would not have the effect that we sought. Both bodies sought to say that if anyone could find additional sanctions that would work and be effective in bringing about the transformation that we sought, we should support it and advise the Government to support it.

One must consider the purpose of sanctions. The evidence is clear that for the ANC the purpose is not to destroy the South African economy physically but to bring it to its knees and then bring about the necessary political change. In the view of the ANC, if that does not happen, violent change will physically destroy the South African economy by fire. The options are very narrow between those two. As the hon. Member for Brent, South has said, the view of the churches coincide with that.

It is therefore incumbent upon us to consider the issue of sanctions clearly and non-emotionally. The idea that they are automatically right or wrong is not the way forward. We must consider which sanctions will have an effect on public opinion in South Africa and thus bring about the change that we seek. In that sense, the Gleneagles sanction, which cost nothing, probably had a greater effect than anything else.

Since 1976, when I began to take an interest in these matters, I have seen a major change in attitude among the South African population. When I first went to South Africa, one could not mention apartheid at the university. The subject was simply not on the table. Now, I understand, it is discussed constantly by everyone in South Africa. That is a big move forward. I am told by a moderate nationalist Member of Parliament that a convention took place in the Orange Free State at which members of his party were entitled to put their views. It was not the familiar set piece convention with all parties. Each member was with a small group so that people could express their views. He said that the overwhelming view was in favour of negotiation with the black community towards a non-racial South Africa. To me, the key to that change lies in supporting those reasonable, moderate Members of Parliament. I should have liked Denis Worrall to be able to lead a new party and take away the focus from the Right-wing, reactionary element and from the President himself. Until we achieve a breakthrough in the existing Parliament, even though we disagree with its basis for being there, the move toward a non-racial South Africa will not take place.

Mr. Pike: I accept that there has been a major change of opinion among many people in South Africa, but it is regrettable that people like Graham McIntosh should lose their seats and that Wynand Malan is very much on the fringe. How does the hon. Gentleman envisage a breakthrough in the political situation, given the change of opinion among many people and the vital role of the churches to which my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) referred?

Mr. Lester: I believe that maximising contacts between Members of this House and those people in South Africa would be a marvellous step forward. We have no direct way of changing the position in South Africa. It must be changed from within. As the evidence of the ANC showed — this has been widely misunderstood — nobody wants to drive the whites out of South Africa. Their essential role and legitimate place in South African society is recognised. Moderate Members of Parliament in South Africa must feel lonely and beleagured in their current predicament. Members on both sides of this House should make it clear that we understand the situation and wish to give those parliamentary colleagues support in their struggle. That is one way in which to make the breakthrough.

The hon. Member for Brent, South talked about positive measures. The Select Committee came down on the side of positive and negative measures. We have put foward a major programme of training awards for non-white South Africans to enable them to study in Britain. Total expenditure was nearly £1 million in 1985-86, and another £15 million has been made available for the next five years to help the non-white community. I hope that the churches in South Africa will take advantage of the funds to do the things that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. In addition, there is a new Commonwealth fellowship scheme for non-white South Africans, to which scheme the Government will give £500,000 a year. The EEC declaration is designed to achieve exactly the same purpose. We are also trying to sponsor visits by South African politicians to Europe. We should like them to appear before the House and the Select Committee, test their views against the wider world and break down the laager mentality.

We wish to go further. We wish to see something like the Marshall plan in place. There is a massive requirement to improve everything to do with the black community. It is beyond the South African economy to do that now, even if South Africa wished to spend money to do so. If we could adopt the Marshall plan in a positive sense — subject only to a condition to which some of my colleagues would not agree — we would see political change and representation of the black community within South Africa, although not necessarily one man, one vote. The ANC has told the Committee that it wants to see a South African solution that is supported by all South Africans; white, coloured and black. It is up to them to have a conference and decide what sort of constitution they want.

Until such a constitutional conference takes place, all we can do is promise the sort of assistance that should come from the developed world.

I certainly would not turn my face in any way against increased sanctions, provided I am satisfied that they will be effective. I want also to expand the positive aspect. In terms of human contact and concern, the only way to prevent the ultimate disaster that all of us fear and feel hopeless to prevent is by doing the maximum that we can in the immediate years ahead. We must get the clear, unemotional thinking to which I referred.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington on bringing the matter before the House at this time. I hope that the quality of the debate and the reasoned way in which hon. Members have expressed their opinions will be heard in South Africa. I am sorry to say that it probably will not be, but it is good to think that it could be.

12.37 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I am delighted to follow the wise words of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), who is one of the most respected internationalists in the House. I join him in congratulating the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on his wisdom and political courage in bringing forward the motion. He has shown an appreciation of the value of the Commonwealth and a willingness to call apartheid what it is — an evil doctrine. It has caused much suffering within the republic and in the front-line states. He pointed to a way forward in a formula which echoes that in the conclusions of the Eminent Persons Group. The alternative — a bloodbath worse than any since world war 2 — is set out starkly in the Eminent Persons Group report.

The House of Commons has not debated South Africa since July 1986. Much has happened since that time. There has been the state of emergency and, as a result of censorship, South Africa has been removed from our headlines. To that extent, the State President has succeeded. He has a breathing space and an opportunity. I pose this question to those Conservative Members who are ever ready to act as apologists for the State President: do they seriously think that on his record he has the wisdom or the capacity to use that breathing space costructively; or, as many of my friends from both sides of the political divide in South Africa say, is he a man who is, effectively, played out? They have no confidence that any of his potential successors has the wisdom or the foresight to look beyond the narrow prejudices of the white electorate that they represent.

We have heard from Conservative Members a litany of the changes that have taken place. However, they must concede that the twin pillars of apartheid — the Population Registration Act and the Group Areas Act — remain. If hon. Members of all parties call for changes in education and housing, they must recognise the difficulties. In housing, for example, a recent survey by estate agents in South Africa showed that many thousands of houses are empty. However, in spite of the housing crisis in South Africa, those houses cannot be used because they happen to be in white only areas. Africaner friends have pointed out to me that many school buildings are empty in spite of the education problems in South Africa and they cannot be used because they too are in white areas. Therefore, the essentials of the apartheid system — the Group Areas Act and population registration — continue, despite what has been said about the State President and his political initiatives. His idea of the National Council changes in concept. Even a moderate like Buthelezi will not play until Mandela is released. So far as the Kwa Natal-Zulu option is concerned, we know that the Natal National party president and President Botha immediately rejected it. The State President has not said anything of substance to suggest that he is likely to make any serious move in that direction.

Mr. Gardiner: Since the hon. Gentleman's intervention in my speech on this point, I have looked at the documents that I have with me. Will he accept that it was on 13 August that President Botha asked for additional comments from the Kwa Natal Indaba before his Government made their views known?

Mr. Anderson: That Government, in the shape of the National party leader in Natal, made their rejection known immediately. If the hon. Gentleman were to read the speech of the State President at the opening of Parliament, he would see that no welcome was given to those proposals.

Essentially all the projected reforms are based on ethnicicity. This week the State President said that there is no black majority in South Africa because he thinks of the black people as a series of tribes. The object of the game is to preserve white power while repression and suffering continue.

I hope that I have read transcripts of all the Prime Minister's press conferences on this issue. She spits out the word "necklacing". We all abhor that practice and, indeed, the African National Congress has distanced itself from it. I hope that the Prime Minister will make a similar condemnation of, for example, the torture of children and of the kitskonstabels — "instant constables" — vigilantes who have been armed by the South African Government, who have three weeks training and who have powers of arrest and immunity from prosecution. They are unleashed on the townships and are responsible for much of the torture. Much of the so-called black on black violence arises from the so-called kitkonstabels, who are tools of the apartheid system and who seek to preserve the white power structure.

Against that repression, the Prime Minister's attitude is an economic version of constructive engagement. Conservative Members have said, "Let there be more investment." The editor of *The Round Table* calls that the "hormone weed" theory of development — in other words, the weed of apartheid will destroy itself by its own growth: the exclusive role of the whites will diminish, blacks will get into business and find top jobs and, in the fullness of time, political developments will follow. First, that has a certain neo-Marxist overtone in that as the sub-structure and economy develops, so political developments will inevitably follow investments in South Africa. But in Vancouver the Prime Minister said, en passant, that if she were an investment manager, she would certainly not advise people to invest in South Africa.

Secondly, the hormone weed theory of development does not accord with historical evidence. During the 1970s, which was a boom period for the South African economy, political reform was put on the shelf. Therefore, the idea that there is a direct relationship between economic

[Mr. Anderson]

development and political reform is simply not borne out by historical experience. Indeed, the clamps were tightened during the 1970s.

Thirdly, the idea of the inevitability of political change following economic change does not have time on its side, if only for demographic reasons. At present whites comprise one in six of the population and by the end of the century they will comprise one in eight. There will be 49 million people in the republic by the year 2000 and 79 million by the year 2020, of whom 66 million will be black. Can we seriously think that those 66 million blacks will be content wholly to be kept out of the political system? That is the position that President Botha and his friends are prepared to countenance when they talk airily about their National Council.

I regularly meet business men who have interests in South Africa. Even those who in the past have been willing to tell me, "Just wait for the next speech; things will change", are now extremely pessimistic about the capacity of President Botha, or any potential successor, to initiate meaningful change or even to consider it.

Earlier I mentioned the Prime Minister's complete disregard for the Commonwealth, shown in a series of speeches over the past decade. She seems to want to marginalise the Commonwealth, at least in her mind. Yet today's motion starts by referring to the value of the Commonwealth as a unique body bridging some of the great divides in today's world. I commend to the House Aristotle's maxim that friendship must be kept in good repair. I ask hon. Members to bear that in mind when they consider that the Prime Minister went to the Commonwealth conference in Vancouver, not with the presumption of friendship, which is the essence of the Commonwealth ideal, but determined to savage her host, the Canadian Government, by producing statistics which, although not bogus, related to a period which she knew was irrelevant because it was before Canada began to implement sanctions. She was effectively questioning the bona fides or good faith of the Canadian Government. No wonder the rest of the Commonwealth are at odds with us, as the motion states.

After Nassau two years ago, the Prime Minister insulted other members of the Commonwealth by saying that the sanctions agreed were tiny. Last year in London she said over the table to President Kaunda of Zambia, "Kenneth, how can you say that, when we give you so much aid?" Throughout, there has been an attitude of coldness and hostility towards the Commonwealth. The Government have put a ball and chain on effective sanctions by the Commonwealth, the EEC and the United Nations. They have done the minimum possible.

The Government have not sought to monitor the compliance of British business men with the voluntary investment ban; they have simply drawn the attention of the British business community to it. Indeed, they are laying out the red carpet in South Africa for the UKSATA trade visit this month. I invite the Minister to come with me to No. 1 Victoria street, the overseas division of the Department of Trade and Industry, where we would be advised on how to sell computer technology to the research arm of the South African military, how to set up joint ventures for the Mossel gas to petrol project—the whole object of which is to evade the oil embargo—and how to take advantage of USA reluctance to sell security equipment to South Africa.

But the Government, of course, want to end apartheid. They have repeatedly failed to prosecute clear breaches of the arms embargo, contrary to paragraph 6 of the Nassau agreement. For example, there was a discovery of howitzer spare parts smuggled from this country to South Africa in February 1986, but no prosecution followed. Yet the Government want to end apartheid. There was the belated and very minimal ban on the importation of Krugerrands some eight months after Nassau and the voluntary ban on tourist promotion, when the Government simply wrote two letters — one to ABTA and the other to the advertisers. When, in April, the Department of Employment was asked about non-compliance, it said:

> "We are not monitoring it. If the ban is now being broken, it would be disappointing."

Britain allowed the South African military attaché, Colonel Rob Crowther, to remain in this country against the spirit of our agreements with the Commonwealth and the EEC. The Minister and the South African Government have tried to claim that, when Colonel Crowther left the country shortly after 9 July, there was no connection between that and the arrest of Mr. Larsen; it was "simply the end of a tour of duty." We know that the close proximity of those two events and the link with the South Africans in the kidnap attempt must have had a decisive effect and the Government told Crowther that he had to go. He has now been promoted to a very senior position in the South African security establishment. Yet the Government want to end apartheid.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Is my hon. Friend aware of an organisation calling itself the Office of the South African Coal Industry, which established itself in London on 23 September? Apparently, it is to present a comprehensive insight into all the issues relating to the South African coal industry. It aims to counter the anti-apartheid movement's stand on importing coal. Is he further aware that the organisation is a slap in the face to the countries that have decided to take sanctions against South Africa, especially on coal?

Mr. Anderson: It is a piece of special pleading on behalf of a South African industry that is desperately trying to avoid sanctions because it knows that they could harm the industry and bring pressure on the Government.

The Minister must be aware that a unique position occurred at Vancouver in that, for the first time, senior Commonwealth leaders held a press conference, away from Britain, to denounce the British Government's attitude. It involved Prime Minister Hawke, Prime Minister Mugabe, President Kaunda and Prime Minister Gandhi. The toadying British press repeated the Prime Minister's official line that Vancouver was, for her, "a great triumph". The Prime Minister's press conferences are peppered with references to "they" and "them"—that undistinguished, undifferentiated mass which lacks the intellect, courage or foresight to reconise that she alone is right. I remind the Prime Minister of the views of another puritan from East Anglia who told Scottish Ministers,

> "in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."

Even Cromwell, from time to time, admitted that he was wrong, whereas our Prime Minister is always right even when the rest of the world is against her.

The Prime Minister capped it all at Vancouver by describing the ANC as "a typically terrorist organisation". She claimed that the Foreign Secretary had seen ANC representatives only in that capacity. In July 1986 the Minister wrote:

"The decision to meet Mr. Tambo was not taken lightly. . . The Government decided in favour because we firmly believe that dialogue between the South African Government and geniune leaders of the black community is essential if progress is to be made towards a settlement of South Africa's problems . . . the ANC undeniably represents an important focus for black opinion in South Africa. . . the need for dialogue between the opposing sides in South Africa has never been greater".

Since then the Foreign Office has been trying to rewrite history and to bring together the unbridgeable — the views of the Prime Minister and those of the Foreign Office, which, over the years, has been trying to build bridges between all sections of opinion in South Africa.

After the Prime Minister's postures at Vancouver, the United Democratic Front, which is dedicated to non-violent opposition, said in terms that it would not meet the British Government. Our officials have been trying constructively to build up relationships, but their attempts are being shattered by the Prime Minister's remarks.

When the news department at the Foreign Office was asked yesterday about the apparent contradiction between the Prime Minister's views and those of the Minister of State, having scurried to rewrite history, it could state only that the Prime Minister's statement represented Government policy. Perhaps the Minister could say to what extent the Government have been able to rebuild the bridges with the ANC now that Humpty Dumpty has shattered them to bits by those intemperate and immoderate remarks in Vancouver.

In her reply to me during the debate on South Africa in June last year the Minister of State said:

"we believe that the measures taken must be effective."

In the light of the record, can the Minister say that the Government are serious about making the measures effective?

In the same debate the Minister continued:

"The Eminent Persons Group called for concerted and effective Commonwealth action . . . We shall not ignore that call."

How can the Minister reconcile that with the Prime Minister's conduct in London in August last year and in Vancouver this October?

The Minister also said:

"With regard to majority rule, we cannot support a society that does not give a democratic vote to each and every one of its people."—[*Official Report*, 17 June 1986; Vol 99, c. 993-94.]

I warn her that if she continues like that she will suffer the fate of Comrade Boris Yeltsin.

By their acts of commission and omission, what are the Government doing? The current line is to divert attention from the lack of policy on South Africa by saying, "Aren't we good to the front-line states?" The Government say that we are increasing our aid to the front-line states but between 1980 and 1986 our aid to them fell even further than our overseas aid generally. That surely is only one side of the coin. How can we seek to put money into the front-line states and ignore that major state, South Africa, which is doing so much to destabilise the front-line states, and to destroy the very economies that we are trying to build up? It does not make sense. The two are different sides of the same coin.

Perhaps the Minister will rewrite some parts of her speech. She tries to throw dust in our eyes — to pretend that we can have a coherent policy towards South Africa and the front-line states while ignoring the great destabiliser which has cost South Africa more than $10 billion. She cannot have it both ways.

The Prime Minister made her points, Pretoria was delighted, and we have seen what followed. But let me ask two key questions: how much is the Prime Minister opposed to apartheid, and is she prepared to do anything about it? I would say that she is against apartheid only in the way that President Botha says that he is against it. Certainly her conduct has given aid and comfort to the friends of apartheid, both in South Africa and outside it. However, I shall concede for the sake of argument that she goes further than verbal condemnation, and wants to do something about apartheid.

The Prime Minister has a record of being in favour of sanctions against the Soviets following their occupation of Afghanistan, and against Nicaragua and Poland, but of rejecting sanctions against South Africa. But, even if there is agreement on the aim of destroying apartheid, there are honest differences about the means that are sought. The aim of sanctions is not to destroy an economy, but to bring pressure on those who can have a say, internally, in the construction of the new South Africa.

The Government's arguments appear to amount to this: sanctions do not work. That is like saying that medicine does not work when the Government prescribe only one teaspoonful, and, by their own actions, have diluted even that small teaspoonful. They have never been serious about sanctions, as the Prime Minister showed by her attempted humiliation of the Commonwealth after the Nassau summit.

I refer the Minister to the remarks made by Prime Minister Seaga of Jamaica at the Vancouver summit, where he — Harvard Business School educated, not one of the radicals in the Commonwealth — set out the current effectiveness of sanctions so far: for example, the apartheid premium that the South Africans must pay for their imports. He ended by saying that the general object had been in part achieved. There had been an effect on the standards of living. Sanctions had not brought down the South African economy, but they were doing precisely what had been hoped by at least causing the captains of industry and finance to think deeply, and to put internal pressure on the political leaders. One effect of that has been meetings between South African business men and the ANC, the "terrorist organisation" about which the Prime Minister feels so strongly.

I have tried to fathom the Prime Minister's motives, but I find her record puzzling. Paradoxically, her conduct puts her in a uniquely strong position to prevent the bloodbath predicted by the Eminent Persons Group in its report. In June 1984, she welcomed President Botha to Chequers. In August 1985, she did not hesitate to embarrass the predecessor of the Minister of State, Lady Young, following the 15 August speech of the State President — which had been so much trailed and heralded. Lady Young condemned the failure to release Nelson Mandela and expressed the disappointment of Her Majesty's Government. Immediately there was a telephone call to Lady Young from the Prime Minister's holiday retreat in Austria. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office had to revise dramatically its view. The line that was then taken was that Britain had discerned a number of positive

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features in the speech. South Africa had embarked on the process of reform. The Prime Minister did not mind about embarrassing Lady Young.

In July 1986 the Foreign Secretary forlornly set out on his mission impossible to South Africa. His aim was to rescue something from the sabotage of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. It had been torpedoed by the bombing on 19 May of the front-line states. The Prime Minister had no hesitation in sabotaging the Foreign Secretary's visit by saying that it was a pity that South Africa was no longer a member of the Commonwealth. The ANC then refused to meet the Foreign Secretary in his capacity as a representative of the EEC. By an exchange of letters it agreed to see him only as a leader of Britain, but now the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Prime Minister are trying to rewrite history by claiming that the Foreign Secretary met the ANC only in his Foreign and Commonwealth Office capacity.

I have spoken to individuals in South Africa who saw at first hand President Botha's reaction to the Prime Minister's conduct at Vancouver. I am told that he was absolutely beaming at her conduct and that he said that she was one of the greatest statesmen in the world. The white citizens of South Africa do not trust the United States. They regard the Prime Minister as perhaps their only influential friend in the world. After Vancouver, there was talk of making the Prime Minister an honorary citizen of South Africa.

However, the Prime Minister's conduct has provided her with an opportunity to play a positive role in South Africa. She has leverage. She is perceived as relating exclusively to the whites and they to her. When Harold Macmillan was Prime Minister he assured for himself a place in world history by going to Capetown in 1961, where, in a prophetic and courageous speech, he told the South African establishment about the facts of life. The Prime Minister has a similarly unique opportunity to demonstrate that our economic stake in South Africa does not place us on the side of the status quo. Nobody is better qualified than the Prime Minister to tell the South African establishment about the facts of life today.

There are few parts of the world where Britain can play a decisive role, but surely this is one of them. The Prime Minister has leverage, but is she prepared to use it constructively? If she rejects economic sanctions, she should use other means of shock therapy to tell the whites that they must not continue with their present policies. However, the Prime Minister's signals thus far have been all one way. She has signalled to the whites that she is on their side.

It is 25 years since South Africa left the Commonwealth. Why is the no-visa agreement between this country and South Africa still in existence? The ending of the no-visa agreement would not be costly and it would be a positive signal to the white minority in South Africa. The Prime Minister could assure herself a decisive place in history if she grasped this opportunity.

An old order is dying in South Africa. A great Conservative statesman of the past, Edmund Burke, showed that he had the vision and sensitivity to see beyond the issues of the moment. I shall paraphrase what he said about France 200 years ago. Is the Prime Minister so dazzled by the plumage, the Randgold, the strength of the military and security apparatus, the short-term business and trade advantages, that she forgets the dying and rotten bird?

1.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) for the opportunity to discuss this all-important subject. We have heard many interesting speeches, and may I commend in particular the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), from whom we heard a few moments ago. Sadly, the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) repeated much Labour party mythology, which is not based on fact or reason.

I shall start this important subject, as my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington did, by talking about the Commonwealth. It is a vital part of the coming together of views across the world. I restate the British Government's full support for the Commonwealth and remind the House of the objectives of our Commonwealth membership: the maintenance and reinforcement of the continuing strong links at all levels between member states and their peoples; the continued support for the Commonwealth as an organisation that can play a constructive and stabilising role in world affairs, notably in promoting democratic principles, international understanding and world peace; the development of the Commonwealth as a unique challenge for encouraging co-operation and understanding between the industrialised and developing countries; and the maximisation of the political and economic benefits of our Commonwealth membership. None of us would disagree with those objectives that were set out in the House by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in July 1986.

I remind the House of the nature of the Commonwealth. It is a deliberative not an executive organisation. That is best demonstrated by quoting the 1971 Singapore declaration of principles, which said:

> "A voluntary association of independent sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and cooperating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace."

The Commonwealth is an organisation of great diversity. That diversity, as you and I know from Commonwealth parliamentary conferences, Madam Deputy Speaker, is one of its great strengths. It does not and cannot tell its members what to do. Countries do not join the Commonwealth because they agree with everything that it says or does, but come together to try to find common solutions, although they accept that on some occasions there may not be any. They join together because it is a worthwhile framework in which to co-operate. As the Commonwealth Secretary-General once said, it

> "cannot negotiate for the world, but it can help the world to negotiate."

It is in that spirit that we should approach the matter.

The Government believe that the Commonwealth is an effective and practical organisation. We do not seek to direct or lead it, but we aim to play an active role in it and participate fully in its activities.

Let us examine the Commonwealth meetings in which we have recently played a most active part. In the past few months, in addition to the Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver, which was attended by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, we have had three major events. The noble Baroness, the Lady Hooper, attended the Commonwealth Education Ministers' meeting in Nairobi. I shall return to the results of that meeting when I talk about the Vancouver conference. My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) led the British team at the meeting of Ministers for Women's Affairs in Harare. I was honoured to lead the British delegation to the Commonwealth parliamentary conference in Kuala Lumpur in September. There are many other Commonwealth Parliamentary Association functions, and, as I said at its annual general meeting this week, they all have full Government support.

We shall continue to support the Commonwealth in practical and financial ways. The United Kingdom remains the largest single contributor to the budgets of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation—£2·5 million in the current financial year. We are glad to provide accommodation for the secretariat and the foundation at Marlborough house in London and nearby. With Canada, Britain provides the greater part of the budget for the Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation. When the Secretary-General told us earlier this year that he was having difficulty in persuading some member countries to meet their pledges, we were glad to promise £7·5 million, as against the usual formula of 30 per cent. of total contributions, to encourage others to follow our lead.

We fund the Commonwealth Institute—some £2·7 million this year—which is a unique showcase in central London for all the Commonwealth. That valued centre for Commonwealth activity draws on inputs from a wide range of countries. It is a good example of the informal Commonwealth co-operation that goes on at many different levels.

Seventy-five per cent. of the total United Kingdom expenditure on scholarships for overseas students—some £60 million in the last financial year—goes to students from Commonwealth countries. I shall return later to the point made by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) about education. We are pledged to increase this sum. I cannot overstate the value of shared education at school or university. I benefited from having friends of different nationalities in my school. I know that it forges common bonds and encourages an instinctive turning to British methods, products and services when those students become leaders in their countries.

What makes the Commonwealth special is its spirit. It is more than a set of multilateral institutions. There are four ways in which the Commonwealth continues to occupy a unique position. First, it forges links between peoples. The network of societies, organisations and institutions with a Commonwealth label must be the widest in the world. Societies and organisations which choose to co-operate in the Commonwealth framework also enjoy shared common traditions, especially in the education sector and in the approach to voluntary organisations. Together they build a web of personal contacts around the world.

The range is almost infinite. Last year we were glad to welcome the Commonwealth parliamentarians to London for their 75th anniversary meeting. This year surveyors—the Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy—met in London to pool their experience across five continents. In September, the Prince of Wales opened the new headquarters for the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International in Wallingford—a Commonwealth institution based in Britain but providing expertise worldwide.

Secondly, the Commonwealth is a stabilising influence in a troubled world. It is a unique mixture of nations, members and races from all continents of the globe and it covers the full spectrum of humanity. I have no doubt of the value of the Commonwealth's contribution in alleviating some of the world's most pressing problems. The Commonwealth has rightly focused attention in its meetings on problems of security, both economic and political, of small states. Over half our Commonwealth members have a population of less than 1 million, so the Commonwealth is uniquely well placed to examine the problems of those small states. The Commonwealth also helped in a stabilising way at the difficult time of the change to independence in Zimbabwe. The Commonwealth Observer Group was there to see fair play, acceptable to all the parties involved. In the current negotiations in Geneva on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade the Commonwealth has a small team to provide help to ensure that the interests of the smaller countries are not overlooked by the big battalions.

The third way in which the Commonwealth is so valuable is in its link between the developing and the developed world. For evidence we need look no further than the broad agreement and the unity of purpose between the developed and the developing nations at the recent Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. Together, small and large countries, developing and developed, poured out ideas and suggestions to solve common problems.

The Commonwealth also provides the major framework for the United Kingdom aid programme. About 75 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid—some £700 million in 1986—goes to Commonwealth countries and that is supported by 30 per cent. of multilateral aid. The Commonwealth fund for technical co-operation is another unique development agency. It finds experts to fill gaps at short notice. Often experts from one Commonwealth developing country go to work in another—the Indian ophthalmologist in Guyana and the public health officer from Bangladesh working in St. Vincent. Those experts are helping one another with their first-hand experience of the problems of the developing countries.

The fourth way in which the Commonwealth is effective is in its support for national policies. Thus there was total endorsement of the British position on Afghanistan and Cambodia at the Vancouver meeting. The Commonwealth countries together made clear the unacceptability of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan and the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. The Commonwealth countries welcomed progress in the Geneva talks on reducing intermediate-range nuclear weapons—the essential next stage in reducing tensions between East and West. The countries are completely united in trying to achieve a better world. I am proud that over the years the Commonwealth countries have made decisions that have helped each other and I am especially grateful for Commonwealth support over the independence of Zimbabwe and over Belize. That is what the Commonwealth is all about. It is special in that it forges links between people of every creed, colour and race and brings a stabilising influence into a troubled world as well

[Mrs. Lynda Chalker]

as forming links between the developing and the developed world. Thank goodness that the Commonwealth countries are mutually supportive.

We have heard much during the debate about the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver. It was a successful meeting. Some hon. Members have focused on the differences, and that is only to be expected. However, the areas of agreement were much more extensive than the areas of disagreement. The conference witnessed some real achievements and I agree with the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) who quoted the words of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Sir Sonny Ramphal, on this point. In Vancouver there was an important declaration on world trade. The Commonwealth demonstrated its united opposition to protectionism and its commitment to an open, multilateral trading system, and to the reform of world agriculture policies. There was a valuable expression of commitment to the GATT and to progress in the current Uruguay round. The Commonwealth sent a helpful political signal to the GATT negotiators in Geneva that developed and developing countries can find common ground on an issue such as this. We shall work with other members to ensure that the commitment is turned into reality because it should significantly enhance the prospects for the outcome of the Uruguay round.

The Commonwealth decisions on distance learning were also significant. I referred earlier to the noble Baroness who led the Commonwealth Education Ministers' conference in Nairobi. Distance learning is an imaginative and valuable project to help meet the educational needs of member countries. Several hon. Members including my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) placed great emphasise on that. I pay tribute to the Commonwealth secretariat and Lord Briggs and his committee for the impetus that they gave to distance learning. Much detailed work remains to be done and with our wide experience of the Open University and the Open College we in Britain have much to contribute.

A third feature of the Vancouver meeting which has received very little press attention is endorsement of the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on sub-Saharan African debt, which my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe considers to be a fundamental necessity in helping the developing nations. We have suggested the writing-off of outstanding official debt for the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The United Kingdom has already written off £100 million. It has also been suggested that the repayment and grace periods should be extended and that interest rates should be reduced on debts rescheduled through the Paris club, which includes most creditor countries. That is one of the most vital steps ever taken to assist the economies of developing nations and I hope that it will be welcomed by the Commonwealth and worldwide.

I now want to consider the one issue that worries us more than any other—South Africa. The major political agenda item at Vancouver was bound to be southern Africa. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister outlined the result of the meeting in her statement to the House on 22 October. I want first to deal with the vexed and terrible problem of apartheid.

As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear in Vancouver, apartheid is a repulsive and detestable system. It must go and it must go as soon as possible. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington and his hon. Friends worry about double standards. I understand their worries and am not oblivious to what they have said. However, I can state that South Africa is not the only country in which there is racial discrimination. Of course there are others. However, the difference is that South Africa regards itself, and wishes to be regarded, as forming part of Western society and upholding civilised values. Yet South Africa is unique in institutionalising racial discrimination at almost every level of society and government. Despite the reforms of recent years—which of course we welcome—the basic structures of apartheid remain intact. The whole international community, including the United Kingdom and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, rightly find that abhorrent.

Let no one doubt the sincerity of our determination to see apartheid ended. We oppose apartheid root and branch, just as we oppose abuses of human rights wherever they occur. Apartheid must go and it must be replaced by a non-racial, representative system of government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington's motion refers to Britain being out of step with the rest of the Commonwealth. I understand my hon. Friend's frustration and I understand what he is trying to say. However, I must argue about his interpretation. We are totally opposed to apartheid. At Vancouver there were broad areas of unanimity on a common approach to this appalling problem. Everyone at Vancouver agreed that apartheid is repugnant and must be ended and replaced by a non-racial representative system of government. Everyone agreed that fundamental change should be brought about by peaceful means through negotiation between the South African Government and freely chosen leaders of the black community. Everyone agreed on the need for outsiders to do what they can to help to bring the parties in South Africa to the negotiating table and all endorsed the approach outlined by the Eminent Persons Group of the Commonwealth in its negotiating concept—that the parties in South Africa, but principally the South African Government, should take a series of steps designed to create a climate for dialogue in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. Everyone also agreed on the vital importance of assistance to the victims of apartheid in South Africa and on an enhanced programme of Commonwealth aid for the neighbouring countries within the region in order to reduce their economic and transport dependence on South Africa.

In all these areas, Britain has taken a leading role for positive change within the Commonwealth, bilaterally and in other fora. Again and again the British role is acknowledged and was acknowledged by a large number of Commonwealth Heads of Government in Vancouver and in bilateral meetings. They know that we want positive change in South Africa and are determined to help try to bring that about. We shall continue to put these measures at the forefront in all our international efforts to promote peaceful change in southern Africa. That is what we are determined to see and that is what we are working for.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister seriously contending that Britain was not at odds with all other members of the Commonwealth? Has she not read the communiqué? It is peppered with statements such as:

> "With the exception of Britain, we believe that economic and other sanctions have had a significant effect"

and:

> "with the exception of Britain"

the conference believed that

> "genuine efforts should be made to secure the universal adoption of the measures".

Is she unaware that, with the exception of Britain, the conference set up a standing committee of eight Commonwealth Ministers?

Mrs. Chalker: If the hon. Gentleman had waited a couple of minutes he would have heard my comments on those issues. Let me tell him here and now that there was no difference of opinion about the ends. Yes, we disagreed on the means, but there was no disagreement about the ends. In all my talks with leaders of African countries in nearly two years, I have never had a disagreement about the ends, only about the means. The views of those leaders are interesting and are, indeed, changing as a result of experience.

On the vexed subject of sanctions, of course there are differences and no one seeks to hide them. I was glad that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber accepted that there are practical problems of implementing measures, whatever those measures may be. The reasons why the United Kingdom Government oppose punitive economic sanctions are well known. What happened at Vancouver was that the Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed to disagree. That was to be expected. No one with any knowledge of what was going on in the Commonwealth in the preceding weeks and months could have predicted otherwise. I regret very much that so much media attention has been directed at that aspect, to the exclusion of the positive achievements which achieve so much more for Commonwealth citizens. That is why I have sought to spell out those achievements at length today.

The Government accept that the majority of the Commonwealth, although by no means all other members of it, continue to favour the principle of punitive economic sanctions. We do not question the sincerity of those Governments' beliefs. Nor do we seek to prevent them from pursuing such a policy, although we regard it as a cul de sac and possibly a dangerous one for those countries.

The House should note that we have been scrupulous in implementing all the restrictive measures which have been agreed in the Commonwealth, the Twelve and the United Nations. If there is any validity in what the hon. Member for Swansea, East has said, I shall take action on it, but I do not believe that there is. Our measures have been designed to send a political signal to the South African Government, not to destroy the South African economy. I believe that this House will agree with all those black South Africans who say that they have no wish to inherit an economic desert. That is what we seek to avoid, at the same time as bringing about an end to apartheid.

The House should also note that while there was majority agreement at Vancouver to seek to tighten and extend the application of existing measures, not one Commonwealth country gave any undertaking for further measures. I believe that that reflects the growing awareness of the complexities of the issue and the changing appreciation of what has been going on.

If we respect the sincerity of others' views on sanctions, as we do, we ask them to respect the sincerity of ours. I wish to nail once and for all a pernicious myth that has been fostered by those who disagree with, or fail to understand, the Government's policy. It is a totally false equation to argue that to oppose apartheid means that one must support punitive economic sanctions and that opposition to sanctions amounts to support for apartheid. Sanctions are only one means by which some people believe that apartheid can peacefully be ended. It is far more complicated than that.

The Government do not agree with the comments on sanctions, but our views are just as deeply held as those of countries which espouse the cause of punitive economic sanctions. Our views are shared by many leading South African opponents of apartheid. We all know the views of Helen Susman, Alan Paton, Chief Buthelezi, and many others besides. The evidence that we have seen over the past year, which is causing a change of mind, is clear.

The implementation by some countries of punitive economic sanctions has been ineffective. Attitudes in South Africa towards genuine negotiations have changed; they have hardened. We need only to look at the result of the 6 May whites-only election to see that. It is also clear that punitive sanctions would hurt those whom they are intended to help. There is a growing understanding in the Commonwealth and elsewhere of the implications of such punitive sanctions for the black population in South Africa. I shall give two or three examples.

In the deciduous fruit industry, as a result of the United States' sanctions, about 30,000 seasonal contract labourers in the pear, grape and apple industries were not called up this year. Such job losses affect an estimated 150,000 dependants. In the hard rock lobster industry, again the United States' prohibition on the importation of food has affected 75 per cent. of South Africa's lobster exports and 50 per cent. of the industry's sales. What has that done? It has cut back opportunities in the market and affected the poorly educated and the geographically isolated black fishermen in the industry whose income levels have been severely cut and who have no alternative employment.

I can go on and give examples in the fish processing and coal industries in which such measures are affecting black and white alike. They are doing nothing for the economic future of South Africa, which black people will indeed govern. That is why I feel strongly about the matter. I shall say the same thing to the hon. Member for Swansea, East from the Opposition Back Benches as I say from the Government Dispatch Box today. Punitive sanctions would make for economic stagnation, not economic collapse, in South Africa. It is important to recognise that fact. Such conditions would not be conducive to peaceful change. On the contrary, in modern economic conditions, economic development and the consequent expansion of black influence will bring an inevitable erosion of apartheid. Many black leaders recognise that fact. I have told the House before that, in July 1986, Oliver Tambo himself told me that the ANC had no wish to inherit an economic wasteland. The front-line states are increasingly aware of the difficulties of applying sanctions. They know that they would not be in the interests of the people of the region. I hear that again and again in my travels. I do not

[Mrs. Chalker]

deny that the United Kingdom, unlike many proponents of sanctions, has significant national interests in southern Africa. It is true that sanctions would damage them. But what sort of Government would damage national interests in pursuit of a misconceived policy? That is what I believe it would be.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It would be a Labour Government.

Mrs. Chalker: Indeed, a Labour Government.

That is not the reason to oppose punitive economic sanctions. The reason for opposing them is the unremitting harm that they would do to black people all over southern Africa, and, indeed, white people.

We have heard much in the debate about British strategy. The Government have sought a vital and constructive alternative strategy. We believe that it is the one that is best calculated to advance the cause of change. We are dedicated to advancing the cause of change. We must all accept, with the deepest regret, that change will be a long haul. It will not happen tomorrow. South Africa is not on the brink of cataclysm. Violence will not work and I believe that the violent path will prove longer than the peaceful one. Peaceful change can come only when all parties in South Africa are working for it. For progress, both sides must see the need for negotiation in their own and the common interest. That is what we must achieve, but that point has not yet been reached. To that extent, it may not be too late for negotiation as some would say, but it may, sadly, be too early.

Another point that is vital to South Africa's future is that outsiders cannot impose the solution. Yes, outsiders have a duty to take a pragmatic and realistic view and to do what they can to encourage improvements in South Africa. However, we must be patient about the way in which we do that. There are many brave people of all colours and creeds in South Africa who are leading the way on both sides. I am thinking of the importance of the Dakar meeting between the representatives of IDASA and the ANC, which I heard about from President Diouf when I was in Senegal. I think too of the brave work done over many years by Helen Suzman. There are many more examples.

I turn now to the vexed question of contacts with the African National Congress, which I know troubles some of my hon. Friends. When she spoke in the House on 22 October my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it quite clear that we take strong exception to the sorts of threats that were issued against British firms at Vancouver. We said then, we have always said, and we shall continue to say, that we condemn all acts of violence in South Africa and in southern Africa from whatever quarter they may come. That means that violence, whether by the ANC or other black people and organisations, hardens attitudes. There is no doubt that violence by the ANC hardens white attitudes and delays dialogue and peaceful settlement. That is why we do not believe that it is in the ANC's interest to become identified with other three-letter organisations such as the IRA or ETA.

We understand how people have come to think that they have no option other than violence. However, we must advise them that violence will not bring closer the end of apartheid.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. Will she make it clear that when she referred to other organisations she included the South African Government as one of the organisations that are committing acts of violence?

Mrs. Chalker: Of course, we oppose violence from the South African defence forces or from any other body. I have said that on many occasions in the House. Our opposition to the use of violence by the South African Government inside South Africa and cross-border violence by the South African defence forces is well known outside the House. However, I am glad to repeat it now. In fact, that would have been my next sentence when my hon. Friend intervened. We shall continue to make that clear to the South African Government.

We understand that the African National Congress undoubtedly enjoys considerable support from many black people in South Africa. We continue to call for it to be unbanned. However, we also say that the ANC is by no means the sole representative of black opinion. Many black leaders in South Africa, including Chief Buthelezi, and the United Democratic Front support the principle of peaceful change. In our efforts to achieve peaceful change, we believe that dialogue is vital. That has been one of our reasons for having contacts with the ANC. We sought to persuade it that violence is not the right approach. At the same time, we have argued consistently that the ANC should be unbanned and that Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners should be set free to create a climate for dialogue in the context of the suspension of violence from all sides. Those were the objectives of the Nassau communiqué of 1985, which was re-endorsed at the Marlborough house meeting in August last year and again at the Vancouver Heads of Government meetings.

I understand why some of my hon. Friends are anxious about ANC meetings and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate for his comments. But I believe that it is right that officials continue from time to time, as may be necessary, to meet ANC representatives. The question of further meetings with Ministers at present is entirely hypothetical. They would require careful consideration at the time and in the light of the circumstances. I assure the House that none of these decisions is taken lightly.

Meetings happen as and when necessary. This morning's meeting was at the request of the ANC. The request was made before it was known that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington had been successful in the ballot and that we would have this debate today. We simply kept to the arrangements made. I understand that the ANC wished to express its anxiety about security in the light of the charges being dropped in the so-called ANC kidnap case, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General covered in the House in his statement on 23 October.

We use every such occasion to urge the ANC to forswear violence and we shall continue to do so, but we understand black frustrations. Violence, however, only makes dialogue and change more difficult by hardening white attitudes. This morning's meeting was low key and courteous. I understand that the ANC did not raise the outcome of the Vancouver conference, nor the Prime Minister's criticism of it, nor sanctions, nor Her Majesty's Government's overall policy. Working meetings can help us towards better understanding and that is why they take place.

Mr. Stanbrook: In my view of what my right hon. Friend said, will she confirm that there is no objection in principle to Ministers meeting the ANC?

Mrs. Chalker: The question of Ministers meeting the ANC is purely hypothetical at present. If and when requests are made we shall consider the facts at the time. Obviously when my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was President of the Council of the European Community he met Mr. Tambo. I met him in the summer of 1986 and other leaders have also had meetings. That is purely because we wish to pursue dialogue to bring about peaceful change in South Africa. That is what it is all about.

Apart from seeking to bring about dialogue, there are other steps that we can and should take. That is why the United Kingdom has continued to try to help bring about change positively and practically. We are not prepared to stand aloof from what is happening in South Africa. We see change there, but we see that it needs a great deal of encouragement because it is happening too slowly. Some South Africans are, indeed, showing themselves more receptive to new ideas. That means that we must talk to all sides and not cut off links. We must encourage the men of peace among the opposition and support the neoliberals in the new Afrikaaner generation — they are there, but they need to be helped to have a positive influence.

We shall continue to put pressure on the South African Government for fundamental change, but it is often most effective when we bring pressure to bear in private. We shall work both in public and in private. We shall continue to carry out scrupulously the limited measures against South Africa which we previously agreed to take as a signal of our serious desire for progress. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear at Vancouver, we shall continue to give our support to the negotiating concept, first suggested by the Eminent Persons Group, which we regard as the most effective way to promote the dialogue needed for fundamental change by peaceful means. We shall continue to press for the release of Nelson Mandela and political prisoners, and for an end to the ban on the ANC and other political parties in the context of the suspension of violence on all sides. We shall continue to make representations for detainees, particularly children, for whose detention there is no excuse. We shall continue to use our influence to encourage the South African Government to continue the process of legislative reform.

In order to promote internal forces for change in South Africa we shall continue to give practical assistance to black South Africans. Here I turn to some of the points made by the hon. Member for Brent, South, but I shall write to him more fully about the issues that I cannot cover in the debate today.

Since 1979, we have been offering training for a future in which all South Africans will have their rightful share. In July last year we announced an expanded training programme of assistance. Over five years, some £12 million will cover 80 undergraduate scholarships each year for study in Britain and for training and other activities in South Africa. This year we are sponsoring 280 non-white South African students, and next year the figure will rise to 400. We have begun, and intend to continue, that process. Under the 1987 European Community budget, £14·5 million has been allocated to aid black South Africans, and Britain's share of that is £2·9 million.

Our programme of economic and security allowance to South Africa's neighbours is also substantial, and it is part of the whole. We shall continue to support the efforts of the South African Development Co-ordination Conference to reduce the economic and transport dependence of front-line states on South Africa. That is why since SADCC was formed we have contributed £819 million in bilateral aid to SADCC states, £35 million to SADCC projects for vital transport and research; a bilateral training programme under which 1,300 people from the region are currently studying in Britain. In addition, £103 million is being given to SADCC and its members between last year and 1990 through the European Community, plus a fifth of the cost of EEC food aid to the region. That is how Britain is showing its seriousness in trying to bring about change in South Africa, and it is valued by the recipients. It does not, in itself, constitute a policy for ending apartheid, but it is an important plank in a broad platform of pressure, advocacy, aid and assistance. The aid to the front-line states gives a strong message to the South African Government, when they see the economic independence of their neighbours increasing all the time.

The fact that there is change in South Africa is welcome, but it is slow and difficult. There is some hope, I am glad to say, but we need, on all sides, to be realistic. We need realism among white South Africans, among black South Africans and among outsiders. It is no good having some hypothetical way of proceeding; it must be a practical and a step-by-step progression towards ending apartheid. We must work together for what is attainable. This Government intend to do just that. To concentrate on the differences of approach benefits only those who would not wish to see that change come about. Britain wants change, the Commonwealth wants change. We want the end of apartheid just as soon as we can help South Africans to achieve it. But it will only be by achieving it within South Africa that it will be effective, and we shall only be effective, as my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington wishes, if we can persuade the South African Government to initiate and carry through a process of dialogue to establish a non-racial representative system of government. That is our aim, and all that we do is to that end.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. We have very little time remaining and a number of hon. Members are trying to catch my eye. I appeal to hon. Members to be generous with each other and take only a few minutes. In that way, I can call everyone.

1.53 pm

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): I am indebted to the hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) for bringing this good motion before the House. It is a pity that there are not more hon. Members, from both sides of the House, in the Chamber, either to take part in the debate or to listen to it. I am particularly pleased with the words in the motion stating that the House

"regards with sympathy and understanding the efforts of poorer members of the Commonwealth to raise standards of life, liberty and government for all their citizens; pledges its

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> support for a high level of trade and economic aid, within the Commonwealth; regrets that the United Kingdom appears to be out of step with all other members of the Commonwealth on the subject of sanctions against South Africa."

The motion's expressions of sympathy for the problems facing poorer members of the Commonwealth are particularly relevant.

The tendency among Government Members is to blame black people and black nations for their plight. I do not think that black people can be blamed. I believe that the way in which the western world has dealt with black Commonwealth nations caused the problem. It is wrong for Government Members to blame the victims.

I am entitled to speak on behalf of black people in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the world, as is my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), but I do not think that the Prime Minister is entitled to speak on behalf of black people, as she attempts to do. I do not believe that the hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) is entitled to do that either. References to kith and kin in South Africa are disgraceful, particularly since that was a major issue at the time of the Rhodesian troubles. Government Members should be careful about how they approach the issues.

The Minister said that more areas of agreement than disagreement emerged from Vancouver. That is true, but the one area of disagreement was so large and so profound that it totally obliterated the areas of agreement.

The problems for southern Africa, and South Africa in particular, are of such magnitude that I need to hear more than I have heard today to ease my fears. The Minister said that apartheid was repulsive and detestable and that it had to go—soon. I am in no position to judge whether people's intentions are honourable. I do not know whether the Prime Minister is really against apartheid. I am not prepared to get involved in that argument. All that I can do is to look at the facts.

First, there seems to be a problem about freeing black people in South Africa. Tremendous strides have been taken in combating racism all over the world. That is true in the United States of America where, among other things, there are now in Congress about 30 black men and women. Tremendous strides have been taken in the United Kingdom. We now have four black Members of Parliament. However, there is not a single elected black person in South Africa. The Minister nods in agreement. It is a major problem.

Black people in South Africa and throughout the world are not prepared to sit back and wait until white people decide that the time is right for them to vote in a free South Africa. That is no longer palatable to black people. The Minister says that change takes time, but the majority of black people are not prepared to accept that. The Minister described sanctions as a cul-de-sac and talked about the sincerity of the Government's policy. She said that blacks suffered under sanctions. Black people, through their legitimate organisations—those that are allowed to exist in South Africa—have said consistently that they are prepared to sacrifice their jobs, or make other sacrifices, to ensure that they get their rights. The Minister quoted Oliver Tambo as saying that he did not want to inherit a bankrupt South Africa, or words to that effect. What she did not tell us was that he also said that he supported sanctions as a means of bringing the Government to heel, and ensuring that the economy was not ruined.

I was pleased to hear the Minister condemn violence by the South African Government and defence forces. I asked the Prime Minister about that. It is a pity that she does not come to the House and say what the Minister has said. Why cannot she do that? Why will she not? As far as I am aware, the Prime Minister has never condemned the violence of the Botha regime by name. She has never said, "I condemn the Botha Government for their violence towards black men, women and children in South Africa, Namibia and the rest of southern Africa", and I believe that she never will. However, I challenge her to make such a statement to the House in due course, and I give her fair warning that I shall return to the matter constantly.

Mr. Boateng: My hon. Friend will not be alone.

Mr. Grant: I thank my hon. Friend for his support.

As a new Member, I am sometimes rather confused. The Government say that they are against sanctions. Then the Minister this morning says, in a very liberal way, that people can choose their own paths; if some countries wish to apply sanctions, so be it, we will not interfere. But the Government's record is different. Things do not seem to match.

I am on the Standing Committee considering the Local Government Bill, clauses 17 and 18 of which will force local authorities that have refused for the past 27 years to have anything to do with firms that have links with South Africa to accept its goods and services, and to give contracts to South African companies and firms with major links with that country. Local government throughout the land—Labour, Conservative and alliance—all have policies of refusing to use South African goods and products. Indeed, I was told that in the answer to a question that I put in the House. Those two clauses, however, will change the position.

Let me briefly refer to a matter that causes me grave concern. The Secretary of State for the Environment has attempted to justify taking away the powers of local government in the following words:

> "already more than 40 authorities impose contract conditions relating to links with South Africa. Too many councillors seem to find it more fun to play at national politics at their ratepayers' expense than to deal with the real local challenges and problems."

That is crass ignorance, and it is an insult to local authorities. The Secretary of State is saying that, by not buying South African goods, we are playing politics and making fun of people.

Local authorities do not use South African goods because they have been produced by the blood, sweat and tears of black men, women and children. When British companies bring huge profits back to Britain, they do so on the basis of black people having spilled their blood for slave labour wages and of black people being moved around the country at the whim of their employers and the Government. Because they are humanitarian, local authorities are not prepared to use those products. They realise that for those products to be on our tables, black people have suffered. The hon. Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) boasts that he drinks South African sherry. That is an insult to the House, but it is even more of an insult to those who have been killed and maimed by producing such goods.

This has been a fairly low key debate. A number of hon. Members believe that this subject is being dealt with too lightly. We must be realistic. We must deal with the problems in the system.

The Government have said nothing so far about the mini war that took place recently in Angola. The South African Government stated publicly that they sent their forces into Angola to fight alongside UNITA against the forces of the Angolan Government. In an editorial today, *The Guardian* mentions the episode and condemns the South African Government for their role in that war. It says that the military situation in South Africa is growing worse, and continues:

> "it can only be a matter of time before the balance tilts and the MPLA becomes the first front-line government in southern Africa to give Pretoria a bloody nose for its constant destabilisation of the region in forward defence of apartheid. It is the only language Pretoria can be made to understand so long as it believes might is right."

The Guardian is a moderate newspaper, and those words are relevant. We can talk calmly, without the fear of violence, but that is not so in South Africa.

South Africa is referred to a great deal, but we hear little about Namibia, even though the situation in Namibia is worse than it is in South Africa. Namibia is illegally occupied by 100,000 South African troops. There are tales of rape, torture, mutilation and looting by the South African forces. British firms have exploited for years the mineral wealth of Namibia. They have used the forces of the South African Botha racist régime to ensure their profits through the exploitation and the blood of the Namibian people.

United Nations resolution 435 calls for the removal of the South Africans from Namibia. I understand that Britain refuses to adopt a serious stance on this issue.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman must retract that remark. The United Kingdom has fully supported United Nations resolution 435 ever since it was debated, and we continue to believe that it should be implemented without any preconditions. We fully agree that external forces, wherever they come from, should withdraw from Namibia and Angola, but resolution 435 is on the United Nations resolution list with our full support.

Mr. Grant: What steps have we taken to implement resolution 435? Is it true that the Government have used their blocking powers to veto the resolution? I give way to the Minister so that she can clarify that point. She refuses to do so.

Mr. Anderson: In the Security Council the Government have frequently alone vetoed any attempt to put some bite into resolutions on Namibia.

Mr. Grant: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that clarification.

Regardless of what I or Conservative Members think, the position in Namibia and South Africa must change. The forces of history will ensure that that change occurs.

I want to be as positive as I can about this desperate situation. The way forward is through discussion with the ANC and other groups. I note that business people have decided that the way forward is to speak to the ANC and to bring it into discussions. I was pleased that the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) mentioned that the ANC wants a democratic South Africa that is free from racism and where black and white people can live together in harmony. We all support that aim, but the problem is in achieving it. We should not kow-tow to the South African Government or give them an easy time. We must ensure that serious, hard sanctions are implemented so that that regime can be brought swiftly to an end.

2.12 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng) rather lowered the tone of the debate, which has been argued in a reasonable and honourable manner. Some of his remarks were regrettable and inaccurate.

Mr. Boateng: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) should learn how to tell us one from the other. I think that he is referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant); I am the hon. Member for Brent, South.

Mr. Carlisle: I shall embarrass the hon. Member for Brent, South further by saying that I enjoyed his speech; he spoke a lot of sense and his points should be noted.

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Gentleman should say no more; I take it all back.

Mr. Carlisle: The hon. Member for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) made a characteristically robust speech, which we have all come to expect from him. The picture that he painted of South Africa and southern Africa belies the truth. He may have fuelled a few flames that have at last begun to die down in this rather sorry place.

As to the hon. Gentleman's comment about local government and contracts — I am aware that he is on the Standing Committee on the Local Government Bill — I was surprised by his boast that Labour councils did all that they could to avoid buying South African goods. He was upset that a clause prohibiting such action may be inserted in the Bill. Perhaps he will enlighten me on what he thinks about the Labour-controlled Watford borough council developing the centre of that fine town — I am indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) for this information — in partnership with, I am told, massive South African investment. That money was borrowed freely on the market — money resulting, in the words of the hon. Member for Tottenham, from the blood, sweat and tears of the black people in South Africa. But that Labour council unashamedly borrowed that cash and invested it in the centre of Watford.

Mr. Bernie Grant *rose* —

Mr. Carlisle: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman because he did not give way to me. I was in Watford not long ago. I am delighted for that fine town and for my hon. Friend the Member for Watford, who will obviously benefit from the investment in his town. I am delighted at the council's foresight and pay tribute to it for borrowing the money on the most competitive market.

Like my colleagues, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) on his choice of subject, but the wording of his motion was somewhat unfortunate. We have the greatest respect for his great knowledge and experience of African affairs, especially of Nigeria. I admire my hon. Friend for his "courage", as the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) described it, in bringing this subject before the House. We should discuss it but the motion was inaccurate. It fell into the

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same trap into which the hon. Member for Tottenham fell in assuming that South Africa is in flames. My hon. Friend's motion talks of

> "incalculable suffering, cruelty and bloodshed among the non-white population of South Africa".

That is not strictly true. Before I am accused of being economical with the truth when I say "strictly", I must point out that the position in South Africa was beginning to deteriorate some two years ago, requiring the South African Government to declare a state of emergency to restore order. I think that most Governments faced with such problems would have done exactly as the South African Government did. The position in South Africa is now much calmer, as my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) knows. I know it because I was recently there, and I declare that interest before the Opposition question me about it. I am a frequent visitor to South Africa. I found peace and calm in the townships. That was only because of the state of emergency.

The British Government, in continuing to support their earlier resolution on the release of Nelson Mandela and the lifting of the state of emergency, must understand that, if the state of emergency is lifted and the police are withdrawn, there will be anarchy in the townships. South Africa will again face the terrible problems it had two years ago and the position will deteriorate quickly.

Mr. Adley: This morning, on the "Today" programme, my hon. Friend said that the South African record of human rights was not blameless—from him, that was a substantial admission—but nor was our own. That struck me as a grotesque insult to the police and services in Britain. Can my hon. Friend tell me which police authority in Britain has a store of sjamboks and whether he thinks that they are likely to be used?

Mr. Carlisle: Perhaps unwittingly, my hon. Friend has taken my remarks a little out of context. Perhaps at that early hour of the morning, he did not hear me say that the Amnesty International report, which was published last October, catalogued violations of human rights throughout the world, including Britain. Amnesty International's accusations concerned Ulster. We were not blameless in the Amnesty International report, nor was South Africa and other countries.

The motion refers to the Commonwealth—we should discuss it—but not to the malaise in some member countries. Human rights are violated in some Commonwealth countries in the same way as in South Africa and sometimes conditions are much worse. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington would have had the sympathy of his colleagues if he had referred to that malaise and catalogued some of those violations of human rights. If he had done so, we would perhaps have been a little more sympathetic towards his argument.

I am a little disturbed that my hon. Friend should propose to commit further resources to the Commonwealth at the British taxpayer's expense without asking it to take some responsibility in return. It is rather disturbing to think that the British taxpayer is asked for, and willingly gives, large sums to members of the Commonwealth without receiving a response and without having any say in how the money is spent. Therefore, my hon. Friend should have called in his motion for additional responsibility from the Commonwealth as well as additional resources for it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) said that the last point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington was the only part of his speech with which he could agree. However, I take issue with it. I cannot agree that there is a simple solution, as is implied in the motion. This debate alone should have taught us that there is no simple solution to this incredibly complex problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington said that the problem of tribalism exists throughout Africa. South Africa is part of Africa—a fact which some people tend to forget—and African values have to be considered there. The Western system of democracy enjoyed in this country and passed on by us to countries throughout the Commonwealth is not necessarily the right system for Africa. The one-party system—dare one say, the dictatorships—prevalent in black Africa may well be the only system by which those countries can be governed. If one accepts that, one must accept, too, that the system of apartheid in South Africa has worked in terms of government. I am not supporting it, but if we work on the basis that what is right for one might not be right for another, we should perhaps have some respect for those who believe that the system represents the only way of continuing to govern South Africa. I do not support that view, but it is widely held in South Africa.

Mr. Richard Alexander: My hon. Friend has raised an important point with which my right hon. Friend the Minister did not deal in her reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Woodcock). Can we not see in Bophuthatswana a perfect example of how the system could work on a non-racist basis? Bophuthatswana has its own army and its own education system and is completely independent of South Africa. Is not that the basis on which Africa and southern Africa should proceed?

Mr. Carlisle: I agree with my hon. Friend. The House will understand that what may be right for one country may not be right for another. The experiment in Bophuthatswana is working well and we hope that it will be encouraged in other states in that part of the world.

We should concentrate a little more on the Commonwealth. One is bound to ask the question asked often in the popular press, whether we need the Commonwealth. In a week in which we remember our dead—I am glad that this has been mentioned—we must remember the part that the Commonwealth played in the last two wars, and especially the part played by South Africa. There was great respect for the Commonwealth for coming to our help. However, those of us who are upset at the antics of some Commonwealth leaders fear that they are losing the respect and dignity in which they were held because of their extremely good war record.

It has been said that the Commonwealth is a happy family, but I wonder how happy it is. It seems to be happy in its almost paranoid attention to South Africa but in other respects it may not be as happy as it makes out. It is almost a toothless dog. It is not a great political animal; indeed it tries to fight shy of politics. It has no real collective economic strength, and in world defence, which is perhaps the most important consideration, it has virtually no standing.

Having said that, I believe that we should continue to support the Commonwealth. There must be respect between one member and another. The sight of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister being castigated by the likes of President Kaunda, Prime Minister Gandhi and Prime Minister Mugabe for standing up for something in which she, the British Government and the majority of people in this country believe is detestable. It is deplorable that the Prime Minister's stand should be so castigated by members of the Commonwealth who, in many cases, depend on this country for an economic lifeline. Indeed, they are almost going for the mother country rather like the fledglings who, having fled the nest, return to foul it.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister should be congratulated on her stand. It is regrettable that some Commonwealth leaders have taken the view that they have and insulted her and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary when he visited Zambia.

Most of us are upset by the Commonwealth's fixation with the South African issue. What a tragedy at a time when there are so many problems involving poverty and the world economy that the Vancouver conference should be dominated by the South Africa issue. I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. It was not inevitable that southern Africa should be discussed by the Commonwealth. The 49 countries of the Commonwealth should have far better things to do than talk about something over which they have very little control. They can control the economies, poverty, hunger and despair within their countries. However, quite unashamedly, they chose to spend most of their time castigating a country about which most of them know very little and, in the majority of cases, are prepared to do very little, if anything. No one is more guilty of that than the Commonwealth secretariat.

Every time I pass the rather nice windows of the Commonwealth secretariat in that nice area of London, I am appalled at the displays of propaganda which have nothing to do with helping the Commonwealth. The displays make that window an anti-apartheid propaganda display. They have nothing to do with the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Sonny Ramphal, is an emphatic figure who seems to buzz around the world with great aplomb and a certain amount of dignity. However, in his speeches, literature and the propaganda that he puts out he never fails to take every opportunity to have a go at South Africa. Is that really the role for the secretary-general of 49 different countries, which my right hon. Friend the Minister states enjoy 30 per cent. running support from this country? No wonder we are cross. No wonder we believe that the efforts of those Commonwealth countries should be directed in other directions within the organisation where they can help themselves.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlisle: I certainly will not give way.

I do not want to refer to the effect of sanctions, because most hon. Members understand what sanctions would mean for those whom they are intended to benefit. That point was eloquently made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. We must consider the effectiveness of sanctions. Would they make any difference? The limited, tiny sanctions that have been applied—which I deplore because I do not believe that we should have sanctions —have had a reverse effect.

A headline appeared in the Johannesburg *Star* the other day warning its readers of sanction euphoria. It states that because sanctions were being imposed and some companies were beginning to leave South Africa, that was generating a new prosperity among South African business men which they had not enjoyed before. It is remarkable that companies like Barclays bank, IBM and General Motors which have left South Africa and sold their assets for nothing to South African management have now lost their influence. That is the tragedy of sanctions. They never have the intended effect.

It is remarkable how the resilience of the South Africans and others in a similar position has turned the South African economy around. It is now much stronger and the South Africans look forward to the future with great optimism. Under those conditions there is a chance for change. I repeat what I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington. If we are looking for change in a country, surely the conditions for that change are far better when the economy is flourishing, when everyone has a chance of a job and when reform can take place within a peaceful context.

I am sorry to have taken the additional time, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I had little choice towards the end. The motion rightly refers to dialogue, which means that we should discuss these matters in the House and in and around South Africa. If we are to have any influence on the South African Government and people, it must be on the basis of trading with them, visiting them and having contact with them. That is dialogue, and that is the way to change. That dialogue is the way to peaceful reform and to encouraging the South African Government in the direction in which we want them to go. Without that dialogue, we are lost. Sanctions imposed as they are intended would cut that dialogue

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

2.30 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I put it to you that the last participant in the debate has shown incredible disrespect both to the Chair and to the House. As so many hon. Members wished to take part, if only for a few minutes, you asked for short speeches. The last participant rose at 2.12 pm and took all the remaining time. That was in direct contravention of your wishes. He thus showed disrespect for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and for the House. In my view, it is quite wrong that an apologist for the South African racist regime should treat the House in that way. Is there anything that we can do to pay back, as it were, the disrespect that has been shown to you, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern. I consider the matter to which he has referred no disrespect to the Chair. My real concern is for hon. Members who sit here for a very long time and have a contribution to make. I only wish that they would take just five or six minutes each so that, whatever their views, the House and the country can hear them. To my great sorrow, it has not been possible today to hear all those points of view.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 19th November, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), if proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Moore relating to Housing have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put the Question thereon.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

European Regional Development Grant (Northern Region)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

2.31 pm

Ms. Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I wish to raise a matter which has concerned me for some time—the decline in European regional development fund grant to the northern region of England in the past four years. I have been aware of the problem for some years as a Member of the European Parliament and more recently as a Member of this House. It is of considerable concern to my constituency and to the northern region as a whole.

Like many other areas of the United Kingdom, the northern region of England is eligible for ERDF grants for infrastructure and for various schemes related to job creation. One might argue that the northern region is especially eligible as, with the exception of Northern Ireland, it has the highest unemployment in the United Kingdom and has long-standing problems due to industrial decline.

In the early years, from 1976 to 1980, the north benefited considerably from European funds, but in recent years the position has changed greatly. In 1983, 1984 and 1985 the region's share of European development funds coming to the United Kingdom was 12·5 per cent., 10·5 per cent. and 7·3 per cent. respectively. For Wales the figures were 18 per cent., 15 per cent. and 16 per cent. For Scotland, they were 31·7 per cent., 25 per cent. and 20·1 per cent. Calculated per head of population, that means that in those three years the amount of grant per head was £18 in the north, £29 in Scotland, £34 in Northern Ireland and £42 in Wales. Indeed, the figure per head of unemployed population are even more dramatic.

In July 1986, I drew the matter to the attention of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) in her capacity as a Minister during the British presidency of the EEC Council of Ministers. That approach was subsequently referred to the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison) who then had responsibility at the Department of Trade and Industry. In a letter dated 21 October 1986, the Minister agreed that there was a problem about the decline of funds to the northern region, but he said that one of the difficulties was that

> "most of the large infrastructure needs of the northern region have now been met."

My reaction to that was one of amazement, as I could think of many infrastructure projects in the northern region which certainly would have been grateful beneficiaries of EEC funds, not to mention the possible dramatic improvements on the A1 from Newcastle to Berwick, the A69 from Newcastle to Carlisle, the completion of the Tyne and Wear metro system, and many other developments in telecommunications infrastructure. The Minister's statement contradicted the Government's own words in their regional development programme 1986-90 which it submitted to the European Commission about the problems of the northern region. Referring to infrastructure, the Government said:

> "However, it is equally apparent that much more needs to be done."

In section 7A of the same regional development programme, the Government wrote:

"While nationally there were signs of a gradual recovery in the economy, this was not the case in the north-east".

The Government thereby reinforced our need for ongoing help from the European regional development fund.

In 1986, the position improved somewhat. In particular, there was a helpful visit to the northern region by the then European Commissioner for regional policy, the late Alois Pfeiffer. We managed to obtain a higher proportion of EEC funds in that year. This year has seen a further dramatic decline. The figures that the European Commission recently released show that the northern region has obtained 0·7 per cent. of the grants that were allocated to the United Kingdom under the ERDF. Scotland obtained 16 per cent., Wales obtained 17·3 per cent., and the west midlands obtained 18·8 per cent. If we calculate the figures according to the amount of money received per head of population, we shall see that in the north there was a grand total of 28p per head of population, whereas the figure was £16·69 in Northern Ireland and £7·20 in Wales.

I do not condemn the activities of other regions which have been fortunate enough to get a greater amount of EEC funds, but, on the face of it, the allocation looks anything but fair. I imagine that the Minister may say that the position is due to improve—I hope that that is the case—but I trust that he will accept that considerable injections of such funds will be necessary if the shortfall of the last few years is to be made up. The problem is compounded by the decline in regional development grant to the northern region which, during the period 1984-86, declined by 78 per cent. That is a more dramatic fall than in any other United Kingdom region.

It is true that obtaining money from European funds is related to the number of applications that a region puts forward. It could be that not enough applications of a sufficient size or of a sufficiently suitable nature have been put forward by the northern region. If that is the case, the Government need to look at the situation to make sure that a fairer number of applications are put forward by the region in the future.

One thing that concerns us in the north is that we feel that, lacking a strong regional structure, we may be losing out as we do not have the institutional framework necessary for co-ordinating and putting forward applications across our regional area. In that respect, we notice that the Scottish and Welsh Offices, quite understandably, are active in direct contacts with Brussels and in putting forward the case for their particular parts of the United Kingdom. Incidentally, the north-east was not helped by the abolition of the Tyne and Wear metropolitan district council which covered an area the size of which is deemed suitable for the purpose of applying for EEC funds, and it was an area with which the European Commission was used to have some contact.

We hope that in the future the northern region will be able to co-ordinate more successfully its efforts to establish its own regional structure. We hope also—perhaps the Minister can assure me on this point—that we shall be more successful in the future than we have been in the past in getting money from the section of the European fund that deals with integrated operations and national programmes of community interest.

I should like several assurances from the Minister about this matter. I should like him to assure us, for example, that he will act to ensure that more applications from the northern region are forwarded by the Government to Brussels. It is not only the Commission that decides on applications. A large measure of the chances of an application's success is whether it has been successfully backed by the national Government and forwarded to Brussels with strong recommendations.

I should like the Minister to assure me that he will act to try to ensure a high quality of applications from the northern region to enhance our chances of success. I should also like his assurance that the northern region will continue to be a priority area and will be a key priority area when the Government negotiate on EEC grants with the European Commission.

I should like the Minister to commit himself to achieving a reasonable share-out of the funds in future, and to make sure that if he is not prepared to try to get a specific quota of the fund allocated to each region, he will act to ensure that enough applications have gone forward to achieve a reasonable take-up of the funds in future.

Finally, I should like the Minister to accept that, if he does not act on these issues, there will be two consequences. First, there will continue to be the widespread belief in the northern region that we are losing out badly on this. When the European Commission publishes—as it does regularly—the amount of money that it has awarded to various regions under the ERDF, if the Minister has not acted he must be prepared for yet more and more unfavourable press and other media responses in the northern region to those announcements. Secondly, if he does not act, there will be the increasing danger that money from Brussels will seem to be the result of strong political and organisational lobbying powers rather than need. The funds will not be seen as addressing the real regional problems that they were designed to alleviate, but simply as a response to various pressures.

I hope that the Minister will give me the assurances that I seek, that he will act to end what many of us regard as a highly unsatisfactory situation and will ensure that it does not recur.

2.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Francis Maude): I am grateful for this opportunity to talk about the issues which the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms. Quin) has raised in a calm and responsible way. I am grateful for the tone of her speech; it speaks well of her concerns for her local area.

I visited Newcastle recently and in particular spoke to those operating in the financial services sector, which is my special area of responsibility. I was heartened by the buoyancy that I discerned among those to whom I spoke about the extent to which new businesses in that sector are developing and the extent of demand for their services. The financial services sector is not merely self-standing; it provides services to manufacturing industry and all sorts of industries. To some extent the requirements for manufacturing industry and other new and developing industries mirror the development and buoyancy of the financial services sector. I detected a burgeoning sense of self-confidence in the region, which was reflected by those to whom I spoke.

I hope that the north-east will not gauge its standing with the Government and generally on how much public money, whether European money, national Government

[Mr. Francis Maude]

money or local government money, it manages to obtain. It has a developing strength of its own. I hope that its growing self-confidence will reflect that.

I am glad to have the chance to talk a little about the extent to which funds from the European Community are available. But I should introduce a note of caution about my readiness to talk about the shape of things in future. I am sure the hon. Lady will understand my reticence as she has experience of the way in which European institutions work.

This is a particularly important time in the reform of the Community's structural funds, of which the ERDF is one. I shall explain later that the reform of the funds is subject to increasingly intense negotiations in Brussels. It must be seen as part of the question of the financing of the Community which, as the hon. Lady knows, we see as crucial. Therefore, I cannot be as precise as I should like to be in answering the hon. Lady's questions.

In the north-east there is an enormous diversity of activity with many of the non-traditional activities on the increase. I have adverted to some of those. New industries and service industries are doing as well as many traditional industries, and the hon. Lady will welcome that as much as I do. That diversity has been reflected fully in the support that the region has received from the ERDF and other Community funds. That support is extensive and I do not apologise for going into it in a little detail.

All the assisted areas in the northern region are eligible for ERDF support. Up to the end of last year commitments to the region totalled more than £353 million, which is more than to any other English region. Most support was provided for infrastructure projects, but a significant amount of aid was given for industrial projects. Some of the more notable projects assisted include the development of the Sunderland airport industrial site, which attracted £3·4 million from the ERDF, and the construction of sewers, pumping stations, mains and so on, on Tyneside which attracted £17·5 million.

The northern region also benefits from two out of the three national programmes of Community interest which have been approved for England. These cover the Shildon and Tees corridor areas and, taken together, represent some £36 million worth of ERDF funding. I hope that the hon. Lady agrees that there can be little doubt that that assistance has brought significant benefits to the region. I am sure, too, that the region will continue to benefit.

Commitments to the northern region in 1986 were the second highest ever. The year 1982, which contained the highest, was an exceptional year, with a large award made for industrial projects in Cumbria. Much of the region's major infrastructure is now in place. I take the hon. Lady's point that it is always nice to have more. One can always think of additional infrastructure projects, but essentially the major infrastructure projects are in place, which is not the case in every region. I hope that the hon. Lady accepts that the north-east has had its fair share of support in the past. Projects submitted now tend to be those where eligibility for support from the Commission is less certain than in the past, for example, projects on tourism, which is growing fast in the north-east, as elsewhere.

On the face of it, the region's share of the ERDF awards so far this year appears to be poor. I agree with the hon. Lady that a figure of 0·7 per cent. of the total awards for the United Kingdom is a small amount. However, it is premature to be concerned because further awards are to be made. Only just over half of the funds available for commitment this year have been allocated, and it is likely to be early next year before the full picture for 1987 commitments become clear. I have little doubt that the northern region will receive substantial further awards. The hon. Lady will be aware that last year the northern region received 11 per cent. of the total United Kingdom awards. I would expect that, subject to Commission approval, this year's total awards will be very close to, even if it does not actually reach, that figure. I hope that she agrees that that would represent a substantial commitment to the area.

As the hon. Lady knows, the Community's ERDF regulations set out a guaranteed lower limit of awards for the United Kingdom — 14·5 per cent., provided that sufficient qualifying applications are submitted. Further awards are possible, up to a maximum of 19 per cent. of the fund, at the discretion of the Commission. In 1985, before Spain and Portugal joined the Community, the figures were a little higher. The limit applies for a period of three years and the current period ends this year. Similar provisions apply to other member states. Since the sum total of the current lower limits is 88·6 per cent. and of the higher limits 117 per cent., it follows that the eventual outcome is likely to be somewhat closer to the lower rather than to the higher figure.

The United Kingdom, as with other countries, attaches great importance to ensuring that we receive a high share. We always attempt to ensure that the value of our applications submitted to the Commission is greater than the United Kingdom's maximum share of the fund, and that has been achieved on a regular basis. I have to stress that the decision about which projects are supported rests with the Commission. There is competition with other projects submitted within the region and with those from all other United Kingdom regions. In addition, above the United Kingdom's lower limit percentage share of the fund there is competition with applications from other member states. The Commission makes its decisions on merit.

The hon. Lady has suggested in the past, and she did so again today, that there should be a quota for each region within the United Kingdom's percentage range. There are no such quotas at present, but the point will be very much borne in mind. At the end of the day, however, the final decision about which schemes are approved rests with the Commission, irrespective of any domestic quota that the United Kingdom might decide to establish.

In addition to disbursing its funds through support for infrastructure and industrial projects, the ERDF provides a source of finance for the business improvement services scheme, which is proving very popular. More than £8 million worth of support has been provided for the north-east region since the scheme was introduced in 1984. Some two thirds of that will have been met from ERDF sources, with the United Kingdom Government providing the balance.

Quite separately from the ERDF, the north-east has benefited from two other Community instruments. First, the European Coal and Steel Community has provided cheap loan finance for job-creating investment projects throughout the north-east. So far this year, 15 loans worth almost £4 million have been approved for projects in the region. Loans up to £500,000 also benefit from my

Department's exchange risk guarantee scheme, which enables firms to borrow in low-interest rate foreign currencies. That is an innovative development.

Secondly, the European investment bank operates throughout the assisted areas in the region and provides loan finance for major infrastructure projects. Last year the bank approved loans for road improvements in Cleveland and Durham and made loans to the Northumbria water authority—a total of £12 million.

To complete the picture of funding from the European Community, I should mention the European social fund and the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. Support from those has been substantial. Nearly all of the region has priority status under the European social fund. It is due to receive £12 million this year for training programmes, doubling the figures for the two previous years. It has put in a larger bid for 1988. That funding, amounting, on average, to about £1,000 per trainee, is in addition to the Government's own programmes under the Manpower Services Commission and to industrial training board schemes. I trust that the House will accept that that is due recognition of the training needs of the region.

As to agricultural support, the region is classified among the less favoured in the United Kingdom and is therefore eligible for the higher rates of capital and headage payments.

This has been an imposing recital of the support that the region receives from the Community. I could add, too, the help provided under United Kingdom national schemes for the regions and for particular projects or needs. The Department's national schemes of support are available in the north-east as in other regions. In keeping with the objective of regional industrial policy of reducing, on a stable long-term basis, employment disparities between regions, the north-east benefits extensively from my Department's regional schemes of support. Indeed, assisted area coverage in the region represents some 97 per cent. of the working population — a higher percentage than in any other region.

As a further reflection of the Department's support, English Estates North was formed just a year ago to bring about a greater regional emphasis in the activities of the English Industrial Estates Corporation, which forecasts expenditure of approximately £14 million in the north-east in the current financial year. English Estates North has been quick to forge links with other organisations such as the Northern Development Company and in its first year has established a partnership with ICI. In a joint project between the two a 167-acre site has been identified as the location for a technology park which should attract up to 5,000 jobs in the longer term.

The Northern Development Company itself receives substantial financial assistance from my Department. In recognition of the efforts of local interests in setting up the NDC as a vehicle for the regeneration of the economy of the north, the Department will be providing nearly £1·2 million this year towards the cost of the company's inward investment promotion and core programme activities.

All this emphasises the Government's recognition of the circumstances of the region and the extent and the flexibility of the assistance that has been given, both through the Community and directly.

I have in this context to comment on the review of the structural funds and particularly the ERDF. The treaty of Rome as it now stands requires that the ERDF be devoted to structurally less-developed regions and declining industrial regions. The United Kingdom's predominant interest lies in the declining industrial regions. This interest is very strong in the northern region. At the same time, there is widespread support in the rest of the Community for the proposal to concentrate more of the fund on the structurally less-developed regions, and there is an overriding need, as everyone will agree, for discipline in the Community budget. I cannot say at this stage what the outcome of these negotiations will be in terms of funds for the northern region. There are too many unknowns. What I can say is that the importance we attach to help for DIRs has the needs of the northern region very much in mind.

Perhaps I should add something about the form in which I expect some at least of the future ERDF support for the region will be given. The Commission has proposed special programmes for declining steel and shipbuilding areas. In line with business improvement services measures, they will support the creation of alternative economic activities undertaken by small and medium-sized companies, thus generating jobs and, I trust, reinforcing the new dynamism in the region.

The programmes, Resider for steel and Renaval for shipbuilding, are being discussed in Brussels in the hope of decisions within months. Here too I cannot say what the outcome will be, but I assure the House that the United Kingdom is seeking help for areas such as those in the north that have long borne the burdens of job losses in these industries.

On a slightly longer timescale, I look forward to the submission to Brussels of programmes of integrated action prepared for Durham and Cleveland, Tyneside and south-east Northumberland. Such programmes are a new concept, largely replacing the provision of support to individual projects. If approved by the European Commission, these would be a principal means of bringing ERDF and social fund finance to the region in future. Other parts of the region may be preparing programmes in due course.

I hope that the hon. Lady will accept that we are well aware of the worries that she has expressed. I hope that she can draw some comfort from my replies, even though some were, of necessity, imprecise. We have listened to her carefully and I hope that she will not be disappointed in due course.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 16 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Aberdeen Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1987
2. National Provident Institution Act 1987
3. Bexley London Borough Council Act 1987

PRIVATE BUSINESS

HIGHLAND REGION HARBOURS (MISCELLANEOUS POWERS) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

LERWICK HARBOUR ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Children's Hospital, Cardiff

1. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in opposition to the closure proposed for 1988-89 of the Children's ear, nose and throat hospital, Ely, Cardiff; and what assessment has been made of the suitability of alternative medical facilities offered at the University hospital of Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales wishes me to apologise for his absence from the House on an important inward investment mission overseas.

My right hon. Friend has received two representations on the proposed closure of the Children's ear, nose and throat hospital at Ely from nursing and administrative staff at the hospital. The suitability of alternative medical facilities at the University hospital of Wales is a matter for South Glamorgan health authority in the first instance.

Mr. Morgan: Does the Minister agree that the act of medical vandalism that is being contemplated by South Glamorgan health authority will lower the standard of hospital services by removing the only specialist children's hospital in Wales? Since about 40 per cent. of its patients come from outside South Glamorgan, if Welsh Office Ministers cannot take responsibility for the quality of hospital services in such regional specialty hospitals, who can?

Mr. Grist: The proposal has yet to be approved by the health authority. If there is continuing disagreement, it must come to my right hon. Friend for a decision. In those circumstances, I can make no comment at this stage.

Sir Raymond Gower: Could the matter be examined in another way? Is my hon. Friend aware that the over-concentration in the University hospital has led to a tremendous shortage of building space and parking space, not only for relatives visiting patients, but for members of staff? Will the over-concentration continue, or will wiser counsels prevail?

Mr. Grist: I am not sure about wiser counsels, but my hon. Friend makes a good point. The health authority will have considered that issue when examining alternative accommodation at the University hospital. If the matter came before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I imagine that he would consider it, too.

Low-flying Aircraft

2. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from farmers in Wales concerning the disturbance caused to livestock in Wales by low-flying aircraft.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): None. Complaints would normally be made direct to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister make urgent representations to the Secretary of State for Defence to ban all low flying at 100 ft in Wales, as it is causing great suffering to people and animals? Will he press the point that farmers whose beef cows have aborted, which frequently happens as a result of low flying, should be fully compensated to the equivalent price of a nine-month-old suckle cow?

Mr. Roberts: Any claims for compensation arising from damage alleged to have been caused by aircraft activities should be submitted to the Ministry of Defence claims commission. The claims procedure has been agreed between the claims commission of the MOD, the agriculture departments and the farming unions. I cannot hold out any promise of banning low-flying aircraft, since that form of training is, of course, vital.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Of course, no one likes aircraft screaming over his head, but is it not some consolation to be able to look up and see that they do not carry red stars under their wings?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is quite right. Whenever people complain about low-flying aircraft to me, I ask the question, "Were they ours?"

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas: Will the Minister accept that at least one fifth of these aircraft are not ours — unless one regards the United States as part of his Department? Will he, therefore, take seriously the number of complaints from the farming community, in view of the information given to me by the Minister of Defence about the increased number of flights and the noise of aircraft? Will he support the call for a review of low-flying procedure, as it is 10 years since we last reviewed it?

Mr. Roberts: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is well aware of the views of farmers and the hon. Gentleman on low-flying aircraft.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that not only livestock but people are deeply disturbed by these supersonic sorties above their homes? There have been terrible accidents, and pilots, aircrew and valuable jet planes have been lost. Is it not time for the Government to take heed of the multitude of protests that they have recieved and call a halt to these uncivilised exercises?

Mr. Roberts: The Welsh Office is responsible for many things, but defence is not one of them. These questions should be addressed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Hospital Waiting Lists

3. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects hospital waiting lists in Gwent to fall.

Mr. Grist: In-patient waiting lists in Gwent fell from 8,842 to 7,705 between March 1986 and March 1987. The number of in-patients treated increased by 32·4 per cent. between 1979 and 1986. Much remains to be done, and Gwent health authority is actively working on the problem in conjunction with the Welsh Office.

Mr. Flynn: The people of Gwent will give little thanks for that rather complacent reply. One out of six is not good enough. In the other categories of waiting lists in Gwent, there has been an increase in those of urgent cases; in urgent cases waiting for more than a month; and in non-urgent cases waiting for more than a year. The total number of out-patients who are waiting has increased, as has that of out-patients waiting for more than three months. That follows a special effort by the Welsh Office to reduce waiting lists to acceptable levels.

Does the Minister recognise that the Health Service in Gwent is locked into a spiral of decline, caused by the burden placed on it by a 20 per cent. increase in work with only a 5 per cent. increase in resources? The Gwent area health authority also faces a special burden of paying locally the capital cost of rebuilding the Royal Gwent hospital — money that is funded centrally elsewhere in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The system under which the area health authorities have operated for their capital funding has been the same for all since 1984. Gwent has been well funded. Incidentally, it is worth pointing out that median waiting times for in-patients in Wales have fallen from 47 days to 42 days under this Government. The waiting list for in-patients in Gwent has fallen by more than 1,100 to March of this year.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the Minister realise that the people of Wales, as well as the people of Gwent, are concerned about the length of waiting lists? As the Minister responsible for health in Wales, is he proud that we now have the lowest number of hospital beds since the Health Service was set up in 1948, that we have fewer beds in relation to population than Scotland or Northern Ireland, and that we have longer waiting lists than Scotland or Northern Ireland? In those circumstances, does it make sense that, in the past 18 months, we have lost 700 hospital beds in Wales, several hospitals are now under threat of closure and our already overstretched health authorities face £6 million of cuts by the end of the year?

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I tell the Front Bench that that question has now been asked, but I denied a question to the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) because I thought that he might deal with wider issues.

Mr. Grist: The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), who went on at great length, overlooked the fact that it is a matter not of having beds available, but of how many patients one treats. It is worth pointing out that when he was a Minister the number of in-patient places in Wales rose by 3 per cent., but under this Government the number has risen by 24 per cent. or 84,000 every year. Out-patient treatment fell by 3 per cent. under the previous Labour Administration, but has risen by 18 per cent. under this Government.

Education Reform

4. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the inclusion of Welsh in the core curriculum.

14. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning his proposals for a core curriculum in Wales; and when he hopes to respond to those representations.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received a total of 203 representations that refer to the position of Welsh within the national curriculum. Of those, 150 favour the inclusion of Welsh as a core or foundation subject throughout Wales. I expect to publish soon a statement of policy on the national curriculum in Wales, which will embody our response to the consultation exercise.

Mr. Butler: My hon. Friend will be aware that, as a Welshman who learnt Welsh as an adult, I have the interests of the Welsh language at heart. Will he assure me that he will take into account the diversity of Wales and the impossibility of forcing Welsh on the children of Gwent? Circumstances vary within Wales, and a policy of forcing Welsh on people will not be in the best interests of the Welsh language.

Mr. Roberts: I fully appreciate my hon. Friend's considerable interest in the promotion of the language and the fact that he has written a book about it. He is right. There is considerable diversity in knowledge of the language throughout Wales. Some 20 per cent. of our children are taught in Welsh and 80 per cent. are not. Nevertheless, we believe that Welsh should have its place in the curriculum. I believe that we have found the right answer in making it part of the core curriculum for those who are taught in Welsh, and part of the general curriculum for others.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas: Will the Minister now answer my question, is was a general question about the core curriculum, the number of representations that have been made to him, and what response he expects to make? My question is not about Welsh in the core curriculum, but about the core curriculum in general. Does he accept that the notion of a core curriculum divided into subjects, whether core or foundation, is completely outdated and has no relevance to the reality of pupils' learning experiences? Does the Minister further accept that his Department needs to take a transcurricular approach on language, scientific, environmental and social issues at primary and early secondary level? Such an approach is much more relevant to school pupils than is a curriculum based on the notion of subjects.

Mr. Roberts: I do not think that what we have said about the core curriculum and the curriculum in general debars transcurricular teaching.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What proposals does my hon. Friend have in mind in the core curriculum for religious education and the daily act of worship?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend will know that religious education is, of course, a statutory requirement under the Education Act 1944, and our proposals do not change that. We believe that religious education is vital to the spiritual development of our children. With regard to the collective act of worship, we trust that there will be flexibility in the timing so that it can take place at different times if necessary.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the fact that the Minister did not answer question 14, will you decouple it from question 4 and make sure that an answer is given when we come to it?

Mr. Speaker: The Minister chooses what answer he gives. I remind the House that question 14 is about the curriculum in Wales, and goes wider than question 4.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: Taking into account the diversity of Wales, does the Minister agree that, in Dyfed and Gwynedd, Welsh should have almost as important a place in the curriculum as English, and that the problem of the place of the Welsh language in the core curriculum highlights the wrong thinking behind the core curriculum? Does he agree that those decisions are far better left to the individual local authority?

Mr. Roberts: We intend to consult the local education authorities. I remind the hon. Gentleman that I said that where Welsh is the medium of teaching it will be included in the core curriculum. We shall set up a subject group to deal with Welsh in the curriculum, and I very much hope that that group will be able to devise courses and set levels of learning and attainment that will satisfy all people in Wales.

Mr. Forth: Would it not be a tragic misuse of finite educational resources to have a declining language in the core curriculum? Would it not be much more appropriate for that language to be allowed as an option in a flexible way during the time outside the core curriculum, so that it may have its proper place?

Mr. Roberts: I have made the position very clear. It is that the 80 per cent. of children in Wales who are not taught through the medium of Welsh will have Welsh as part of their curriculum. Of course, there will be different levels of attainment. The consultation exercise revealed considerable support for our proposals for Wales.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister may wish to have Welsh in the core curriculum, but I am not sure, from his answers, about his enthusiasm for the teaching of Welsh outside the Welsh-medium schools. Will the Minister give us an assurance that the Welsh language will be given its proper place in teaching outside the Welsh-medium schools? If the language is to develop and get back to the status that Opposition Members would like to see it have, it must develop in the English-speaking areas, or we shall land in the barbaric state that some Conservative Members would like to see.

Mr. Roberts: I assure the hon. Member that Welsh will have its place in the curriculum in Wales. We are seeking to meet the diversity of practice in Welsh-speaking schools and the diversity of need for the language.

Enterprise Agencies

5. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure the future security and success of enterprise agencies in Wales, particularly the Cardiff and Vale enterprise.

Mr. Grist: The success of enterprise agencies in Wales is demonstrated by the 16,000 jobs in small businesses that they have helped to create. The agencies, including Cardiff and Vale enterprise, have benefited from substantial central funding, which continues to be available under the new arrangements introduced last year.

Mr. Michael: I am sure that the Minister is aware of reports that the Government intend to put a substantial amount of money into such agencies and that it will be matched by a similar amount from the large banks. Presumably the banks will do that with the intention of obtaining a write-off facility on their contributions. Can the Minister tell us what he knows about that? Is he aware of the report that none of this money will go to Wales? If that is the case, what will the Minister and his colleagues do about that? Does he share the fears of some of us that it might lead to a diminution of the existing secondments by banks, which have made a tremendous contribution to enterprise agencies? In view of the Minister's statement that these agencies are very cost effective in the creation of jobs, does he agree that they provide an ideal model for partnership between local government and private enterprise in our areas?

Mr. Grist: I do, indeed, agree that they are models, not just for local government, but for private industry. Under the new system, local enterprise agencies can receive a grant for five years up to a maximum of £25,000 per annum in the first two years, declining to £10,000 in the fifth year. The grants are conditional on the local enterprise agency producing a satisfactory three-year business plan, a five-year financial strategy aimed at self-sufficiency by year six, and matching £1 for £1 private sector contributions — and of course that is not only banks. Similar but less generous arrangements apply to English local enterprise agencies. In addition to core funding, the Welsh Development Agency will grant up to £17,500 per annum per agency for special projects.

Mr. Raffan: Does my hon. Friend agree that as the 15 local enterprise agencies in Wales have assisted in the creation of 16,000 jobs at a very good cost-per-job ratio, it is important that, as his officials have advised, the private sector should become far more substantially involved than hitherto in the local enterprise agencies? Can he tell us what progress has been made in achieving that aim, in more closely monitoring the successes and failures of the local enterprise agencies, and in organising an annual conference in Wales at which the agencies can meet and exchange information and experiences?

Mr. Grist: I am sure that the local enterprise agencies will have heard my hon. Friend's suggestion. It sounds to me an excellent one. We want to see more private sector involvement in financing and the secondment of more staff — a point that my hon. Friend made some time ago. The private sector connection varies markedly among the different agencies throughout Wales.

Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unadjusted figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; and if he will give the equivalent figures for 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Roberts: On 8 October 1987 the numbers of persons unemployed in Newport district, Gwent and Wales were 8,263, 23,721 and 148,050 respectively. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Mr. Hughes: The Minister of State has been going around Wales proclaiming some sort of El Dorado, which exists only in his own imagination. When will he come down to earth and recognise that about 30,000 men have been out of work for more than five years, almost 80,000 for longer than two years and that some 5,000 have given up looking for a job altogether out of sheer despair? Is not this the reality of eight and a half years of Thatcherism in Wales and not the starry-eyed image that he is trying to portray?

Mr. Roberts: I thought that the hon. Gentleman might have spared at least a word of welcome for the fall in unemployment. It has been falling for 17 consecutive months. It is now 26,055 down on October 1986, which is a 1·9 per cent. decrease, and in Gwent it is down by 5,142, which is a 3·1 per cent. decrease on October of last year and one of the biggest declines in any county in Wales. Furthermore, there has been a decline of 2,247 in the Newport travel-to-work area. Surely the hon. Gentleman welcomes that, and surely he knows that we are doing our very best for the long-term unemployed, through the special employment measures.

Mr. Ray Powell: It is about time that the Minister stopped complaining and came to the Dispatch Box to explain why Opposition Members spread doom and gloom. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said, the doom and gloom have been spread by the Government since 1979. Can the Minister understand why we are not all that overjoyed that there is a drop in unemployment? His Government have created the unemployment in Wales since 1979. Is it not time that he looked at the true figures for 1979 and tried to get back to that level, from which he could develop his employment measures? In Ogmore unemployment was 3·5 per cent. in 1979. It is now 18·7 per cent. When the Minister can reduce unemployment to the 1979 level, there will not be so much doom and gloom among Labour Members.

Mr. Roberts: I can never forget 1979 and the hidden unemployment of which we were aware of then and of which the people of England and Wales were very much aware. That is why they elected a Conservative Government to put things right. Our only prospect at that time was deepening unemployment. The United Kingdom economy is fundamentally strong, as was reaffirmed in the Autumn Statement. The provisional figures for industrial output in Wales are up 2 per cent. in the second quarter and 5 per cent. over the year. We are in our seventh year of successive growth and all the indicators show further improvements to come.

Mr. Raffan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the dramatic reduction in unemployment in Wales in the last year, amounting to nearly 23 per cent. in my constituency, was in no small part due to the Government's tremendous success in attracting inward investment, which has increased by 25 per cent. in the past year and now amounts to 20 per cent. of the United Kingdom total? Does he agree that if we are to keep up and improve on that fine record it is essential that the Secretary of State for Wales leads inward investment missions abroad, as he is now doing in Japan?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Unemployment in Clwyd has come down by 4,070 in the course of the last year, and that is in no small part due to the existence of five expanding Japanese companies in the area.

My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance of inward investment to Wales, and, indeed, the importance of my right hon. Friend's mission to Japan. Already we have 88 projects this year, involving 6,000 jobs, as a result of inward investment, and that number is up on the numbers applying to the same period last year and in 1985.

Mr. Anderson: Is the Minister aware that that so-called dramatic improvement has led to male unemployment in my constituency more than doubling? Yet the Welsh Office, in a typical piece of job destruction, has stopped the Nan Tong cotton mill project, which we had hoped would be launched in my constituency, by refusing adequate money. Will the Minister tell us whether, even at this stage, he is prepared to re-examine that project, which would have brought more than 300 extra jobs to an area that needs them desperately? What is the latest position?

Mr. Roberts: The position relating to the Nan Tong project, which involved expenditure of £25 million for the creation of 300 jobs, was explained by my right hon. Friend on 26 October. Of course we are not complacent about the position in Wales. However, unemployment has been falling for the past 17 months, and in the hon. Gentleman's county of West Glamorgan there has been a fall of 2·4 per cent. over the past year.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that a large part of unemployment in Wales has been structural unemployment, caused by the decline in the old manufacturing industries, and that we should welcome the new industries which have come to Wales and which are producing many new jobs?

Mr. Roberts: My hon. Friend is quite right. When I referred to the position in 1979, the change in our structure had just begun. The Labour Government had had the experience of closing down the steel mills at Ebbw Vale and Cardiff, but there was far more to come, and that is what the present Government have had to endure. What we have also done, however, is to secure new jobs through inward investment and by encouraging the expansion of businesses that are already in Wales.

Mr. Livsey: Will the Minister authorise a study to quantify how many young people are forced to leave rural

Wales to seek work in England and elsewhere? This is an immense problem, and I believe that it hides the true unemployment level in Wales.

Mr. Roberts: It was because people were leaving mid-Wales, in particular, that we have encouraged Mid Wales Development in all the efforts that it has made to provide work opportunities there—and, indeed, in rural Wales generally. We have also encouraged the Welsh Development Agency to move into the rural areas, and we look forward to the promotion of businesses in such areas so that we can keep our young people there.

Good Old Age Initiative

7. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate the number and total value of schemes that have now been approved under the good old age initiative.

Mr. Grist: Nine projects with a total estimated value of just under £3·5 million have now been approved under the elderly initiative grant scheme.

Mr. Jones: As £1 million was promised to Wales under the auspices of this scheme, will the Under-Secretary of State explain why there has been such a small take-up in Wales? Will he consider making the balance available to Welsh local authorities on a per capita basis, in accordance with the number of elderly people in each local authority?

Mr. Grist: I think that I understand the hon. Gentleman's problem in his island constituency. This scheme began in January 1987. Its purpose was to create original schemes to help the elderly that could be demonstrated to other parts of the Principality. We were looking for originality of schemes. Originality has been the problem with regard to take-up. Nine schemes have been approved so far. We hope that many more schemes will be approved, and we have been urging local authorities to look into the matter.

Wildlife Appeal

8. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he next intends meeting representatives of conservation groups in Wales to discuss the progress of the Welsh wildlife appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no present plans to meet conservation groups to discuss the progress of the Welsh wildlife appeal. I am pleased that the Welsh Office has been able to contribute £10,000 towards the costs of organising the appeal, and of course the Government already give financial support to some of the bodies involved in it.

Mr. Davies: I assure the Minister that that support is very welcome, but I suggest that he should seek a meeting with the conservation groups in Wales to discuss conservation in the Principality. Will he discuss in particular with the conservation groups the threat that is posed to the estuarine environments of south Wales? Three are protected by either national or international accords, but they are threatened by the construction of barrages across them. What assurances or reassurances is the Minister able to give that environmental considerations will be of prime importance either before or during the progress of those schemes?

Mr. Grist: Each scheme will have to be looked at in its own right. Therefore, I cannot give a blanket answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. A meeting with Ministers, or an appeal, is a matter for the organisers. The Government's attitude to conservation cannot be impugned. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 dramatically improved the framework of nature conservation.

Regional Aid

9. **Sir Raymond Gower:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many regional selective assistance and regional development grants have been made or offered for projects in Wales in the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In the 12 months to 31 October there have been 153 offers of regional selective assistance, and 1,390 regional development grant approvals.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my hon. Friend able to say how this assistance has been spread across Wales? Has a certain proportion of this assistance gone to those areas in Wales that most need help of this kind?

Mr. Roberts: The assistance and the grants have been spread fairly evenly throughout Wales. As one would expect, special attention has been paid to the highly industrialised areas. However, there has been a fairly even spread, not only across Wales, but as between overseas companies and British or Welsh-based companies.

Mr. Rowlands: If it is such a great success story, will the Minister tell the House how many people were in full-time employment in Wales in 1979, and how many are in full-time employment now?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman knows the answer to that question. More people were in employment in Wales in 1979, but I am also right in saying that at that time there was considerable hidden unemployment. The trend was downwards, and the people of Wales knew it. That is why we were elected. As for the investment to which I have just referred, that involves £104 million in grant, with a total investment of £767 million. Nearly 24,000 new jobs are forecast, and over 2,000 jobs have been safeguarded. That is very different from the position in 1979.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the Minister confirm that as unemployment in Wales has risen the Government have reduced the amount of money that is available for regional assistance and the number of areas that qualify for it? Will he also confirm that fewer jobs are available today in Wales than in 1979 and that the increase in employment is explained by the number of people leaving Wales to look for jobs rather than by a real increase in the number of jobs in Wales?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman's last point is absolutely wrong. The fact is that unemployment in Wales has been going down for the past 17 months. Wales has had a faster decline in unemployment than almost any other region of the United Kingdom. There is no getting away from those facts.

With regard to regional assistance, as my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Autumn Statement, regional assistance is due to be increased. I know that the hon. Member for Caernarfon

(Mr. Wigley) is arguing with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor about the figures, but I will leave that argument to them.

Rechem International

10. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, in the light of Mr. Justice Garland's support for further investigation, he will reconsider his decision not to initiate an inquiry into the activities of Rechem International, Pontypool, Gwent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No, Sir. I think that the hon. Gentleman mistook the tenor of Mr. Justice Garland's address to the jury. However, as my right hon. Friend has stated, should any new evidence come to light which would warrant further study he would reconsider the position. At present no such evidence has been produced.

Mr. Murphy: In considering that response, has the Minister taken into account the recent explosion and fire at the Rechem plant and the reports surrounding it? Does he agree that he is at variance with the weight of public opinion in Gwent and Torfaen on this matter? When will he realise that the fears and suspicions of the community will be allayed only when a public inquiry is held?

Mr. Grist: As I have said to the hon. Gentleman, if new evidence comes to light the position will be reconsidered, but there has been no new evidence. The matter is hotly disputed, and the hon. Gentleman and his predecessor have done little to allay people's fears, probably unwisely.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Private Health Scheme

25. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what facilities the Church Commissioners offer those on their payroll for contributions to private health schemes to be deducted from their salaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): The Commissioners make such deductions for their staff if asked. They are ready to do the same for clergymen, but they are not aware of any widespread demand for this.

Mr. Greenway: Will the Church Commissioners give medical help and assistance to bishops and clergy with specific medical difficulties, including counselling them out of homosexuality where that is a problem, in view of last week's unsatisfactory decision in the Synod?

Mr. Alison: It is not strictly the Church Commissioners' responsibility to provide funds for medical treatment for clergy. However, my hon. Friend's point is less a matter of medical necessity and more one of the proper direction of the human will.

Mr. Frank Field: May I invite the right hon. Gentleman to return to the original question and ask whether he is aware that the Church Commissioners have distributed information about private health schemes with salary cheques? If so, what payment was made to them for that? I do not necessarily expect an answer now, but I would be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would write to me or provide a written answer.

Mr. Alison: I understand that in one diocese served by 240 clergy a circular was issued as part of a canvass to discover whether there was any interest in private medical schemes. Only 12 clergy expressed interest when canvassed, and only five eventually joined a preferential scheme. If my answer does not fully meet the hon. Gentleman's points, I will, of course, after studying the question, write to him.

Storm Damage

26. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, if any estimate has been made of the damage to property for which the Church Commissioners are responsible, caused by the hurricane in October.

Mr. Alison: A preliminary assessment of storm damage to the Commissioners' property indicates an estimated cost of some £660,000. Most of this relates to the Commissioners' agricultural estates. About £60,000 worth of damage relates to bishops' houses.

Mr. Chapman: Do the Church Commissioners insure their properties against what I can best describe as "acts of God"? If not, does that not show a certain lack of financial probity? If they do insure their property against "acts of God", does that not show a certain lack of faith?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend seems to impale me on the horns of an awkward dilemma. The answer is that the Church Commissioners are men and women of robust faith, and it is precisely for that reason that we would not seek to circumvent the Divine displeasure via the insurance industry. To do so might incur irreparable damage to that worthy industry.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Historic Churches Preservation Trust has evidence that many millions of pounds worth of damage has been caused to historic churches? I appreciate that that is not a direct responsibility of the commissioners, but is he prepared to join the trust and others, if necessary, in approaching his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for extra assistance to repair those marvellous and irreplaceable buildings?

Mr. Alison: I fully appreciate the point made by my hon. Friend and, without commitment, we shall of course consider whether there is anything in these exceptional circumstances that the Church Commissioners can do to help churches and parishes faced with heavy bills for damage. My hon. Friend will understand that every pound that we contribute towards repairing the fabric of a church necessarily means that a pound is taken away from the stipends of the clergy and the contributions to their pensions. It is our priority to look after the incumbent, the human fabric, but I shall consider the point raised by my hon. Friend.

Churches (Funds)

27. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what funding the Church Commissioners have made available in the last year for which figures are available to churches still in active use.

Mr. Alison: The commissioners are not generally empowered to use their funds for churches in use, but they sometimes make grants in individual cases in their capacity as landowners, where they have a chancel repair liability or where they own land in the parish. Such grants amounted to £210,000 in 1986.

Mr. Baldry: Although the human fabric is vital, many of our churches which are in use are of considerable historic, architectural and cultural value and often the parishes are simply too small to support them. Will the Church Commissioners consider whether they can take a lead with English Heritage and other such bodies to see whether they can raise far more money nationally to ensure that these vital parts of our national heritage are preserved for posterity and future generations?

Mr. Alison: I suspect that my hon. Friend may have a constituency interest in his question. I took the trouble to verify whether there might be scope for helping a particular parish church in his constituency where, alas, I find that we have no chancel responsibility and own no land. In certain circumstances the Church Commissioners contribute towards the fabric repair of some churches. I must repeat that funds available for the repair and maintenance of the fabric are, pound for pound, funds taken away from the needs of the human element in our work, which must have the top priority.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman take this opportunity to confirm that, whatever the Church Commissioners may have spent in the past on funding churches, there has been a momentous announcement that they are to fund to the tune of £1 million a year the re-invigoration of the Church in the inner cities as a contribution to the church urban fund? When the relevant Measure comes before the House, will the right hon. Gentleman encourage the House to approve the £1 million a year and support the call to the nation for £18 million, so that much of what is dead in the Church in the inner cities can be brought back to life for the good of the Church and the cities of our nation?

Mr. Alison: I am glad that the hon. Gentlemen has referred to the church urban fund and the £1 million contribution that the Commissioners are hoping to be able to make. I see very little likelihood of the House wishing to impede this perfectly desirable, straightforward and generous response of the Church Commissioners to a manifest need.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To my right hon. Friend's knowledge, have the Church Commissioners considered the possibility of selling their farms to the sitting tenants to raise capital with which they could keep in good repair churches whose parishes are too poor to do so for themselves?

Mr. Alison: I must remind my hon. Friend that the primary responsibility for the maintenance of the fabric of parish churches rests with the congregations of those churches, many of whom, when faced with a particular need, show an extraordinary capacity to raise funds to maintain the fabric, as do the dioceses. It would not be advantageous for the Church Commissioners to liquidate their capital assets for short-term repair needs, which could probably best be undertaken by the congregations and dioceses involved.

Mr. Skinner: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in the coalfield areas one danger to the fabric of churches is British Coal's tardiness and in some cases its refusal to make settlements for mining subsidence? Is he further aware that I had to threaten British Coal with a debate in Bolsover church to get negotiations started? Will the Church Commissioners take steps to contact the Philistines at British Coal and ensure that settlements are forthcoming not just for the churches, but for residents in surrounding areas, such as those of Hillstown and Bolsover?

Mr. Alison: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman referred to "Philistines", which is the Old Testament term, rather than to "heretics", which is the New Testament term. The hon. Gentleman has raised an extremely important issue. I shall be glad to try to help him in relation to Bolsover church, and I give a ready undertaking to see what can be done to press British Coal to expedite and bring to a rapid conclusion any obligations that it may have with regard to subsidence. In my constituency British Coal has generally been fairly rapid in trying to reach settlements with those affected, but I will certainly look into the case that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Newspapers

28. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will take steps to ensure that the Library stocks the *Caribbean Times*, the *Asian Times*, the *African Times*, the *Voice*, the *Gleaner* and the *New Life* newspaper; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): I understand that the Library currently takes the *African Times*, *Asian Times* and *Caribbean Times* on a regular basis, and that the *Gleaner* is taken by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association headquarters. The need for further newspapers is kept under continuous review. I am sure that the hon. Lady will appreciate that because of space restrictions and the staff time involved there is a limit to the number of titles taken. I should say, however, that I personally have a great deal of sympathy with the request for the *Gleaner* and will be adding my representations to those of the hon. Lady.

Ms. Abbott: Is the Leader of the House aware that the Library began to take the *African Times*, the *Asian Times* and the *Carribean Times* only in October this year and that when I first came to the House the Library stocked no minority papers at all? Will he join me in deploring the insensitivity of a Library which stocks magazines for stamp collectors and country landowners, but none reflecting ethnic minority society?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that the fault lies with the Library so much as with those who use it. There was no evident demand for the Library to hold stocks of the papers to which the hon. Lady referred until a request was made last summer by an hon. Member. Once the need was identified, the Library took steps to satisfy it.

Mr. Stokes: Will my right hon. Friend be kind enough to arrange for the Library to stock my favourite journal, which is frequently mentioned by Peter Simple in *The Daily Telegraph*—the Reactionary Herald and Feudal Times?

Mr. Wakeham: I will certainly see that my hon. Friend's request is heard in the right quarters.

Select Committees

30. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he has any proposals to change the arrangements for the setting up of Select Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Leader of the House aware that it is totally unacceptable that there should be any kind of Tory veto as to which Labour Members serve on Select Committees, and that it is a form of impertinence to suggest or imply that active members of CND are too disloyal to serve on the Defence Committee? In view of the allegations made in a number of books it is intended to set up a further Select Committee to look into the Westland affair to ascertain who, if anyone, lied, and will the Committee be set up in such a way as to ensure that the civil servants involved can give evidence to it?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has much basis for some of his allegations. Select Committees are set up by the House. The House decides who shall serve on them. Every Member is entitled to express a view, but in the end Select Committees are set up by a decision of the House.

Mr. Higgins: They have not yet been set up, but under the present arrangements some Select Committees have been concerned with proposals to increase the resources going to the European Community. Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that Wednesday's debate will not pre-empt a decision and that the Committee will be given time to look into the matter before a final decision is taken?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not sure that I can give my right hon. Friend the undertaking that he wants, but I shall see to it that Select Committees are set up as soon as possible.

Mineral Waters

32. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal what progress has been made in selecting British mineral waters for the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: I understand that the Refreshment Department has recently organised a series of tastings of British mineral and spring waters and will be making proposals to the appropriate Sub-Committee of the Services Committee. A decision will be taken when that Sub-Committee has had an opportunity to consider the matter.

Mr. Steen: The House owes a good deal of gratitude to the Chairman of the Services Committee and his excellent staff for giving the House a chance to taste more than 50 commercial mineral waters from all over Britain. When the Services Committee makes its final decision about which English, Scottish and Welsh waters are to be drunk in the House, will my right hon. Friend ensure that the foreign waters currently drunk in the House are expelled from the list? I understand that foreign water was not part of the original water that was tasted by the water tasting Committee, which tasted only British water.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly hope that in any tasting of British water, there was only British water to taste. These are weighty matters, which will be dealt with ably by the Chairman of the Sub-Committee that deals with refreshments once it gets going.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: May I ask my right hon. Friend whether, in the absence of Epping Forest water, Exmoor water, which is extremely good, was tasted?

Mr. Wakeham: I hear from hon. Friends behind me that it was.

Select Committees

33. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal what progress is being made with the establishment of Select Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: Motions on behalf of the Committee of Selection proposing the membership of all 14 departmental Select Committees are at present on the Order Paper. I hope that all the departmental Select Committees will soon be re-established.

Mr. Wigley: Will the right hon. Gentleman admit that the situation for Scotland and Wales this year is totally grotesque? The House should ensure that the Committees on Wales and Scotland reflect the membership of the House in Wales and Scotland. That happens in the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees. As reports come back to the Floor of the House, and before any action can be taken on them, is there anything unreasonable in moving such a proposal?

Mr. Wakeham: The Committee of Selection includes a representative from the minority parties. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that motions tabled by the Chairman of the Committee of Selection are amendable, that hon. Members of any party may object to them, and that, if necessary, a full debate may take place to resolve any issues.

Mr. Sims: My right hon. Friend will recall our recent exchange of correspondence in which I drew attention to the burden on the Education, Science and Arts Select Committee and suggested that it was unable to give adequate consideration to scientific matters. At the time he was unable to support my proposals to set up a Select Committee on Science and Technology, but, in the light of the support given to that idea by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, will he reconsider his decision before these matters are finalised?

Mr. Wakeham: The disbandment of the former Select Committee on Science and Technology was part of a package adopted by the House when the present comprehensive system for departmental Select Committees was established in 1979. The structure of our Select Committee system is always a matter for the House to decide.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Leader of the House agree that it is unacceptable for Tory Members or, worse, officials from the Ministry of Defence, to suggest that certain Labour Members are unfit to serve on the House of Commons Defence Select Committee because they might be security risks? Does he also agree that history shows that if officials at the Ministry of Defence are concerned about people who betray their country, they should look not at the ranks of the Labour party but at the public school boys who support the Establishment?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not accept much of what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I know of no statement from the Ministry of Defence about Select Committees. Every hon. Member is perfectly entitled to have a view as to who are the right and best people to serve on any Select Committee. That is why the House will eventually decide the membership.

Haemophiliacs (Financial Assistance)

3.30 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about haemophiliacs who have become infected with the AIDS virus as a result of treatment with infected blood products. I should explain that I am doing so in the unavoidable absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is unwell.

As the House knows, the position under successive Governments has been that, while compensation may be sought through the courts if there is a question of negligence, there is no state scheme of "no fault" compensation for those damaged by medical treatment.

The Haemophilia Society has, however, put to us a powerful case that the position of haemophiliacs is wholly exceptional and should be treated as such. Their employment prospects and insurance status were already affected by the haemophilia itself. The treatment that led to their infection was designed to help them to live as near a normal life as possible. The hereditary nature of haemophilia can, and in some cases does, mean that more than one member of the same family may be affected.

The Government, having considered all the circumstances, have concluded that it would be right to recognise the unique position of haemophiliacs infected with this virus. We therefore propose to make an ex-gratia grant of £10 million to the Haemophilia Society to enable it to establish a special trust fund. It will be able to make payments to the affected individuals and families throughout the United Kingdom, and to do so with greater flexibility than could readily be achieved in any other way.

The House will wish to know that we have put this proposal to the society, which has welcomed it warmly. The society has asked for advice and assistance in administering the fund, which we have gladly agreed to arrange.

The grant of £10 million is being made from the reserve. When the full details of the grant and trust fund have been settled there will be an exchange of letters with the society. I will arrange for copies to be put in the Library.

I know that the whole House wishes to express its sympathy to the individuals and families who have been affected in this tragic way. I hope that the whole House will welcome this action to translate that sympathy into practical help.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): First, will the Minister convey my good wishes to the Secretary of State and the hope that it will not be long before he returns to the Dispatch Box, where I have a number of unfinished arguments to settle with him?

Every hon. Member who attended last month's lobby and who witnessed the courage and restraint of the representative of affected haemophiliacs will welcome the statement that the Government have a duty to help affected haemophiliacs because they were infected by the Health Service to which they had come for treatment. The Minister's conversion is all the more welcome because it reverses the position, which he had been maintaining only six months ago, that the Government had no such duty. He will appreciate that, having recognised that in principle he has a duty to help those infected, he must not now short-change them.

Will the Minister explain how he has costed the fund and come up with £10 million, or was it a convenient round figure? Is he aware that, per head, it represents just over £8,000 for every person infected and that that is less than half the capital sum that is paid by his Department in cases of vaccine damage? Is he satisfied that such a modest sum is enough, particularly when the most pressing need for the families of the victims is to keep a roof over their heads by clearing a mortgage?

As the Minister has appointed the Haemophilia Society as the agent for the scheme, will he undertake to review with it the size of the fund? Would it not be unfair to put the society in the false position of being responsible for the scheme without providing the resources that it finds necessary?

Will the Minister take this opportunity to condemn the ill-informed and unfeeling discrimination against haemophiliacs who are antibody positive, who have frequently lost their jobs, in some cases lost private tenancies, and in nearly all cases involving children who have encountered prejudice at school? No amount of money can compensate for the humiliation of such prejudice.

Will the Minister associate himself with the remarks of the chief medical officer at the weekend that no case has been recorded in the world of AIDS being transmitted from doctor to patient? Will he take this opportunity to join me in regretting the latest sensationalist campaign of the tabloids publicly to name the doctor, which increases public anxiety and can only encourage further discrimination against those who are antibody positive, whether haemophiliacs or not?

Mr. Newton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks about the Secretary of State, and I shall certainly pass them on to him.

On a number of occasions I have commented on the difficulty of a compensation scheme. This is not a compensation scheme. That must be made clear. It is a recognition of a special and unique combination of circumstances, and I am glad to make that recognition.

On a matter of the £10 million, we arrived at a broad estimate of a sum that we felt would give significant help to the group affected, recognising that to calculate in terms of a specific sum per individual would not take account of the great differences between the circumstances of the individuals affected. That is one reason why we have not attempted to have a regulated scheme. For example, some may be young single men, others may be older men with families, and so on. On that basis we have arrived at this sum and this flexibility of scheme.

The Haemophilia Society will not, in effect, be acting as the Government's agent. It will be up to the society to decide how to administer the £10 million. I must make it clear that we will make this sum of money available to the society at once and in full as soon as the arrangements can be made. Disbursement will necessarily take place over a longer period, and the trust will have the benefit of the income from whatever capital remains at any point in time, which on that sum will increase significantly the total resources available.

I wish to associate myself wholly with the remarks about discrimination against haemophiliacs and their children, or haemophiliacs themselves, wherever and whenever it may occur, because of infection with the virus. I welcome the opportunity to do that.

In respect of the chief medical officer's remarks over the weekend and on previous occasions, it is my view that the maintenance of confidentiality in these matters is absolutely essential to the effective safeguarding of the public. If confidentiality is in question, people who might otherwise be a risk will be less inclined to come forward and take advice that may minimise that risk. It is important that that should be understood.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome statement. Is he aware that the campaign by Back Benchers of all parties, in which my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) played a particular part, shows the House of Commons at its best? We were all deeply moved by the tragedy of two wholly innocent victims of this appalling disease, and we worked together to achieve justice for them. We are truly grateful to my hon. Friend and his colleagues for the fact that they have listened and acted. However, is my hon. Friend aware that it may be necessary for us to approach him again in order to assist this finite number of victims, in the knowledge that he and his right hon. Friend will once again respond sympathetically?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks; I note his final observation.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I thank the Minister for his statement, and my gratitude will be echoed by those people in north Wales who have made representations to him on this matter.

Will the hon. Gentleman clarify a couple of points? As he has emphasised that this is not compensation, will he say whether consideration is still being given to the principle of compensation? Will he confirm that it in no way debars any individual from going to court if he so wishes? Will he give an assurance that he will seek additional resources if it transpires that the demand for help from this fund is greater than it appears at present?

Mr. Newton: We have shown our general willingness to consider the circumstances of cases that have been put before us. That has been amply demonstrated by my statement. As to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, there is no way in which this statement, or any other, can prevent individuals from taking legal action for compensation on the grounds of negligence, and I certainly would not seek to do so. The hon. Gentleman made a third point, but I am afraid that I have forgotten it.

Mr. Wigley: It was about adequate funds.

Mr. Newton: I have commented on that and expressed our willingness to consider cases.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I thank my hon. Friend for his statement. If the House has been seen at its best in persuading the Government, the Government have been seen at their best in responding swiftly to the perceived need. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the door is still open for discussions with the Haemophilia Society on the administration of existing benefits, in addition to those available from this special fund, particularly with regard to how confidentiality can be preserved in applying for them and how those who have to adjudicate — particularly on appeals for attendance allowance—could possibly be helped by circulars from his Department?

Mr. Newton: I am conscious of the important role that my hon. Friend has played in representing the interests of the Haemophilia Society. As to confidentiality, normally all information given to social security officers in respect of claims is confidential. If there are some additional anxieties—I understand that there are, or may be, some —we should be glad to discuss them with the society. In general, we shall be seeking to make available to the society, in conjunction with the new trust fund and on any other matter that may concern it, the best possible advice that we can make available, and we shall seek to work closely with it.

As to the attendance allowance, my hon. Friend will be aware that there are particular problems that go much wider than the cases that we are discussing over the payment of attendance allowance for short periods. I cannot undertake that they can readily be resolved in this context.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I congratulate the Minister on his statement, on acting so swiftly, on drawing the funds from the Treasury and, not least, on persuading the Haemophilia Society to accept the terms. What will the Government's response be if individual members of the society say that the terms of the settlement are unsatisfactory? Will sums from the fund be completely disregarded for supplementary benefit purposes?

Mr. Newton: The issue of how to administer the fund will be a matter for the Haemophilia Society. I do not envisage a system of appeal to Ministers or to some other tribunal, which would be possible only under a statutory scheme.

Such a system would destroy the merit of flexibility and individuality, which we perceive as the main merits of the proposal.

As to the supplementary benefit scheme, or its successor from April 1988, the income support scheme, which will have different capital rules, one of the matters that the society will wish to consider in administering the fund is the interaction between payments and the social security system in general. That is a matter on which we shall seek to give the best possible advice.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Can my hon. Friend clarify two matters? First, will the Haemophilia Society be able to make payments from the £10 million capital, bearing in mind that there will be a decreasing commitment? Secondly, the question asked by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) was not adequately answered. Will payments made out of the fund by the society be disregarded, for both taxation and social security purposes? It is clear that they should be. It is within the Minister's power, or that of my right hon. Friend, to ensure that, in terms of regulations, they are counted as disregards.

Mr. Newton: Of course the trust will be able to make payments out of the capital. When I referred to the income, I was simply saying that it is unlikely that all the capital will be disbursed in the early period, because, unfortunately and tragically, the problem is still gathering ground. However, the trust will be able to make payments of capital from the fund.

On the second question, it is not possible to generalise, because this will depend upon the nature, for example, of the payments and the purposes for which they are made. I note carefully the concern expressed by my hon. Friend. This is clearly a matter that can be covered in our further conversations with the Haemophilia Society.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I welcome the Minister's undertaking to review the total sum available. No recompense can be made for the harm done to these families by the Health Service because blood was imported from the United States of America when we should have relied upon our own and much better blood products. Is the Minister willing to give similar consideration to those who are not haemophiliacs but who were damaged in a similar way? An example is the woman with four children who was given a blood transfusion when she was expecting her fourth child. This woman now has AIDS, is alone and poor, is on supplementary benefit, is dying and is terrified about the future of h[illegible] children. Will she be given some help as well?

Mr. Newton: Our present view is that the combination of circumstances affecting haemophiliacs infected by the AIDS virus, along the lines that I described in my statement in reporting what the Haemophilia Society said to us, makes theirs a unique and exceptional case, and we feel that it is right to treat it in that way.

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): Will my hon. Friend accept the thanks of all those hon. Members who attended the recent extremely moving meeting at the House of Commons with the Haemophilia Society? Is he aware that at that meeting evidence was given to hon. Members of the terrible barriers experienced by AIDS victims when they try to obtain mortgages or insurance cover? Will he use his influence with the organisations concerned to try to remove those barriers, so that these tragic victims can live as normal lives as possible?

Mr. Newton: I am anxious to do anything that I can to assist in whatever way possible. One of the things that we have in mind for the trust fund and for its application is that it might be able to assist individuals to overcome such problems.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Will the Minister use his influence with the Secretary of State for Scotland so that funds are provided for centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow, which are funded only by local health authorities and which need cash immediately?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to that.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): May I add my thanks for the statement? I am sad that it was not possible for the Secretary of State to make the statement, and I hope that he will be fully recovered soon.

If the society wishes, will it be possible for a permanent adviser to the trust to be appointed by my hon. Friend's Department?

Mr. Newton: If that proposal were put to us by the society, we should certainly consider it. We have already made it absolutely clear in conversations with the society that the Department will provide whatever advice it needs. The only point at which I would cavil is whether such an adviser would need to be permanent, but that is something about which we can talk.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I thank the Minister for his statement, which I welcome. He was at great pains to say that this is not compensation, but I, with many others, will regard it as such. We should not be worried about that, because the system under which one must prove negligence before one can have compensation is time-consuming, expensive and in no one's interest. Will the Minister have discussions with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is responsible for health in Scotland, who wrote to me on 30 October turning down my request for a scheme of compensation for haemophiliacs, to tell him that he has been overruled, and to explain why he has been overruled?

Mr. Newton: I do not propose to adopt such an aggressive line with the House or with any of my colleagues. Nor will I engage in further argument, which some might regard as merely semantic, about what is or is not compensation. Legally, this is not a compensation scheme — no more than the vaccine damage payment scheme was a compensation scheme. About 10 years ago the Pearson committee—this is the point that I failed to pick up from the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley)—examined these issues carefully and came out against no fault compensation in respect of medical accidents. The question raises issues that are much wider than those that we are discussing today.

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): Does my hon. Friend accept that, although his statement will be greatly welcomed, not only by the victims but by those who care for them, he must ensure that disbursements from the trust fund are made as soon as possible, because many victims have been suffering severe financial difficulty for some time.

Mr. Newton: Just as we made our decision within a fortnight of meeting representatives of the Haemophilia Society, so we hope to get the trust into operation and the money paid as early as possible. I hope that that means weeks, not months.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Minister may know that several families in my constituency have communicated their distress to me. Does he understand that the recent all-party meeting in the House was one of the most compelling and effective ever held here? Although I thank the Minister for his statement, will he urgently consider revising upwards the money on offer?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I have said. This is an adequate and proper sum, which has been warmly welcomed by the society. We have shown continually that we are willing to consider any proper cases that are put to us.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that this measure will be warmly welcomed in the north of England, especially by the many bodies which have campaigned on this issue, led by the *Northern Echo*? Will he assure the House that the money is coming from the Treasury, not from the DHSS funds? Will it go to the widows and orphans of those who have already died from this lamentable condition?

Mr. Newton: I am conscious of the feeling about this in northern England, not least because, somewhat unexpectedly, about six or seven months ago I was interviewed on the subject by the *Northern Echo*. It will be open to the trust to make available money to the widows and other dependants of those who, unhappily, have died from this infection.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Although the House is gratified that a speedy decision was made, as the Minister said, the problem is still gathering. Many of us believe that, against that gathering problem, if the statement were taken as the final word it would be rather Scrooge-like. Will the Minister's insistence that this is not compensation be used by Departments to argue against benefit cases that will be affected by compensation? Will he review the amount given as the position becomes clearer during the next few months?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman implied in his question, it is difficult to be sure exactly what the scale of the problem will be. With haemophiliacs, as with others infected with the virus, we do not know how many will contract full-blown AIDS. The range of issues in respect of AIDS are being examined continually as our information improves.

On the other parts of the hon. Gentleman's question, I do not think that I can add anything to what I have said on earlier occasions.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my hon. Friend in a position to say that there are no circumstances which a haemophiliac can be adversely affected if treated by a doctor with AIDS?

Mr. Newton: As I think has been made quite clear, there is no evidence of patients of any sort—haemophiliacs or others—being infected in the way that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I welcome the Minister's statement, which represents a change of heart by the Government. I recognise the point made about an ex-gratia payment and the fact that the Minister has not said that the door is closed for an increased advance payment of the ex-gratia payment. However, can the Minister assure the House that there will be no technical difficulties in payments being made to patients who live north of the border?

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman studies the text of my statement he will find that the words "throughout the United Kingdom" were included. They were specifically intended to include, among other places, areas north of the border.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): While warmly welcoming the speed, scope and compassion of the Government's response to the problem, may I ask my hon. Friend two questions that go back to the original cause of the tragedy — the importation of contaminated blood supplies from United States drug companies? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to reassure the public that any further imported blood supplies will be tested to ensure that no contamination of this kind can possibly occur again?

Secondly, on a legal point, as we all understand that AIDS victims who are haemophiliacs cannot possibly afford to take any legal action, will my hon. Friend speak to the Law Officers to see whether Government-funded legal action might be taken against the drug companies, which might result in substantial damages of the kind that could amount to some welcome extra funding for the Haemophilia Society's trust fund?

Mr. Newton: I shall draw the latter suggestion to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends. No doubt the Haemophilia Society will also note it.

Imported — and home-produced — blood products have been heat treated for the past two years and more, and we are confident that everything that can conceivably be done — in a world in which absolute guarantees cannot be given—has been done to ensure the safety of blood supplies of all types. It is therefore unlikely in the extreme that any further cases of infection will occur in this way.

As a result of the major investment in the new blood products laboratory at Elstree, it is hoped that this country will become self-sufficient in blood products by the year after next.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Are not the Government really ducking the whole issue of proper compensation? Is not an average of only £8,300 insignificant when one considers the scale of the problem? Why have successive Governments refused properly to examine the subject of no fault compensation? Will a whole group of people once again not be compensated, when what is wrong with them derives directly from a deficiency in hospital operations?

Mr. Newton: I cannot deal properly with the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question without ranging over the whole ground of the Pearson report. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman looks at it so as to understand the reasons for the position adopted, as he says, by successive Governments.

With regard to the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question, I shall not repeat what I said earlier, but I am mildly disturbed that the hon. Gentleman's response is so much less generous than that of the Haemophilia Society.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I welcome the Minister's statement, but I believe that the sum is less than adequate. Will the Minister give an assurance that if that proves to be the case, the sum is reviewable and that he will report to the House in, say, three months on the operation of this scheme?

If a person in these unique circumstances is in receipt of supplementary benefit and receives a sum of money in excess of £3,000 before April, will he or she not be denied certain amounts of money paid to him or her by way of supplementary benefit?

Mr. Newton: I have already said in response to earlier questions that a considerable amount will depend on the way in which the payments are made. We shall seek to ensure that the society has the best available advice.

With regard to the first half of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have made it clear, and will say it again, that we have looked at the case that has been presented to us. We believe that this is a proper sum, but of course we will not be closed to representations that might be made at a later stage. Reporting will be primarily a matter for the Haemophilia Society under the arrangements that I have proposed, but I shall consider whether there is an appropriate way in wich I can make available some sort of report to the House.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry barr): I add my warm thanks to the Minister for the statement and the way in which action has been taken so speedily. We note that he has left he door open, because, as the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) said, we are dealing with a finite group of people; a group which by definition, from the Minister's other answers, cannot alter in any way. It cannot grow. This cannot happen again.

Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that a non-statutory scheme funded by an ex-gratia payment means

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

that there will be no accountability to the House for the operation of the scheme? There will be no questions or appeals—nothing at all. Therefore, it is crucial that we settle this once and for all, and here and now. Does the Minister accept that neither the public nor the House would want any of that money to find its way back to the Treasury via the tax system, or to his own Department, via clawback? Does the Minister further accept that the issue of interaction should not even operate? We can disregard attendance allowance and mobility allowance, so technically it is easier to deal with the matter. Why cannot the Minister say that now?

Mr. Newton: Because there are a number of issues, especially in view of the speed with which we have acted, as the hon. Gentleman said, that need further consideration. I note the points that have been raised on both sides of the House today.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks, the flexibility that goes with the scheme has certain disadvantages of the type that he outlined. I can say only that, having given a great deal of thought to the matter over some months, I am convinced that the basic nature of what we propose is by far and away the most sensible and satisfactory way of providing flexible help to those who need it.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I welcome this important gesture by the Government, but the Minister must be aware that he has put a heavy burden of responsibility on the Haemophilia Society. Will he give an undertaking that it will be possible for either himself as Minister, or the House, to return to the subject to consider further the possibility of increasing the funds or the practical back-up that will be available to the society in future?

Mr. Newton: On the basis of some years' experience, I have never found it possible to prevent the House from returning to a subject if it wished to do so.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to ask a question on the statement? He was not rising during questions on the statement.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Did the hon. Gentleman hear the statement?

Mr. Allen: I was present throughout the statement.

Will the Minister tell us whether the Treasury has assessed the net cost of the scheme? Is it less than £10 million?

Mr. Newton: I have no reason to suppose that the net cost will be less. We certainly do not think that it will be intended to be less than the £10 million. The position is that £10 million has been made available from the reserve.

Several questions were raised this afternoon. Hon. Members were right to raise them and we shall consider them. No doubt such questions will be raised with us by the Haemophilia Society, but I cannot say more than that today.

The Grove Hospital, Ilkley

4.3 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed emergency closure of The Grove hospital, Ilkley."

One quarter of National Health Service convalescent beds are located there.

The matter is urgent because, at its meeting tomorrow, the Leeds Western health authority will have before it a proposal to close The Grove almost immediately as an emergency measure and as part of a package intended to deal with overspending of £800,000 in this financial year. The community health council has strongly opposed the closure and at its meeting last month, the health authority failed only narrowly by seven votes to five to throw out the closure proposal, but also resolved to consider fresh alternatives.

The reason why the House should discuss the matter is that a decision to accept an emergency closure at a time when the statutory procedures are in midstream would effectively tie the hands of Ministers, who can hardly consider objectively the future of a hospital, the doors of which have closed and the staff of which have been dispersed.

The matter is specific and important because on 7 April this year my hon. Friend the Minister for Health said in answer to a question from me in the House:

"Should there be objections from the relevant quarters"

—and there have been—the proposals

"would come to Ministers to determine".—[*Official Report*, 7 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 147.]

However, everyone realises that if the hospital were to be closed now, before the statutory procedures are completed and before objectors have even had a chance to put forward alternatives, the involvement of Ministers would be a parody of what Parliament intended. Such a move would subvert the democratic processes under which we operate and, by doing so, would undermine public confidence in the processes laid down by Parliament to ensure that the viewpoints of all concerned can be given full weight.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed emergency closure of The Grove hospital, Ilkley."

I listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said, but I regret that the matter that he has raised is not appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

4.6 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you look at what happened on the Third Reading of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill last week? As I understand it, no Privy Councillor moved the motion on Queen's consent during the process of Third Reading. If that is so, there is some doubt about the validity of Third Reading. According to page 1038 of "Erskine May", if Queen's consent is not indicated on Third Reading, that Third Reading is not valid. I gather that that happened in about 1851 on a railways Bill, which had to return for a further Third Reading. There was one other precedent when a Bill went to the other place, having not received Queen's consent. It made some progress there before the mistake was found. A different course of action was taken.

I hope that you will look into the matter, Mr. Speaker, because it was a controversial issue. I should think that if Queen's consent has not been given properly, the matter should come back to the House to be resolved.

Mr. Speaker: I certainly give the hon. Gentleman that undertaking.

Question Time

4.7 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, question hour is a cherished, if limited, period in which Back Benchers can question Cabinet Ministers. The session on Welsh questions lasts only 35 minutes, so I should like to ask for your help with a problem, because, although it may not be immediately apparent, some Ministers try to pay attention during your judgments.

You will have noticed this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, that the Secretary of State for Wales was not present on what would have been only his third opportunity to be questioned by Welsh Members since his appointment. As 30 of the 38 hon. Members representing Wales are on the Opposition Benches, and as the Secretary of State does not represent a Welsh seat, it is particularly important that he should be here to be made aware of Welsh problems. We understand that he is in Japan, and we wish him well on his mission, but three weeks elapse between each session of Welsh questions. The right hon. Gentleman could have gone to Japan in the three weeks either before or after today. Therefore, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, as custodian of Back-Bench interests, to say whether you would expect Cabinet Ministers to make every effort to be present, when their Department is due to answer questions.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not intolerable that the House should have to listen to the incompetent blatherings of the third choice for shadow Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that I can best deal with the matter. I received a letter from the Secretary of State saying that he could not be present at Question Time today. I note what the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) said, but it is not up to me to demand that anyone be present in the Chamber.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Bulgaria) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (France) (No. 2) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Nigeria) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Pakistan) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Belgium) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Malaysia) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That the matter of Economic, Industrial and Commercial Development of Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Orders of the Day

Consolidated Fund Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54(1) (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Immigration Bill

Order for Second Reading read

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill amends the Immigration Act 1971 in a number of necessary ways, but it leaves that Act as the foundation of our system of immigration control. The 1971 Act was the first comprehensive immigration statute and established a new system of immigration control for both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth citizens. It sought to bring primary immigration by heads of households down to a level which our crowded island could accommodate. The Act was introduced in the belief that there is a limit to the extent to which a society can accept large numbers of people from different cultures without unacceptable social tensions. That remains our view. It is not an anti-immigrant view; it is a realistic view.

It would not be in the interests of the ethnic minorities themselves if there were a prospect of further mass inward movement. That prospect would increase social tensions, particularly in our cities. That is why we say that firm immigration control is essential if we are to have good community relations. Since the 1971 Act, mass primary immigration has, indeed, ended, but we need to keep immigration control in good repair. As right hon. and hon. Members know, there is discretion and room for compassion in individual cases, and my hon. Friend and I exercise that discretion and compassion provided—and only provided—that the framework can be kept firm.

I doubt whether any change in immigration law will ever be free from controversy, but we bring forward the proposals in the Bill calmly and dispassionately. I hope that they can be examined in the House in that spirit. It is no part of our approach to raise the public temperature on these issues.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we could have taken a combative stance on this matter during the election campaign, but we deliberately refrained from doing so.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): What about the letter?

Mr. Hurd: If the hon. Lady thinks that my letter to Mr. Merchant—if that is the letter that she means—was combative, she has a remarkably low temperature on such matters. It was a low-key, realistic attempt to reply to inquiries about what we had in mind.

Ms. Short: I agree that the tone of the letter was not combative. My point is that the letter was written during the election campaign, thus bringing into that campaign promises of further immigration restrictions. The Home Secretary knows that very well.

Mr. Hurd: It was written because I happened to go to a meeting in Newcastle with leaders of the ethnic minorities in that city. They asked me whether I could find an opportunity to make plain the limited nature of what we had in mind. That is precisely what I did and I am glad that the hon. Lady acknowledges that it had that effect and struck the right note.

People who have arrived here in the past 40 years are varying and enriching our way of life, as earlier arrivals did before them, but new settlement has to be strictly limited. Between 1979 and 1985, the number of people coming here for settlement fell from 70,000 to 55,000. The figure for 1986 was even lower at 47,000, but there were special factors in that year following the rule changes in 1985 and a change of practice in right-of-abode cases. I do not seek to make a party point about the fall in settlement figures.

I think and hope that there is a broad political consensus that the days of unrestricted primary immigration are over. We shall continue to differ on questions of degree, but nearly all of us share a public commitment to firm but fair controls on immigration. The Bill gives further evidence of our determination to carry that commitment through in practice. However, if we are to maintain a firm immigration control we must be able to react to new demands and developments.

The immigration control system is under considerable pressure. I pay tribute to the immigration service, to the departmental staff at Croydon and to our posts overseas for the way in which they cope with the ever-increasing burden of work. Traffic through our airports and seaports rises inexorably. Last year there were 39 million passenger arrivals. There are also the pressures, which we share with other European countries, arising from the increasing number of asylum applicants. In responding to these pressures, we must be able to react quickly and effectively, and we have done so.

A year ago we extended visa controls to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and later to Ghana and Nigeria, in response to the scenes at our airports as large numbers of people arrived claiming that they were coming for a visit, and requiring careful examination.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Home Secretary aware that we have fewer political asylum applications per head of the population than any other industrial country, that there are fewer acceptances and that because of the attitude of the Home Office the general atmosphere in which anyone seeking political asylum in Britain is surrounded is one of unremitting hostility bordering on racism?

Mr. Hurd: I made a mistake in giving way to the hon. Gentleman. I am not talking about asylum applications and the Bill is not concerned with them. He knows that perfectly well. He deals with a subject which we have discussed often. We are discharging our obligations under the 1951 convention. The fact that there are fewer bogus asylum applications here than in some other countries is not a reason for relaxing our stance. The interpretation was before the House of Lords and we await its judgment. I have nothing further to say on that matter at the moment.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Home Secretary confirm that, since the introduction of the visa system, the refusal rate has more than doubled and that, therefore, in the past 12 months something like 20,000 men, women and children were refused visits? Will he also take the opportunity to deny rumours that he will introduce a maximum of six months for visitors seeking visas to enter the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I will come to the hon. Gentleman's second point in a moment. I cannot give the figures for refusals, but what has happened is that the procedure that used to take place, sometimes in circumstances of confusion and long delay at the airports and seaports, is now taking place overseas. It remains true that 90 per cent. of all visa applications are dealt with overseas within 24 hours of their being received. That is a remarkable record.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I assure my right hon. Friend that in my constituency the procedure is working very well and that in the few cases where there have been problems his office has been most helpful.

Mr. Hurd: I am much obliged to my hon. Friend for that.

The carriers' legislation is another example of where we needed to move rapidly to maintain the effectiveness of the control. We did that and it had that effect. The measures on visas and carriers were both controversial at the time. I notice that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is present. Many epithets were hurled at us, but in both cases to a large extent the controversy has died away because the new system works better than the old.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar) *rose*——

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will get on with my statement. I have gained some encouragement from those experiences. We will have to go on watching carefully all aspects of the immigration control arrangements to make sure that they are efficient and that unacceptable pressures do not pile up.

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will gladly give way to the hon. Gentleman if he rises in a minute or two.

Before I deal with the provisions in the Bill, I will, for the convenience of the House, deal with two matters related to what I said about the need to maintain an efficient control. One matter has already been raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). I announced today our intention to bring forward a number of changes to the immigration rules relating to after-entry control. The immigration department has to consider applications for an extension or variation to stay from people admitted as visitors, students, business men and some other categories. The demands of that work have grown to the extent that, for many years, the department has suffered a serious backlog. At the end of 1986, it amounted to some 47,000 cases, or the equivalent of some four months' work. As hon. Members know, many delays are much worse than that. Matters cannot be left as they are. From everyone's point of view, the pressure must be eased.

At present, a person is granted several periods of leave, which together add up to the maximum allowed in any one particular category. I now propose to introduce rule changes for au pairs, business men and certain others to provide that longer periods of leave up to the maxima, which will not be changed, may be granted on arrival. That will follow careful scrutiny to establish that the applicant meets the criteria laid down in the rules. I have already taken administrative action within the present rules to ensure that all genuine students are admitted for the full duration of their courses. Those steps will remove the need in many cases for people to apply to Lunar house for purely routine extensions of their stay. Every pointless bit of paper that we can do away with reduces the delays for others.

Mr. McCrindle: I am sorry to take my right hon. Friend back to the point that he was making when I originally tried to intervene, but he was suggesting that, in his view, a good deal of controversy has disappeared since the introduction of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987 a few months ago. Will he accept that, among the carriers, there continues to be a considerable controversy and opposition to the operation of those immigration controls, particularly as regards detention costs. Does he plan to say anything about that, or is there any part of the Bill that might begin to iron out the difficulties that appear to be developing between Home Office officials and the airlines?

Mr. Hurd: The Bill does not cover that point. If my hon. Friend would like to give me the particulars of his concern, I will certainly look into them.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: The right hon. Gentleman, even in his most ebullient and expansive moments, surely does not expect me to range over every conceivable aspect of the immigration controls. He may want to intervene later.

I also propose to reduce the maximum period of a visit to six months, which I believe is the point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West. I will explain why. At present, the rules allow for a visit of 12 months, but most visitors come here for much shorter periods. A substantial number are admitted at first for less that six months, and then apply to have their permitted stay extended. Those applications give rise to work at Lunar house. Very few of them are refused. Once again, there are many pointless bits of paper clogging up the system. The application for an extension often takes longer to process than the time requested, which is absurd.

In future, I intend that, with few exceptions, visitors should be admitted for six months, rather than a shorter period, and that that should be the maximum period for a visit. That will simplify the process, reduce the work at Lunar house, and enable us to concentrate more effectively and speedily on those cases where important decisions have to be made. A maximum visit of six months or less is already common practice in other countries. Most European countries require visas for any visit longer than 90 days. There will be an opportunity to debate the rule changes when they are laid before the House.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): It is commonplace for the entry certificate officer in Kingston, Jamaica to refuse

[Mr. John Fraser]

applications for people to come here to visit if they say that they want to come for six months. They are normally refused on the ground that, if they want to come here for six months, they may want to stay for good. Can the Home Secretary assure us that there will be no discrimination against people from the Caribbean who apply to come for six months under the new, relaxed rules?

Mr. Hurd: I will look into the point that the hon. Gentleman raised. Certainly nothing that I have announced will affect that, for the reasons that I have already given.

Mr. Vaz: Rather than limit the length of stay for a visitor, is not the most appropriate course to provide more resources for Lunar house, such as the staff who were promised when the visa changes were announced last year?

Mr. Hurd: There has been a build-up of resources available to immigration control. My hon. Friend the Minister of State will give particulars when he replies. However, I do not think that that is an argument against getting rid of the pointless bits of paper that I have been referring to.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Can my right hon. Friend give us any reassurance about effective systems for follow-up? One our great concerns is people who come in on one pretext and abuse that, but are not located and invited to leave when the original term expires. Can he reassure the House that a much tighter and effective system of follow-up will be put in place?

Mr. Hurd: I am coming to the question of overstaying. My hon. Friend is on to a familiar point, which raises the useful deployment of services and whether it would be sensible to go to the enormous expense of providing a comprehensive exit control. I accept the need to stiffen the arrangements and, as he knows, to a large extent, that is happening.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East) *rose*——

Mr. Hurd: I will now get on.

The intention of the changes that I have announced so far is to produce a better customer service and a tighter immigration control. The main beneficiaries of my announcements will be those who at present suffer from delays, and right hon. and hon. Members who chastise us because of those delays, which the proposals are principally aimed to reduce.

Let me now deal with the procedures under which hon. Members take up immigration cases with me or with my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I do not believe that many hon. Members find the present arrangements satisfactory. The enormous number of cases imposes considerable burdens not only on my hon. Friend, but also on the hon. Members concerned, and often results in lengthy delays. Ministers are put in the position of having to examine straightforward and routine cases for which a statutory appeals system exists. I hope that new arrangements can be found which will better achieve the objective of providing a service to hon. Members and their constituents without detracting from the proper exercise of ministerial responsibility.

At the same time, I believe that it would be right to review the arrangements for dealing with hon. Members' interventions—particularly "stops" in port cases—that have been operating over the past 12 months. I want to hear the views of all hon. Members on both issues, and I shall shortly be writing to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) with a number of proposals. I am making no proposals today, but simply signalling that we wish to open up the subject.

Clause 1 of the Bill repeals section 1(5) of the 1971 Act, which sought to preserve the position of British and other Commonwealth citizen men settled here at the time of the 1971 Act, and their wives and children, so that they could not be adversely affected by subsequent rule changes. The terms of section 1(5) are very wide. They apply to all British and other Commonwealth citizen men and boys, whether black, white or brown, who were born before 1973 and settled here when the Act came into force. The main effect is that the wives and children of those covered by section 1(5) are able to come here without having to meet the marriage tests in the immigration rules, and without having to meet the requirement that there must be adequate financial support and accommodation for them without recourse to public funds.

Fourteen years have passed since section 1(5) came into effect. It is not confined to adult men living here before 1972, their wives at that time and their children at that time. I want to emphasise that. If section 1(5) continues in force, it will have effect well into the next century on those who were settled here as boys before 1973 when they marry and have children. It has also been objected to on the ground that it confers benefits on wives and not on husbands. Following the Abdulaziz case at the European Court of Human Rights, the Government gave a commitment to end that element of sex discrimination.

Section 1(5) gives rise to anomalies and unacceptable results. Let us take the example of a family with a daughter, a son born in 1972 and a son born in 1973. If they all marry abroad and apply to bring their spouses here, the application from the wife of the elder son will fall to be dealt with on a different basis from that applying to the husband of his sister or the wife of his younger brother. Such a result cannot be right. To take a further—and actual—example, in the recent case of Husseyin, the Court of Appeal found that a woman who was the subject of a deportation order could not be deported because she married a man who qualified under section 1(5) after the deportation order, but before deportation action could be taken. That also cannot be sensible.

Those examples illustrate the anomalies and difficulties to which section 1(5) gives rise. Accordingly, we now propose to repeal section 1(5). I stress that that does not mean that those settled here before 1973 will be unable to bring their wives and children to join them. It merely means that they will have to satisfy the same requirements in the immigration rules as those who do not benefit from section 1(5). We already apply the full range of requirements in the immigration rules to those who have come to settle here after the beginning of 1973. After 14 years, it seems right now to bring these special benefits under section 1(5) to an end, and to treat everyone on the same footing. *[Interruption.]* May I develop my argument before the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) intervenes?

Of course, the change will affect people regardless of origin—a point that was clearly made in this week's *New Statesman*. However, when Parliament considered the matter in 1971, it was concerned about the rights of adult males already settled here. From previous patterns of immigration, it might reasonably have been assumed that, once those men had brought in their close dependants, the demand for entry of dependants would begin to fall away. So far, that has happened only to a modest degree, because those who were children in 1973 are still often seeking wives and husbands from the subcontinent. That is their right, and the Bill does not remove it. The Bill says, however, that it is not a right which should be exercised indefinitely without regard to the ability of those concerned to support themselves once they are here. It is no service to community relations for families to come here if they are then homeless or destitute. It is fair and reasonable that people should not come here without having somewhere to live and some means of support without recourse to public funds.

There are of course some applications now outstanding from the wives and children of section 1(5) men, and there will be more by the time that clause 1 comes into effect. It would be unfair to penalise those applying to come here from parts of the world where there are queues for entry clearance. I therefore propose to frame the commencement order so that applications from section 1(5) beneficiaries which are outstanding when clause 1 comes into effect are dealt with in accordance with the law as it stood at the time of application. I propose to adopt the same approach in dealing with applications from polygamous wives under clause 2.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Has not the Home Secretary said on a number of occasions how strongly he is against retrospective legislation? Does not this clause retrospectively deny rights to people who have held those rights for 14 years? Can the right hon. Gentleman see any moral justification for that?

Mr. Hurd: I have explained the justification, which I think is very clear. The proposal will make overwhelming sense to people as they grasp its impact. I have tried in the transitional arrangements to meet the point about retrospection, and I think that I have done so.

Clause 2 seeks to prevent the entry of more than one wife of a polygamous marriage where the second wife applies to come here in exercise of a right of abode which she has by virtue of her marriage. I do not wish to exaggerate the point. The number of polygamous wives coming here is quite small: we estimate that perhaps 25 or so polygamous households are set up here every year. However, polygamy is not an acceptable social custom in this country. I have no doubt that it would cause serious damage to community relations if it became generally understood that men settled here could continue to bring in a number of wives each. I very much hope that, on reflection, the Opposition will not make an issue of the change. The numbers involved are small, but the principle is not acceptable. The sooner we make that clear in the law of the land, the less likely it will be that damage to community relations will result.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My right hon. Friend will know that, in my constituency, there was a recent case of polygamy in which the intended wife was under the age of 15. Will not the Bill help to stop the awful abuse of children involved in such practices?

Mr. Hurd: I understand my hon. Friend's point. There is an overwhelming argument of common sense in favour of the proposal.

Clause 3 deals with a loophole that emerged about 18 months ago, when about 1,500 women and children arrived here. It was claimed that the children were British citizens by descent, but they had not first established that claim. When they were refused leave to enter, they claimed a right of appeal in this country, and the appellate authorities ruled that the existing provisions of the law meant that they had such a right. The number of arrivals in the past 12 months has been small, but, again, we need to close the loophole.

Accordingly, clause 3 extends to the groups affected a requirement that already applies to all other passengers arriving at our ports claiming British citizenship: they should establish their claim by obtaining a British passport or other document establishing their citizenship. If they arrive here without the necessary documents, they will be able to be removed and will not have a right of appeal in this country. That will reassert, in this limited category, the principle that people seeking to come here for settlement should establish their claim to do so before travelling. It does not alter the existing discretion of the immigration officer to accept as a British citizen a returning holiday maker who has lost his passport but who can show that he lives here.

Clauses 4 and 5 strengthen the enforcement arrangements in the 1971 Act to enable us to take quicker and more effective action against those who flout the conditions under which they were allowed in. Clause 4 restricts the right of appeal against administrative deportation of those overstaying leave to enter this country, or failing to observe a condition of leave so that they can appeal only on the facts of the case and not on the merits of the deportation decision.

Those who are here for more than seven years will, however, still be able to appeal on the merits of the deportation decision. The order-making power in subsection (2) is to enable me to fulfil commitments given in the European Court, when we undertook that an overstayer who claims political asylum should be able, in certain circumstances, to appeal against deportation to the appellate authorities in such a way that they can consider the asylum claim as well as the question of overstaying.

Clause 5 is not new. As the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) knows, an earlier version appeared in the Criminal Justice Bill before the election. The clause seeks to return the application of the law about overstaying to what it was before the cases of Gurde *v.* Singh and Grant *v.* Borg. In the former, the court found that overstaying was not a continuing offence under the terms of the 1971 Act, and in the latter the House of Lords ruled that the offence of overstaying a period of leave could be committed only on the first day following its expiry. That seemed to us to be an extremely restrictive definition of the offence of overstaying. We propose in the Bill to restore the law to what we supposed it to be before those two cases.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The seven-year rule in clause 4 is extremely important. It matters enormously whether the seven-year period is to count from the last time that the person affected entered the United Kingdom or is to relate to people who have lived for more than seven years in the United Kingdom. The Home Secretary will understand the difference. People who may have been living here for between 14 and 20 years

[Mr. Peter Shore]

could have paid a visit abroad during the past seven years and, therefore, could be deemed to be ineligible for the benefits provided by the clause.

Mr. Hurd: It will count from the last time that they entered this country. *[Interruption.]* However, I shall ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to elaborate on that point.

The restriction will apply to cases where there is already a right of appeal through the appellate machinery. What is at stake at the moment is a later right of appeal against deportation. There is already a right of appeal against refusal of leave to remain. In most cases we are referring to the second stage, where there is a right of appeal against the deportation that follows from that. That right of appeal is to be restricted in the way that I have described.

Clause 6 is concerned with Europe. The 1971 Act was drawn up before we joined the European Community, and in some respects it is inconsistent with European Community law. In particular, nationals of European Community states, and their family members who come here in exercise of the right of free movement, do not require leave to enter. Clause 6 makes that point. It is our intention to make an Order in Council under the European Communities Act 1972, setting out the position of people who are claiming free movement rights.

Finally, among the main provisions of the Bill, clause 7 enables me to charge for providing special immigration services and for settlement. I have it in mind that if a commercial operator—for example, an airline—asks for the attendance of additional immigration officers at a specific time or place for special reasons, that will enable charges to be made for such services, assuming that the necessary immigration officers can be made available. On charges for settlement, we already charge for visas, entry clearance and citizenship. It is also right that we should be able to charge for the grant of settlement, on the usual basis of recovering the costs of considering the application for settlement.

I have ranged fairly widely through the Bill and a few related matters, because I thought that it would be helpful to put the proposals in context. Immigration has been, and to some extent remains, one of the most difficult, sensitive and emotive subjects in political life. It needs to be handled carefully. Responsible politicians should avoid sensationalising the issue, because of the consequences that such remarks can have.

Ms. Short: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: No. I have already given way to the hon. Lady.

The issue must also be approached with candour. At the general election the Conservative manifesto repeated our long-standing commitment to "firm but fair" immigration controls. We promised the legislation that is now before the House, to ensure the effectiveness of those controls. The Opposition's manifesto pledged their attachment to

"firm and fair immigration control."

So far, so good. The Opposition have chosen our words. I hope that they will accept our policies.

Mr. Leighton: Six months will undoubtedly be enough for most visitors, but there will be occasions when a visitor could make a good case for staying here for seven or eight months. Something might happen while the visitor was here. What would happen in such a case?

Mr. Hurd: Although the percentage is slightly higher for visitors from the Indian sub-continent, only 0·5 per cent. of the total number of visitors stay for more than six months. It will always be possible on compassionate grounds to allow visitors to stay for longer than six months.

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Hurd: No, I am coming to the end of my speech. I have been quite generous in giving way. Many hon. Members will wish to take part in what is to be an abbreviated debate.

When the Opposition consider how to deal with the Bill, I hope that they will resist the temptation to say different things to different audiences in different parts of town. They have slipped into the habit of saying that they believe in firm control and then denouncing as racist all attempts to improve the effectiveness of the controls. The Opposition cannot will the end without willing the means. If they attempt to do so, people will suspect, with reason, that they are trying to send different messages about their interests to different parts of the community.

The ritual denunciation of modest Government measures—such as the denunciations that I read in the press following a very reasonable meeting that I had a few weeks ago with the right hon. Member for Gorton and several of his colleagues—spread needless distress and alarm among the ethnic minorities. I recall the hubbub about the visa discussion, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) drew attention. However, the hubbub has died down, because the new system was never as it was described and denounced by the Opposition. It has proved to be workable and sensible. Many bona fide travellers from the Indian sub-continent have found that the system provides advantages. All that I am asking for is clear thinking by the Opposition. They must stop speaking on this subject with a forked tongue.

I commend the Bill to the House. It is not a major, new piece of legislation. It makes sensible and limited changes to ensure that our immigration law is flexible, effective and strong enough to cope with the pressures of movement across international boundaries which we see as we approach the end of the 20th century. I believe that such flexibility and strength is a condition of harmony in our cities.

4.49 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): The best thing that can be said about the Home Secretary's performance today is that he began to introduce the Bill in an apologetic manner. Of his 37-minute speech, the first 17 minutes were wholly devoted to matters that do not concern the Bill. I do not blame him for that. If I were introducing the Bill, I would want to talk about something else as well.

Before I refer to the Bill, I want to make two points about the approach to visitors that the Home Secretary foreshadowed in his opening comments. First, I do not believe for a moment that he would have condescended to comment today had not the letter from his under-secretary, Mr. T. C. Platt, announcing the decisions been in wide circulation at the weekend. Secondly, every time that the Home Secretary or one of his Tory predecessors has announced that there are pressures on the immigration service, the only solution that they can think of is to reduce immigrants' rights rather than to improve the service. When we come to debate the new regulations, we will make it clear that it is all very well to talk about firm and fair regulations, but it is wholly unacceptable to do that when every time the regulations are examined in practice they are found, not to be fair, but to be directly discriminatory.

The Bill is the most tawdry little measure that I have seen presented to Parliament during my 23 years as a Member of Parliament. It benefits virtually no one. It penalises a number of British families and families of Commonwealth citizens. Worst of all, it prejudices good community relations by pretending that there is an immigration problem when no such immigration problem exists. If the Home Secretary wants an example of that, he need go no further than consider his hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) who rose, as such persons do, and referred to overstaying. The Home Secretary is aware that overstaying is a spectre that is raised by people such as the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire. However, the Home Secretary did not have the integrity to tell his hon. Friend that overstaying is a problem that has been wildly blown up out of all proportion by the populist commentators. The Bill encourages that kind of canard. It is not to the Home Secretary's credit that he did not slap his hon. Friend down when he tried to raise the issue of overstaying.

Mr. Forth: The right hon. Gentleman should know that the one issue that was raised more than any other with me on the doorsteps during the election campaign by ordinary people was that of immigration. For that reason, the measures that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has brought to the House today will be very welcome to my constituents. I did not have to raise those matters with my constituents; they raised them with me.

Mr. Hattersley: I have absolutely no doubt that the hon. Gentleman talked more about immigration than about anything else during the election campaign. That is one of my complaints about the Bill.

The deplorable thing about the Bill is that it affects so little that really concerns national life. It is less concerned with legislation than with propaganda. For example, we should consider clause 2, the so-called polygamous marriage clause. The clause has 10 subsections to deal with an average of 20 entrants a year. That is one subsection for every two entrants a year—a legislative record, even by this Government's standards, on immigration legislation.

The families that will be adversely affected by the Bill will invariably be black or of Asian origin. What is more, the families that will be adversely affected will almost invariably be poor. Indeed, the families that remain separated as a result of the new decisions implicit in clause 1 will, by definition, be the unemployed, the low-waged and the homeless. That is why I argue that the Bill is bad in content, worse in effect, but worst of all in intention. The primary purpose of the Bill, to use a phrase which the Home Secretary seems to like, but which is detested by people who respect the family life of Sikhs and Moslems no less than that of Christians, is not legislation, but propaganda.

In *The Guardian* last Friday the Minister of State, Home Office wrote that the purpose of the Bill was to "repair loopholes" created by "judicial activism". The Minister of State's memory must be no better than his command of the English language. By "judicial activism" I presume that he means the several tribunal decisions that supported appellants against the Government. I assume that it refers to the judgment that the Government had violated the European convention on human rights, and also to the Law Lords ruling in the case of Grant *v.* Borg. In itself, that is a sorry record. It shows the Government's belief that they must make obeisance to the law only when the law is working to the Tory party's convenience. However, the most important aspect of "judicial activism" about which the Home Secretary complains relates to the Law Lords refusing to act as the Government's poodle in Grant *v.* Borg, and that happened five years ago.

Clause 1, which the Home Secretary proposed with as near conviction as he could muster, breaks a promise made in 1971 by changing a rule that has been in force since 1973. The question which the Home Secrertary must ask, but which he cannot answer without condemning himself and the Government, is, "Why are we dealing with the loopholes now after 15 years, 12 years and six years?" The answer is that the Home Secretary found it convenient to find and fill what he calls the gaps at the beginning of the general election campaign. He found it convenient to fill those gaps in the most public way in a letter that he sent to a Tory candidate in a marginal constituency. Happily, the rascist card did not take the trick, for Mr. Piers Merchant lost. However, the purpose of the Bill is to enable the Government to continue polishing their image to show that the Conservative party is the party that is hard on immigration.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): As Mr. Merchant is no longer a Member of the House, I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not try to imply that in any sense Mr. Merchant, who was an extremely diligent and honourable Member of the House, was in any way racist.

Mr. Hattersley: My complaint is not against Mr. Merchant, wherever he may be. My complaint is against the Home Secretary, who sent that deplorable letter to Mr. Merchant and used Mr. Merchant as a vehicle for that kind of propaganda.

As a result of the Home Secretary's behaviour, the Bill will make no material change to the life of this country. However, it will damage the interests of some of our most disadvantaged citizens. The great party of Peel, Disraeli and Salisbury now seeks a pathetic political advantage by excluding 20 Bangladeshi second wives from this country each year. I hope that that makes the Home Secretary feel proud of his legislative record.

The next justification offered by the Home Secretary for the Bill is that it ends a number of anomalies. In fact, the Bill confirms and reinforces the greatest anomaly of all with regard to citizenship. Clause 1 ensures that in all circumstances EEC nationals enjoy rights of settlement that are denied to Commonwealth citizens. Clause 1 actually confirms that an EEC national enjoys rights that are denied to British citizens. It is easier for a Frenchman

[Mr. Hattersley]

living in Britain to bring his American wife into this country than it is for a British citizen to do the same. It is easier for a British citizen to arrange the entry of his wife into Germany than it is for him to bring his wife into the country of his birth and residence. Yet the Home Secretary tells us that he is trying to clear up anomalies.

If a British woman marries a foreign national, the husband will be allowed to enter this country only after the application of the primary purpose rule—a test that is intentionally weighted against applicants. However, an EEC citizen living in Britain will be able to bring a wife or a husband into this country without having to submit himself or herself or the spouse to that test.

The anomaly created by the Bill is highlighted by the changes in the procedure for registration at the end of the year. An Irishman living in Britain who may want to bring his wife to Britain will have more right to unite his family here than will a British subject. The advice that must be given, therefore, to those Irishmen who are pondering whether to apply for registration before 1 January is to remain Irish in Britain because, if they wish to bring their wives into this country, they have a better chance of doing so than if they become English by a Bill that is supposed to clear up anomalies.

The Irish will be caught in the backwash of the anti-immigration posturing, yet in defence of the Bill the Minister of State said in *The Guardian* that the Government have no wish to

> "belittle the very major contribution made to our national life by the minority communities".

Frankly, I prefer the honest racists, who at least spare us hypocrisy. If, as the Minister pretends, the Government want

> "a society not marred by racial discrimination",

why are he and the Secretary of State raising unnecessary fears by promoting this rotten little Bill? If racial equality is the Government's real objective, why, for eight years, have they constantly promoted legislation that has acted against the interests of the minorities, discriminated against their customs and mores and wilfully prevented the reunion of their families?

The Bill continues that squalid record, as an honest examination of its major clauses demonstrates. Let us consider them one by one. Clause 1 removes from Commonwealth citizens settled here before 1973 the absolute and unqualified right to bring their families into this country—the right which, as the Secretary of State said, was conferred on them by section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. In future they will have to pass whatever tests the Home Secretary stipulates, the primary purpose rule and the demonstration that they will make no call on public funds.

The Home Secretary asked today and in his handout of a fortnight ago why the same tests should not be applied to Commonwealth citizens who settled here before 1973 as to those who settled here more recently. The right hon. Gentleman should know the answer to that question, and I believe that he does. They should not have to pass that test because they were promised exemption in 1971 by the Home Secretary of that time. If the Home Secretary wants to argue with that—I see that he is doing something approaching a nod—I shall gladly quote from a speech made in 1971 by Mr. Reginald Maudling, who was a different sort of Home Secretary in a different sort of Conservative Government. He said:

> "There will be no new papers to be carried, and they will be allowed to bring in dependants . . . the purpose of the second Amendment is to preserve the current statutory right to bring in wives and children under the age of 16."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 552.]

That statutory right, as enshrined in the 1971 Act, has now been removed because the Home Secretary has chosen to break his predecessor's promise. As a result, there will be men in Britain today who have worked, waited and saved for 10 years to bring their wives into this country, believing that they could trust the Government's word and who will now find that they are mistaken. If, after working for 10 years and paying tax and national insurance contributions, they become unemployed, they will not now be allowed to bring their wives into this country.

I offer a second objection to the change in the rules, which is perhaps more fundamental than the first. Men and women settled in Britain should have the automatic right to be joined here by their husbands or wives and dependent children. The primary purpose rule is wrong because it requires an applicant to prove what is logically and rationally unprovable. It is a test which confuses, and is intended to confuse, the applicant. It keeps genuinely married couples apart and, according to the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, the interviews on which the test is based contain intentionally misleading questions which, almost invariably, encourage genuine applicants to give the wrong answers. Entry on the basis of the primary purpose rule is being refused to applicants who, on the criteria laid down by the tribunal in the case of Arun Kumar, should be granted entry. By every application, in principle and in practice, the primary purpose rule is discriminatory and a disgrace, and it is made no better by the Home Secretary's intention to apply it to everyone rather than only to unlucky recent applications.

Ms. Short: I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend about the application of the rule. Did he see the piece in *The Guardian* some weeks ago, in which the Minister of State, having visited the sub-continent, is reported to have stated that officers there regarded the rule as unjust, because it penalised the genuine cases and that the Government were thinking of bringing in a quota system instead? Will my right hon. Friend press the Home Secretary for an answer on that?

Mr. Hattersley: I understand that there are sources in the Government—I do not wish to condemn the Home Secretary to remaining in his present position by suggesting that he is one of them—who share my view of the primary purpose rule and would prefer to replace it with a quota. That would certainly be the right thing to do, as the primary purpose rule is intolerable in every particular. It is logically absurd and morally indefensible and we shall continue to fight against it, both during the passage of the Bill and thereafter.

The primary purpose rule is made no better by extending it to a new class of applicant. The Home Secretary says that it is subject to an appeals procedure, albeit an inadequate one, but he can no longer rely on everything being put right by appeals, because clauses 4 and 5 effectively remove the right of appeal from alleged overstayers. In Grant *v.* Borg the House of Lords ruled that the offence of overstaying was committed only the day after leave expired. I understand the difficulties of that, but everyone knows that the real punishment for overstaying is not a few weeks in prison or a £500 fine, but removal from this country. In the past, most removals have been subject to appeal, allowing examination of the compassionate reasons, which ought to result in a real judgment whether the overstayer should be allowed to remain.

I should make it absolutely clear that I will have no truck with the wilful, the casual, the frivolous or the cynical overstayers. I share the Home Secretary's belief that they should be returned home. There are, however, overstayers who have spent most of their lives in this country, who have wives, families and dependent relatives. A decent system would allow their cases to be examined on appeal on compassionate grounds. If the Bill is passed, an overstayer convicted of the new or extended offence of overstaying, which can be prosecuted over an extended period, will be subject to removal from this country if the court recommends deportation, without the case being subject to the extensive and potentially compassionate appeal that is built into the present system. I repeat that I will have no truck with the frivolous, cynical, wilful or unjustifiable overstayer, but each case must be examined on its merits. That was possible under section 3(5) of the 1971 Act, which allowed a proper appeal to a tribunal, which would consider all the circumstances. If the Bill is passed, that proper appeal will no longer be available.

Clause 3 prevents British citizens from entering Great Britain unless they can present documents proving their status. Will the Minister tell us the estimated size of the problem that the clause is intended to solve? We know that the clause concerning bigamous wives, which received so much publicity when the Home Secretary announced the Bill—from the purity of his position, I am sure that that was not his intention—affects 20 or 25 people in this country. What is the Government's estimate of the number of people entering this country claiming to be British citizens but unable to prove it instantly? The claims made by the then Home Secretary during the passage of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Bill make it almost inconceivable that people could board planes in Delhi or Islamabad saying that they are British citizens but without any papers to prove it.

How many people do the Government expect to arrive at Heathrow on an average day claiming to be British but unable to prove it? I suspect that there will be very few indeed, but I know that, by and large, they will have one of two characteristics—either they will be children of genuine citizens but unable to prove their citizenship without being in the United Kingdom to obtain the necessary proof, or they will be people born in this country who, on their return in desperate circumstances, do not appear to those who judge them to fit the stereotype of the normal British citizen. The people excluded at Heathrow who claim British citizenship but cannot prove it will not be those with Anglo-Saxon names and complexions. They will be children of Asian immigrants—children born in the United Kingdom who returned to India or Pakistan in early childhood—or children born in the West Indies to British fathers. That is a further reason for our profound objection to the Bill. Even when it does not discriminate by intention, it will do so in effect.

Our basic objection is even more fundamental. The Bill is wholly unnecessary. Its purpose is to allow people like the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire, who made his little point and scampered off, to pretend that there is a problem in the continued presence in this country of black and Asian immigrants, and of their children and grandchildren, who are not immigrants at all, but citizens of the United Kingdom, with exactly the same rights as the Home Secretary and I have. The Bill denies the natural rights of many of these people. Above all, it denies the right of family unity to men and women already living here. It panders to prejudice and will heighten rather than reduce racial tension. It is a disgrace to a democratic Parliament, and of course we shall vote against it.

5.12 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): During the last Parliament, I was honoured to spend four years on the Home Affairs Committee and its Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. During those years I had the privilege of visiting many of the places from which our immigrant community originated, particularly Mirpur in Kashmir, Bombay, Delhi, Sylhet in northern Bangladesh, and Hong Kong. In all those places, I was greatly impressed by the work of Foreign Office and Home Office staff, who have a particularly difficult job to do on behalf of all our citizens, be they black or white. Anyone who has sat in on an interview is aware of the tension created by the experience. That tension is felt not just by the people being interviewed, for whom it must be extremely frightening, having to argue their case perhaps through an interpreter and knowing that a decision so important to their future may go against them, but by the people conducting the interview. They have to get it right. They must be dispassionate and accurate, and they are not above criticism.

One occasionally hears from Opposition Members that the work of the entry clearance officers, particularly on the sub-continent, is carried out brusquely and rudely. Occasionally they are accused of racism. I saw no evidence of that when I was on the sub-continent with the Home Affairs Select Committee. Instead, I saw men and women bending over backwards to be fair. During our discussions with the Foreign Office, and the Home Office, I saw such men and women being properly trained to deal with the problems that they face. I saw the dedication with which the entry clearance officers from the Foreign Office and the Home Office went about their work, trying not only to learn the languages of the people whom they interview, but to appreciate their religion and culture.

As part of the work of the Sub-Committee, we visited ports of entry in the United Kingdom and Lunar house. This is a fair occasion on which to pay tribute to the immigration officers at our various ports of entry and at Lunar house. I found them courteous and helpful. There are occasions when tensions rise, and when it seems there is too much work for too few people. I am glad that most of the staff employed by the Home Office in this country who carry out such a difficult role are properly trained in racial awareness and in ways of dealing with people who may be tired after a long flight and confused when confronted by British officials. Indeed, the training that such officials receive properly reflects the difficult task that they carry out. They were not always so aware of the problems faced by people from far away countries but the training is now up to standard.

I also visited the Harmondsworth detention centre and the detention centre at the Queen's building at Heathrow.

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

Those are miserable places. They are the most depressing part of the immigration department structure. They are a scar on the reputation of this nation. Detention centres should be bigger and more comfortable. When I consider Latchmere house, which is in my constituency, I feel that they are not appropriate for people who, after all, have not been convicted of any crime.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hanley: I do not wish to give way to Opposition Members regularly.

Mr. Corbyn: I sincerely thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he agree that far too many people are held in detention? Should we not perhaps give priority to reducing the number of people wrongfully held in detention instead of building up a huge system of detention centres for people who, he admits, have committed no crime?

Mr. Hanley: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman directly. I wish that more people would arrange their affairs so that they have proper entry clearance before they come to this country and avoid being detained for any reason. It inconveniences those individuals who are detained. It is also expensive and distressing for us all. They could do more to help themselves at their port of departure and thus avoid the whole panoply of the detention process and the disgraceful circumstances in which they are held. The staff try their hardest to be polite and pleasant, but the conditions in which people are kept are less than I would expect. I hope that, when he replies, my hon. Friend the Minister will mention that.

We should consider the size of the problem that confronts the Home Office each year. The last full year for which figures are available is 1986, when more than 7 million visitors came to the United Kingdom. That is a mind-boggling statistic. Of those people, most come for short-term holidays, leave when they are due to leave and cause no trouble. They not only enrich our country financially, but they learn of the country's benefits and depart spreading the good will which I hope they enjoyed here. Many come for settlement, and during the past 10 years about 600,000 people were given permanent settlement in the United Kingdom. Therefore, in the past 10 years we have given permanent homes to far more than half a million people. Of those, the majority come from the Indian sub-continent or south-east Asia.

Opposition Members say that the Government are racist, but it is hardly the record of a racist Government to allow so many people from such wide backgrounds and origins to settle. Indeed, their accusation that our immigration law is racist is unfair, not only when one considers the numbers who have been given permanent settlement, but when one considers what the Labour Government did. The law then was much the same as under this Government. Therefore, if there are criticisms to be made, they should have been levelled as much at the Labour Government as they are at this Government.

During the past 10 years, 25,000 people have been given refugee status in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hattersley: Surely the hon. Gentleman will have the grace to concede that the primary purpose rule and all the other rules which are preventing husbands from joining wives and wives from joining husbands, which is the major disgrace of our immigration legislation, did not apply until the Conservative party came to office?

Mr. Hanley: I entirely agree that the primary purpose rule as phrased at present did not apply under the Labour Government. However, it has always been necessary to control bogus marriages, and those who sell their nationality to somebody else must be controlled. The right hon. Gentleman may be a little surprised to hear that I do not hold much truck with the primary purpose rule as it is at present instituted.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hanley: No, I will not give way because I should like to develop the point that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has made.

Mr. Heffer: I wish to give some practical examples.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order.

Mr. Hanley: The primary purpose rule is less than perfect and in some cases people who have genuine marriages are separated because of it. I know it is hard to say this, but it is not our immigration law which separates families; it is families which separate families. People choose to leave their family home and come here before they have clearance for their family. It is inherent in our immigration rules that people must make sure that their families are entitled to come here before they come here and separate themselved from their families. Morover, if they feel that separation is unacceptable, they can always consider returning to their families, thus rejoining the family and stopping the separation. That aspect is often ignored; and, indeed, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook ignored it when he said that the primary purpose rule separated families. It is not the rule that causes separation; it is the action and wishes of individuals.

Nevertheless, I agree that the primary purpose rule needs revision and I certainly believe that it would be better if we could make the interview procedure even more acceptable than it is at present. I have sat in on primary purpose rule interviews in Bombay and Calcutta and listened to the questioning. Certainly, I did not witness any loaded questions, and when in the past examples of loaded questions have been brought to the attention of the Home Office those questions have not been asked again. Naturally, not every interviewer can get it right the first time. It is difficult to interview people on the primary purpose rule. However, I believe that the Home Office is extremely sensitive about this, and so it should be. The instructions given to ECOs are wholly fair and, where there have been abuses or errors, the procedures have been tightened up and improved.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Does my hon. Friend agree that it would help if we had a procedure for taping interviews under controlled conditions so that there would be a validated record of precisely what transpires? Does he share my experience that on some occasions applicants allege that unsuitable questions were asked and it is never possible to establish the truth or otherwise of such allegations because there is no independent record of precisely what happened at the interview?

Mr. Hanley: I thoroughly agree with my hon. Friend. The Select Committee in its report in the spring of 1985 recommended that a reliable record of asylum interviews should be made. Experiments on taping interviews were carried out. Naturally, the difficulties of that are well known, but I am glad that experiments were carried out and that it may be possible to have more immigration interviews recorded. I am sure that the difficulties of tape-recording interviews, especially where two and sometimes three languages are used, are clear to all hon. Members. There is the further difficulty of storing the cassettes. It is difficult enough to store the paper that flows from immigration interviews, let alone cassettes for each interview. However, we should have more taping of interviews and I am glad that my hon. Friend agrees with the Select Committee on that.

On illegal entrants, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook wanted to know how many people arrived in the United Kingdom without having cleared their documents first.

Mr. Hattersley: It is a question of people claiming British citizenship. Will the hon. Gentleman tell me whether he thinks that tape recording their interviews would help?

Mr. Hanley: I am sorry, but I could not hear that.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the hon. Gentleman give me a figure—his estimate or that of somebody else—of the number of people who might arrive at Heathrow claiming British citizenship without papers? Does he think that tape recording their interviews would help?

Mr. Hanley: Tape recording of interviews would help at every level.

Mr. Hattersley: What is the point of tape recording those interviews if there is to be no appeal system afterwards, which is what the Bill seeks?

Mr. Hanley: As I have said, I believe it is right that interviews should be taped. I do not find the right hon. Gentleman's point constructive. In direct answer to his question, I believe that over a relatively short period in 1986 some 1,500 wives and children arrived at ports of entry in the United Kingdom claiming to be British citizens, but with no evidence to support that contention.

Mr. Hattersley: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman has not answered my question. How many people have arrived under those conditions since the passage of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, which seeks to prevent people from getting on aircraft without documents?

Mr. Hanley: I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman supports that Act.

We were considering the number of illegal entrants. In 1986, some 1,582 illegal entrants were traced and about 10,000 have been traced over the past 10 years. It is wholly wrong for the Labour party not to condemn those who abuse our immigration laws because they do harm to our community, to race relations within the community and to those who are waiting to come here legally.

Mr. Corbyn: What about Zola Budd?

Mr. Hanley: What about Precious McKenzie?

Mr. Corbyn: Who is he?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman is obviously ignorant. If he would care to stop shouting and leave the Chamber and look in the Library he will find the answer to that question.

Mr. Corbyn: I was trying to suggest that perhaps the hon. Gentleman should consider the unwholesome, not to say grossly unfair, way in which Zola Budd was rushed into this country because she is white, from South Africa and can run, whereas 12,000 families are forced to remain in Bangladesh because of a deliberate bureaucratic decision taken by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Hanley: Zola Budd was allowed in because of rights that have been debated in the House for hour after hour. I happened to mention Mr. Precious McKenzie who was also allowed into this country, and one should balance his case against that of Miss Budd.

The Bill is merely a technical measure. Certainly, any Immigration Bill raises passions, and it is not surprising that the House has already experienced some shouting from one side to the other. It is always regrettable that this issue raises passions. However, it raises passions outside the House, too.

It is vital that we should have immigration laws that are practical, that work and are not racial or discriminatory. It is difficult to have any immigration law enforced in a country without there being tension. I pay tribute to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service for the work that it does. The dispassionate way in which it carries out its work helps to reduce the tensions and clamour so often associated with this issue. We should see whether the Bill answers the tensions and clamour. I believe that it does. Under clause 4 I am certain that cases will be decided in a dispassionate way and that the distress that is so often caused by campaigns claiming that the Government have acted wrongly will be reduced.

Mr. Boateng: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we should reduce the clamour that he describes as surrounding these cases by reducing the right of appeal? If he is, that is truly a horrific concept and one that does not do him or his party any credit.

Mr. Hanley: To reduce the length of time for which an appeal can continue when there are no real grounds for that appeal is a service to the person who has no right to be here and to the host community. In other words, I do not agree that clause 4 is the ogre that the Immigration Law Practitioners Association claims. One can understand why it wants litigation to go on and on, and one can therefore see why it opposes clause 4. However, I cannot believe that clause 4 will do other than bring about the determination of a case much more quickly and fairly than at present. We should remember that nothing in the Bill removes the discretion of the Home Secretary. He can still decide cases based on his discretion. The Bill simply means that an appeal on the grounds of that discretion cannot be brought.

I should like to clear up a point that I heard on the radio this morning. Clause 1 will not prevent the entry of wives and children of Commonwealth citizens who settled here on 1 January 1973. It is remarkable that people should say that it will. All it does—we have heard this from the Home Secretary—is to require those people to satisfy the same tests as others. Therefore, it is vital for fairness that there should not be two, three or four different classes

[Mr. Hanley]

of individuals living beside each other who, because of the accident of a particular date, happen to find themselves with or without certain special privileges. The Conservative party agrees with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook who pointed to some of the illogicalities that will exist even after the Bill becomes part of immigration law. I am sure that many of us would like some of the old privileges to be removed so that all people are treated in the same way. I believe that the Bill is one step on that road. I certainly expect there to be other Immigration Bills to come.

It is wholly fair that anybody who comes to this country, even if they have been here before 1973, should have to face the same tests as others as to the genuineness of their marriage and the ability to keep their family in this country without being a burden on the state. Too many of us believe that the rights — rights they were — enshrined in 1971 and in operation from 1 January 1973 are inviolable. Those rights were provided in order to serve a need at a certain time, but now, 17 years later, it is fairer that we should have rights that are common to all people of the same circumstances. I believe that to hark back to the rights of the Immigration Act 1971 and to treat the removal of those rights as damaging, racist and discriminatory is wrong. It removes elements of discrimination and makes people more equal. In future we will look back and ask why we did not do it earlier.

The Select Committee found that the number of cases involving polygamy is extremely small but the subject did raise amazing passions among the people who brought the subject to us, particularly the Bangladeshi community. There were many people within the Bangladeshi community in the United Kingdom — the evidence is in the report of the Select Committee — who felt that it was unfair that certain people should enjoy what was effectively a privilege because of the choice of religion. We recommended in one of our reports that action should be taken to stop immigration abuse caused by polygamous marriages. We are glad that it will be brought into law by the Bill. The numbers are small but we should adhere to the principle.

Unlike some Labour Members, I do not believe that nuclear warfare is imminent. I believe that because of our defence stance nuclear warfare is well away. But I believe that bad race relations are more likely to cause blood on our streets than nuclear warfare any day. It is vital that we have a harmonious community and that passions are not whipped up for politial causes when Bills of this sort — technical measures — are introduced. I feel that the Bill should be not so much welcomed as accepted. It is not the sort of Bill to make one raise flags and say that it will make a vast difference to the nation. It will remove certain discriminatory elements and make immigration law simpler and easier. I hope that our record for accepting people for settlement will be seen in its proper context. We are an open and welcoming community. Some Labour Members are utterly wrong and crass in the open-door immigration policy that has been voiced by some of them. *[Interruption.]* Our immigration law is necessary for good race relations. The Bill will do nothing to harm them.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is there not a rule about an hon. Member making an unsupported, totally bogus, totally incorrect and totally wicked allegation without giving way and then finishing his speech?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had finished his speech. I understand that that is the case.

5.40 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) commented correctly and sufficiently on the speech of the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). I was surprised by the hon. Gentleman's declaration that he had been a member of the Select Committee that studied the problems of the Bangladeshi and other immigrant communities. The views that he has formed and the opinions that he has expressed to the House bear no relation to my understanding, or that of my hon. Friends — who are in more direct contact with the Bangladeshi community — of their problems.

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Mr. Shore: I am not giving way. I have been generous in mentioning the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hanley *rose*——

Madame Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman has said that he is not giving way. The hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) had the Floor for a long time.

Mr. Hanley: On a point of order, Madame Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman has just attacked me in his speech, and I wish to refute what he said. Is it not in order for me to intervene? Is that not a custom of the House?

Madame Deputy Speaker: It is a custom of the House for an hon. Member who has been named in that way to have an opportunity to reply. However, the hon. Gentleman had the Floor for about 28 minutes. Does the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) want to give way?

Mr. Shore: Only if the hon. Gentleman promises to be brief.

Mr. Hanley: What I said is wholly consistent with the reports of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. The right hon. Gentleman will notice that the report on the Bangladeshi community was unanimous, comprising the votes of three Conservative Members and two Labour Members.

Mr. Shore: The report drew attention to the problems of housing, homelessness and separated families in the Bangladeshi community. I wish that some of those problems had been reflected in the speeches of Conservative Members.

I listened carefully to the Home Secretary's speech. I particularly wanted to learn why he considered it necessary to introduce this technical measure. Unfortunately, I did not receive a proper answer. The Home Secretary rightly said that the problem of mass primary immigration had passed and that it had been dealt with by the Immigration Act 1971. He gave figures to demonstrate that the number of people who have been coming to Britain in the past 10 years has fallen steeply. It is now down to about two-thirds of the level of about 10 years ago.

With regard to the control of immigration, why is the Bill necessary? The right hon. Gentleman said that amendments needed to be made to keep the control firm and fair. He did not specify why we need these further controls to keep it firm and fair. He mentioned the overload or strain and stress on the officials who administer the entry clearance system. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) rightly said, that excuse is not acceptable. The alternative way of dealing with that problem is to increase the resources of manpower at Heathrow, at other places of entry and in our missions abroad so that we can deal with the problem more expeditiously without overloading officials in the way that they have been overloaded from time to time in recent years.

We were told that this legislation was necessary to enable the Home Office to react to new developments. I hardly consider the main provisions of the Bill to be new developments. They seem to be the old problems that have been with us from the beginning. As I said, my basic question about why this measure is being introduced was unanswered.

The two central features of the Bill are deeply objectionable. The first concerns the powers that will make it even more difficult for men who have been lawfully resident in the United Kingdom for at least the past 15 years—many of whom are now British citizens—to be joined by their families. The second feature concerns the provisions that severely limit the right of appeal for those who are already in Britain and who have, in the words of the Bill, failed to observe the conditions or limitations on their leave to enter.

In theory, some provisions of the Bill will affect all immigrants, but in practice—little has been said about the practical effects of this proposed legislation—as clause 1 makes plain, the main weight of the Bill will fall on Commonwealth citizens, particularly the Bangladeshi community—the most recent of the communities that have arrived in large numbers in Britain—where the problem of divided families is most serious and acute.

The right to family reunion is enshrined in section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. It promised that nothing done under the Act would make the wives or families of Commonwealth citizens who were settled in Britain before 1973 less free to come to and stay in Britain than they were when the Act was passed. Those promises, which were made by a previous Conservative Government, will now be withdrawn by clause 1 without serious or proper explanation or consideration of the effect that that will have.

Commonwealth citizens who have been in Britain for at least 15 years, including those who came in the 1950s and 1960s, and who have often had to endure long and cruel separations from their families, will now be required to show that they are able to support their families without resort to public funds and that they possess accommodation sufficient to house them before entry certificates are granted. It may be said that after 15 years the great majority should be able to support themselves and their families and that they should have been able to find a home, but when we consider the conditions of housing and unemployment as they affect the areas of immigrant settlement in the United Kingdom, the formidable obstacles that these requirements will present become obvious.

This is not the Britain of full employment as it was when the last Immigration Act was passed. Even according to Government figures, unemployment is over 2·8 million. It is in the inner-city areas, where the immigrant communities have most heavily settled, that unemployment rates are at their highest. The Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets and elsewhere is notoriously industrious and hard working. The scourge of unemployment has visited them in the past eight years with exceptional severity. Many, through no fault of their own, are now dependent on unemployment pay and supplementary benefit. Many more have not been able to acquire housing for themselves or their families.

In Tower Hamlets, where the largest number of Bangladeshis are concentrated in Britain, no fewer than 1,200 families are homeless and living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Many thousands more live in grossly overcrowded conditions. In a borough where 84 per cent. of housing is controlled by the council, homes can be found only if the council makes sufficient housing provision.

Before this Government came to power, in the 1974-79 period, about 900 new homes a year were provided, either by the Tower Hamlets council or the GLC. Two years ago the GLC was abolished and, to my certain knowledge, for the past three years not one new council home has been built in Tower Hamlets. There has been a massive reduction in the provision of rented housing, accompanied by a growing number of families from Bangladesh joining their husbands and fathers, who are already settled in Tower Hamlets. The result is a housing crisis more serious than any to be found elsewhere in England and in any period since the 1940s. The local council sought to diminish the problem by the wretched expedient of declaring Bangladeshi families to be intentionally homeless. They are accused of being intentionally homeless because, by definition, they left homes in Bangladesh to join their husbands and fathers here.

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): I am interested in the right hon. Gentleman's observations about homelessness as it affects the Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the recent initiative by the London borough of Camden in offering cash incentives to homeless Irish families so that they can return to Ireland should be extended to others of different races, not only in that borough, but in Tower Hamlets?

Mr. Shore: That would be absurd. Surely the hon. Gentleman cannot believe that after all these years of waiting and coming at last to the United Kingdom to join their husbands or fathers those families would willingly accept a payment for their return fare to Bangladesh. That would be totally unreasonable and wrong.

To subject pre-1973 Commonwealth immigrants to the requirement that they must provide suitable accommodation for their families as a condition of entry is to erect the most formidable obstacle yet against family reunion. If the Government really want to solve the problem and to ease the great strain of family separation, they should drop the clause and radically increase housing investment programmes in Tower Hamlets and similar boroughs.

One of the extraordinary things about the Select Committee was that, with its majority of Conservative Members, it recommended that something had to be done to improve the housing programme in Tower Hamlets. It

[Mr. Shore]

is no good the Home Secretary claiming, as I think he did in justification, that section 1(5) of the 1971 Act is contrary to the European convention on human rights in the sense that it discriminates sexually. If that alleged sexual discrimination is to be put right, the answer, as the Home Secretary well knows, is to extend to women the rights now enjoyed by men, not to remove them.

In principle, clause 3, which also limits rights of access and denies the children of British citizens resident in the United Kingdom right of entry and to have their appeals heard in the United Kingdom, is equally objectionable. One of the first cases arose in my area and it opened up what had not previously been thought to be a right attaching to the children of citizens resident in the United Kingdom. The Home Secretary has been misinformed by his officials if he thinks that the proposed power is necessary. With the introduction of visas for Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis coming to Britain, when fines were imposed upon airlines for bringing them to Britain without a passport or proof of citizenship, those rights were taken away. I have not heard of such a case in the last nine or 12 months.

We need clear answers on several questions relating to clause 1. If a British citizen's child living overseas obtains a United Kingdom passport or certificate of entry, does the parent in Britain still have to satisfy the authorities that the child can be maintained without recourse to public funds and that adequate accommodation is available?

I think that the Home Secretary answered my next question about clause 1. I hope that the small print will be satisfactory. My query concerns people in the pipeline — those who are applying for entry certificates — and whether they will be affected by the new provisions.

The Home Secretary already has the power to deport overstayers. He has administrative powers and powers of criminal prosecution under the Immigration Act 1971. The exercise of both powers is subject to appeal. The appellate authorities have rights to decide and hear appeals on the ground that compassionate circumstances might outweigh the public interest in deporting an overstayer. Further, a prosecution against an overstayer must be brought within three years of the date when overstaying began. Clauses 4 and 5 radically reduce the safeguards. Clause 5 makes overstaying a continuing offence and those affected will, therefore, be liable to criminal prosecution however long they have been here. On appeal, there will be no obligation on the court to consider compassionate circumstances.

Clause 4 is exceptionally severe. Once again, on appeal there will be no requirement that decision-makers take into account circumstances which might be compellingly compassionate. In addition, the clause embraces all those who have been in the United Kingdom for less than seven years. That is an exceptionally long time. In those seven years a person might have married and founded a family. The interests of the wife and children will not now have to be considered on appeal. That is a major loss and change.

Some people overstay because of the fear of persecution for reasons of politics, religion or race. Clause 4(2) enables the Secretary of State to exempt a class of person from the operation of the clause. Are the Government prepared to undertake that people who have applied for asylum as overstayers, or who raise asylum as an issue, will be exempt under clause 4(2) so that on appeal all their circumstances will be judicially considered? I think that the Home Secretary went a long way to meet that point, but I should like to be clear.

Clause 4(2) states that the seven-year rule

> "applies to any person who was last given leave to enter the United Kingdom less than seven years before the date of the decision in question".

As I read it, and as I believe the Home Secretary confirmed, that would mean that someone who had been in the United Kingdom for 10, 15 or even more years could still be caught if he had gone abroad for any period during the past seven years and was given leave to enter the United Kingdom on his return. That would be appallingly restrictive.

Even now, unless there are adverse reports on an individual's character and behaviour in the United Kingdom, the Home Office accepts that anyone who has been in the United Kingdom for 10 years and has not spent long periods abroad should be allowed to remain here. We seem to be moving far more restrictively against people who, under the terms of the Bill, have already established a long period of residence in the United Kingdom.

The Bill will have no noticeable numerical effect on the number of people allowed into the United Kingdom. Its effects will be concentrated upon certain communities, especially the Bangladeshi community. It will cause great distress, by prolonging the period for which families are divided and by removing the rights of appeal against bureaucratic decisions on deportation. Far from promoting racial harmony, it will increase the sense of distrust and alienation among the immigrant communities.

If the Home Secretary cannot give assurances on the questions that I have asked, the Bill will be judged as an intolerably illiberal, discriminatory and racist measure. If the Home Secretary accepts the points that have been made and limits some of the worst effects of the Bill, it will still richly deserve to be rejected by the House.

6 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): More than a quarter of my constituents are of Commonwealth and Pakistani origin, so they and I have a keen interest in any measure on immigration or nationality. They have a special interest to ensure that such matters are considered dispassionately and sensitively.

The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) criticised the Bill for causing unnecessary fear. Yet the right hon. Gentleman and his Labour party colleagues have made exaggerated and inaccurate descriptions of the effects of the Bill, such as suggesting that it removes the right of those settled here before 1973 to bring in their wives and children. During the recent election campaign, in my constituency and in other areas, they went round in an evil and disgraceful way stirring up unnecessary fear about the requirement to register by the end of this year under the British Nationality Act 1981. They told the people in my constituency that if they did not register they would be deported next year. It was done purely for party political purposes, but their stratagem turned round and hit them in the face. Despite the fact that they transmitted this lying and evil message over public address systems and loudspeakers in my constituency, it did not secure the election of the Labour candidate for Slough. It never will.

My constituents are interested in ensuring the firm and fair control of immigration. There is no difference of interest or view among my constituents, whether they come from the Asian, Welsh, Irish, Polish or English communities. Indeed, I have received more representations from Asian constituents that our control over visitors and the admission of dependants and our action in dealing with overstayers is too lax than I have had from any other section of the community. It is not difficult to understand that. Someone who has been settled in Slough for 20 years, having come originally from India, Pakistan or east Africa, who has established himself and his family in a business and who is a full and responsible member of the local community does not wish his position to be undermined by those who try to find loopholes in our immigration control or try to exploit the system.

The Bill, which has been so roundly denounced by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, is fairly modest, but it is necessary and important. It requires that a dependant who will be admitted to Britain should be accommodated and supported by the sponsor—the father, husband or mother — without recourse to public funds. That elementary provision is sensible. I recall my local government experience as leader of Hillingdon council, which had to deal with a flood of people arriving at Heathrow who had made no arrangements for accommodation and who tried to use the provisions of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 to obtain accommodation ahead of local people. My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who was chairman of the housing committee in Hillingdon, and I had to deal with a constant stream of such applications. To protect the interests and defend the rights of Hillingdon's ratepayers and residents who were waiting for housing, we often had to have recourse to the Court of Appeal and even to the House of Lords.

In the light of my experience in Hillingdon when I stood for Slough in 1983, I suggested in my election address that we should make further modifications to the immigration rules to require sponsors to show that they could accommodate and support dependants without recourse to public funds. I was pleased when, in the previous Parliament, the Government changed the rules applying to the dependants of those who had settled in Britain after 1973. I am also pleased that the Bill extends those rules to the dependants of all people settled here.

Labour Members made great play of the right that was available to those settled here before 1971 to bring in children under the age of 16 and wives without let or hindrance. I remind them that those dependent children would now be 16 years old. We should question why that right has not been exercised during those 16 years. Perhaps the sponsors — the husbands and fathers — are more responsible than Labour Members: they would not wish to bring a wife or children to Britain unless they could support and provide them with proper accommodation. Husbands and fathers from Asian backgrounds do not have a different attitude from the rest of us about their responsibility to support their families. Indeed, they are much more responsible towards their families.

Mr. Boateng: Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that to be in receipt of housing benefit is to be disqualified from the privilege of family unity?

Mr. Watts: I am suggesting that those who have had the right to bring in wives and children for the past 16 years and have not exercised that right may have a better sense of responsibility than Labour Members.

If a wife or a child is admitted as a dependant, it should be as a dependant of the head of the household, not of the British taxpayer or ratepayer. I find that those of my constituents who come to me for assistance with processing applications on behalf of dependants are willing to accept these sensible requirements. They see nothing amiss in being expected to accommodate and support their relatives without recourse to public funds. They assume that that should be the case. That is all the Bill does. It puts into law what most people of all communities would accept as a sensible provision.

It is right to apply the principle that only one wife of a polygamous marriage should be allowed to settle here, for the reasons advanced by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Boateng: Is that a problem in Slough?

Mr. Watts: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me, I shall come to a problem relating to polygamous marriages that has arisen in my constituency, and concerning which I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Minister to consider an amendment to the Bill.

There is a problem when a second wife has married her husband after he has acquired a residence of choice in this country. In such a case, it is the first wife who is eligible to seek entry for settlement. The second wife cannot claim that right, even in circumstances in which it is established that the first wife has no wish ever to exercise her right to come to the United Kingdom. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that we should consider allowing either one of a husband's two wives to exercise the right to apply for entry for settlement, if there is an undertaking from the other wife that she would not wish at any subsequent time also to exercise that right. I have two constituency cases in mind, about which I have been in correspondence with my hon. Friend the Minister, so he will recognise them.

Consideration should also be given to making sufficient provision for another category of visitor that is not covered specifically by our present immigration rules. I refer to mothers who come here as visitors to look after their children during term time when they are in fee-paying education in this country. I have had two or three such cases in Slough in the past year or so. In one, there was a satisfactory arrangement under which a multiple-entry visa was issued, allowing the mother to come and go within a period of 12 months to look after her children while they were at school. I have a current case, as yet unresolved, about which I have made representations to my hon. Friend the Minister of State and about which I do not want to go into details on the Floor of the House. My hon. Friend will know the case that I have in mind. We need some specific provision in the immigration rules to cover such cases. When a mother can show that she has the means to support herself and her children and to pay school fees, it is wholly reasonable that she should be allowed entry for short but regular visits during term time to look after her children.

A major problem relating to the admission of dependants is often the difficulty of establishing that a relationship is what it is claimed to be — that a child is the son or daughter of the claimed father. That is a problem especially for children from some parts of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Mr. Boateng: Why?

Mr. Watts: Because there is inadequate documentary evidence—registration of births—it is not easy for such

[Mr. Watts]

people to establish conclusively that a relationship is as claimed. I note that there have been some experiments recently with DNA fingerprinting to help establish relationships in such cases. I ask my hon. Friend to consider making such testing much more widely available — on a voluntary basis — so that whenever there is uncertainty in the mind of an entry clearance officer about the paternity of a child whose father wishes him to come here as a dependant the test can be made available to provide conclusive proof one way or the other. It is most unsatisfactory when a constituent finds that he cannot establish that his child is his through documentary evidence that will satisfy the immigration authorities. Yet this new scientific method, which I understand can give conclusive proof, is not widely available. While it is right to take every necessary step to ensure that the claimed children of men and women who are settled here are indeed their children, we should also be prepared to make available the facilities for establishing such relationships scientifically, now that we have the method.

Mr. Madden: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the difficulties standing in the way of applicants obtaining a DNA test is that many of them cannot afford the £400 to £500 that is charged for such tests? Would he support such charges being covered by the legal aid system?

Mr. Watts: If such tests were more widely available, the costs would probably come down. They are a facility that should be made available on a voluntary basis, as I said earlier. I do not believe that anyone should be forced to take the blood test, but it is reasonable that people should incur some expense to establish the facts that support their cases.

Mr. Hanley: It might assist my hon. Friend to know that a pilot scheme is under way at the Foreign Office, in which 40 tests have been done. The scheme concluded at the end of September. This might be an appropriate moment for our hon. Friend to state whether he has heard of any preliminary reports about that test. My hon. Friend may also have seen in yesterday's newspapers a report that the DNA test is now commercially available for £120.

Mr. Watts: I am sure that bit of information will be welcome to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden). I am grateful to my hon. Friend for amplifying those points.

We heard earlier one of the ritual denunciations of the primary purpose rule by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), I do not pretend that the primary purpose rule works perfectly in every case. There have been cases in which I have been satisfied that the rule has worked unfairly against the interests of constituents, and I have made representations to my hon. Friend about them.

However, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook completely ignored the valuable protection that the primary purpose rule gives young women — and sometimes young men — from exploitation by being forced into marriages solely for the purpose of evading immigration control. If Opposition Members are honest with themselves, even if they do not wish to acknowledge these facts publicly, they will know that cases have been brought to their attention by the victims of such exploitation.

Mr. Boateng: Not one.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Not one.

Mr. Watts: Perhaps when certain hon. Members have been in the House for a little longer, their experience will be the same as mine. I could cite up to 10 cases that have been brought to my attention in the past four years in which people have been inveigled into marriages that they subsequently found had been entered upon solely for the purpose of allowing the spouse to evade immigration control. They then found themselves stuck in a marriage that was not working, with a spouse to whom they did not want to be married any more, and they wrote asking me to ask my hon. Friend to get rid of the offending spouse.

Mr. John Carlisle: Perhaps I have a little more experience of these matters than my hon. Friend, and certainly more than the majority of Opposition Members. My hon. Friend will know that this problem causes the greatest distress, particularly to the young women concerned. He is therefore right to bring the matter to the attention of the House. Since the Government changed the rules, such instances are becoming fewer, and so they should. However, those involved in them certainly suffer a great deal of distress. Many of my hon. Friends have encountered similar experiences of suffering to those that my hon. Friend has described.

Mr. Watts: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for substantiating my point.

The other requirements of the Bill — to establish claims of citizenship before departure, tightening the grounds for appeal by overstayers and making overstaying a continuing offence — are minor but important improvements in our system of immigration control.

Firm and fair immigration control has the overwhelming support of my constituents, regardless of their racial origin, because they recognise that such control is a precondition for harmonious community relations. That is something for which we all strive.

6.20 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): The kindest thing that I can say for some of the speeches by Conservative Members is that they demonstrate how difficult it is to defend the indefensible. I regard the Bill as pretty indefensible.

Like others who have spoken in the debate, I regard clause 1 as the most objectionable part of the Bill, because it repeals the guarantees for Commonwealth citizens settled in the United Kingdom on 1 January 1973 and, more important, the guarantees given to their wives and families. One can raise several serious objections to that repeal. The first has already been mentioned by the Opposition. It is the fact that the Government are going back on clear undertakings given to the people concerned. The right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) reminded us of what Mr. Reginald Maudling said during the passage of the Act. I should like to quote something else that he said on Second Reading on 8 March 1971:

"I do not intend that the position of those already in this country, the rights of those already in this country to bring in their dependants, shall be changed. That is what we promised in the election. If the Rules as drafted do not make this clear, they will certainly be amended."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1971; Vol. 813, c. 47.]

When the Bill came back to the House from the other place on 19 October 1971, Mr. Maudling said:

> "By these Amendments we are giving statutory form to the undertaking I gave on Second Reading that people already accepted for settlement in this country would not be prejudiced by the Bill."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1971; Vol. 823, c. 552.]

Those undertakings have been repeated over the years since then.

I noticed as recently as 5 November in *The Independent* a comment by Mr. Abu Sayeed on behalf of the Commission for Racial Equality in Tower Hamlets. He was commenting, as the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has done, on the implications of the proposal for the Bangladeshi community. He said that many Bangladeshi men in that area had been waiting for up to 10 years to be joined by their wives and children. He was quoted as saying:

> "The Home Secretary came to visit us a few months ago and said we had nothing to fear. It seems that was wrong."

It is hard not to understand the sense among that community of being let down as a direct result of this legislation.

I say with all respect to the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) that if he were having his rights removed in the same way, I doubt whether he would view it in the calm and dispassionate sense that he did earlier.

The Bangladeshi community is very much at the forefront of our thoughts when we examine the legislation, because Bangladeshi men have tended to be resident in this country as heads of households without being joined by their families. That was underlined by the first report from the Home Affairs Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, published on 10 December 1986. Paragraph 6 states:

> "Although family reunion has often been delayed by immigration control procedures, many Bangladeshi men have themselves delayed sending for their families and are now doing so long after their original migration to Britain. The Bangladeshis are the last of Britain's main ethnic minorities to reunite their families here."

Surely the fact that these people are the last of those communities does not justify us putting obstacles in the way of that reunion.

Conservative Members have put forward the argument that the tests that are being laid down are not in any sense onerous. I accept that one can make a good superficial argument that those who wish to be reunited with their wives and families should be able to prove that they can house and support them without recourse to public funds. However, some Conservative Members did not seem to have any sense of compassion. The story of the Good Samaritan appears to have fallen on somewhat stony ground among some Conservative Members.

In any case, the operative point is that made by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney. In real life, it is almost impossible for some of those people to meet those conditions. We are talking about people who, by and large, are resident in our inner-city, deprived areas. If they are looking for housing, it has to be local authority housing, because nothing else is available at a price that anyone with below an astronomical income can afford.

There is an awful catch-22 situation. No local authority will provide housing for a family until the family is here. The applicant cannot get housing until his family is with him, and he cannot get his family to join him until he has housing. I do not know how one could regard that as a fair and reasonable test to be met.

We are talking about the families of men who have lived in the United Kingdom for at least 14 years, who, in many cases, have paid their taxes and have not been eligible for child benefit. Their children have not benefited from the education services, and their families have not benefited from the National Health Service. Now we are penalising them. That is an unacceptable approach to ask us to support.

I was also taken by the point made by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook about the implications of the legislation for all United Kingdom citizens. It is one of the most significant and long-term effects of the legislation. It will affect all British men who marry foreign spouses. They will be covered by the legislation and could be subject to the same tests and the other restrictions that any Government seek to apply at any given time. Alongside that we have clause 6, which enshrines the freedom of movement for EEC nationals and their families. They do not need permission; they do not have to pass any tests. Under EEC law, an EEC national has the right to bring in not just his spouse and children under 21, but his parents and even his grandparents. Thus, there is a crazy Alice in Wonderland situation where EEC nationals living in Britain have stronger, better rights than British citizens. As someone who supports British membership of the Community, I find that hard to accept.

As has been said, the other objectionable part of the legislation is clause 4, which restricts the right of appeal against deportation of anyone who is accused of overstaying, and has been resident in the United Kingdom for fewer than seven years. The present arrangements are that the appellate authority has the right to decide whether compassionate circumstances outweigh the public interest in a deportation case. That right disappears under clause 4. The appeal authorities will be limited simply to examining the strict point of fact whether the person has or has not overstayed. No opportunity will be given to the person to explain the circumstances. That renders the business of appeal absolutely meaningless. Deportation has a major impact on any individual. It has a massive impact on the family, which could be entirely innocent.

As the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney sensibly reminded us, seven years is a long time. It is a period in which someone can put down firm roots in this country. He can establish a business or a family, marry a British citizen or have British-born children, yet we are saying that the appeal body will not be allowed to take any of that into consideration when it examines the case. That gives the authorities virtually an arbitrary power to deport in such cases without their decisions being subject to proper independent review of all the circumstances. At the very least, I should have thought that if the Government have to go down that road, why on earth must they have a period such as seven years? Why can it not be limited to one or, at the most, two years within which that draconian power is to be exercised?

Like the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, I am concerned about the impact of the change on refugees. Clause 4 as drafted would prevent overstayers who have sought asylum in this country and face deportation from explaining why they genuinely fear going back to their native land. That must be the whole nub of their case against deportation, that they genuinely fear

[Mr. John Cartwright]

that their lives are at risk if they are returned to their native country. Any appeal is rendered pointless if that argument cannot be placed before the appellate authority. Like the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, I hope that the powers given to the Secretary of State in clause 4(2) will be used in such a way that these people will be excluded from the implications of the clause.

There has been much agreement in the House that immigration control is a regrettable necessity. However, it must be even-handed and fair. Much more important, it must be seen to be even-handed and fair, and I am afraid that on that test the Bill fails. It is the first immigration legislation that we have seen since 1971, and it is a matter of regret that all it seems to be doing is trying to plug so-called gaps in a system of control. Some of those alleged gaps are important rights that are enshrined in past practice or legislation. Others result from decisions of the courts that the Government now seek to reverse. No one disputes that the impact in terms of numbers will not be dramatic. The legislation establishes dangerous precedents and will create new problems and anomalies. The best epitaph on the Bill was a comment in the editorial in *The Independent* on 5 November, which said that the Bill was "petty and unnecessary". That is a good description, and that is why I and my hon. Friends will vote against the Bill.

6.31 pm

Mr. Tim Janman (Thurrock): Much of the detail of what I wanted to say about the Bill has already been said by some of my hon. Friends. I should like to add one or two comments and, perhaps, broaden the discussion on immigration to bring in the possibility of some form of voluntary resettlement.

I welcome the Bill. My hon. Friend the Minister of State visited my constituency during the election campaign and witnessed an extremely successful result. He will welcome the news that my constituents welcome the Bill, which effectively implements our manifesto commitment to ensure that controls over settlement become even more effective.

I and my constituents especially welcome clause 1. As we have heard at some length, it will extend existing criteria to pre-1973 immigrants. I endorse the statistical point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). Since the Government were elected in 1979, the number of Commonwealth immigrants has fallen to approximately 44,000 per year and immigration from the new Commonwealth and Pakistan has fallen to its lowest level since 1962. It went down to approximately 22,500 in 1986 from a peak of 68,519 in 1972.

I shall certainly vote for the Bill, but I remind the Minister that there are many aspects of immigration policy that the Conservative Governments from 1970-74 and since 1979 have not implemented, even though we have made several manifesto commitments to some form of voluntary resettlement. In our 1970 manifesto we said:

> "There will be no further large-scale permanent immigration".

Since then we have received more than 600,000 into the United Kingdom. They are now permanent residents and that is against the wishes of the British people. According to figures that I have seen, from the early 1960s there was no discernible reduction in the numbers of immigrants until about 1980. The reduction started in 1980 and that is a great credit to successive Conservative Home Secretaries and the Prime Minister. Even since 1980, the number of immigrants who have come to Britain and taken up permanent residence is nearly 250,000. I hope that the Bill will lead to further reductions in the number of people coming in. More important, perhaps it will start to deal with the excessive numbers of immigrants who are already here.

There has been some talk about illegal immigration and about people coming Britain and overstaying. Many people in the United Kingdom are incensed about illegal immigration. A letter to *The Daily Telegraph* from my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) in 1975 said:

> "On the wider question of immigration I find there is much distress in middle-class circles on the question of illegal immigration."

I can assure the House that there is much distress in working-class circles as well.

> "It is felt that the statistics are totally wrong and that the Government is doing nothing to combat the problem. As it is the number of immigrants that worries people, the authorities would be well advised to tackle this if they are to be able to sell further race relations law to the population."

That letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar was true in 1975 and remains true.

In our 1970 manifesto, from which I have already quoted, we pledged to bring in a scheme of voluntary resettlement. Since the 1970 election, all that we have had —although of course there were two different schemes running concurrently before — is the pathetic International Social Service of Great Britain. That Government body reduces the number of people who apply to return to their country of origin under the 1971 Act and in the financial year 1983-84 it spent the mean and measly sum of £1,175 per head on resettlement. That beats even the London borough of Camden in meanness in helping people to return to their country of origin.

The Bill applies tighter controls about fitness to stay to people who came here before 1973. This coupled with a generously funded, voluntary resettlement programme that was well publicised and available to all would achieve a net outflow to reduce the degree of swamping that the Prime Minister rightly spoke about in her famous speech in 1979. Our 1979 manifesto spoke about assisting people to return to their country of origin.

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Janman: I shall not give way because I wish to continue with my speech. Our 1979 manifesto said that we would

> "help those immigrants who genuinely wish to leave this country but there can be no question of compulsory repatriation".

I endorse in its entirety that statement of intent. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to be giving way.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman does not appear to be doing anything.

Mr. Janman: As I say, I endorse in its entirety that statement of intent which we have not yet implemented.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Janman: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Boateng: Now we see.

Mr. Carlisle: I can understand the sense of hearing a reasoned voice on the argument rather than the unsound voices of Opposition Members. Will my hon. Friend remind the House that the system of voluntary repatriation has been in existence for some time and was in existence during the early 1970s when the Labour Government were in power and could have repealed the system? The Labour Government had the opportunity to withdraw that system, but did not do so. One of the reasons why the system is not taken up is that it is not publicised enough. In many cases, the information is suppressed by Labour councils which discourage people who ask about the system. Those people are told either that it does not exist or that the amount of money available is not as much as it could be.

Mr. Janman: I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) for amplifying that point which I had perhaps missed. On the wider topic I shall quote from *The Daily Telegraph* of 1975 some comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour), who, when referring to those well meaning calls of racial tolerance that were made by people——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for an hon. Member to read at great length newspaper cuttings of more than 10 years ago simply because the Government Benches are so short of speakers that they wish to fill up the debate with the abuse of history as reported by *The Daily Telegraph*?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not out of order to read from newspapers, but I hope that the hon. Member will not be tedious or go on at great length and that he will paraphase what he has to say. Many hon. Members wish to speak in this important debate.

Mr. Janman: It occurs to me that it is normally Labour Members who are always calling for freedom of information. In quoting from this text, I am merely imparting information to them. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham, referring to well meaning calls for racial tolerance, said:

> "The popular appeal of these speeches is often limited by the fact that they are delivered by people like me who patently do not have our tolerance tested day after day by intimate personal contact with the problems and difficulties which we urge others—white and coloured—to overcome."

He was reported to have said that:

> "Enoch Powell was right to argue that it was not so much the right of settlement which had created problems as the number of people who had exercised it."

Much more recently than 1975 my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) wrote an excellent article in the *Sunday Telegraph* in which he called for a voluntary and generously funded resettlement programme. Such a measure is not unique. I have already mentioned the initiative taken by the London borough of Camden. Although I support its principle, the complaints that I have about the initiative are that the amount of funding involved is far too measly and that it is discriminatory in that it gives the opportunity only to the Irish community and not to other ethnic communities. We should exercise that borough's principle on a national basis.

Mr. Boateng: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Janman: I do not wish to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

A second example of that principle being carried out by Socialists—not just Conservatives—is France where for many years there has been a voluntary resettlement programme.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have been listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman. I have been wondering when the Chair will direct him to address his remarks to the contents of the Bill. He has already spent 12 minutes talking in general terms and has not once addressed the Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Member knows from his considerable parliamentary experience, Second Reading debates are very wide. The hon. Member who has the floor is in order.

Mr. Janman: I was talking about the impact that the election of a Socialist president had on the voluntary resettlement programme in France, where the grant was increased from £1,000 per person to £15,000 per person for those who wished to return to the country of their origin. The scheme was so successful that in 1985 20,000 people left France under the auspices of the programme. In Germany there is also a civilised and humane method of reducing what is seen to be an unacceptably high immigrant population. A grant of £2,600 per head, plus a refund of pension contributions, is given to those immigrants, mainly Turks, who wish to return to their original country. About 20 per cent. of the Turkish immigrant population—about 300,000 people—has now gone. Belgium, another of our European Economic Community neighbours, has a scheme based on similar principles.

The Kohl Government in West Germany have made a commitment to halve the total of 4·5 million immigrants in West Germany without compulsion. I ask the Minister of State why we cannot start to move in that direction and why we cannot have a clause added to the Bill that will enable a similar objective to be met in this country under a British Conservative Government. Several noises of annoyance have been made by Labour Members, but the Labour party is extremely hypocritical on this point. Its leader went to India and made noises that would lead people to believe that the party's view was one thing, while its then shadow home affairs spokesman tried to assure people in this country that its policies would lead to only a small rise in immigration.

The hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) really takes the biscuit when he goes on about immigration that took place hundreds of years ago from Britain into Ireland, and yet expects the British people to continue quite happily to accept mass immigration into their country now. No party has won a general election with a mandate to allow mass immigration. Yet we have now taken millions of legal and illegal immigrants. The true figure is unknown, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham stated back in 1975.

I welcome the Bill and the fact that it honours the commitment that we gave in the recent Conservative manifesto. I assure the Minister of State that it will be warmly welcomed by all my constituents, including many in the considerable Sikh community in Grays who, like the community that my hon. Friend the Member for Slough

[Mr. Janman]

(Mr. Watts) has in his constituency, can see the wisdom of firm and fair immigration controls which, if anything, go to protect their interests more than those of any other section of the community.

6.49 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I pay tribute to my predecessor, Ernie Roberts, for his many years of service to the people of Hackney, North and Stoke Newington. He has many years left to work for the Labour movement, and I wish him every success in his work, endeavours and projects.

I rise to speak against the Bill. I have the distinction of both being the daughter of immigrants and representing a constituency in north-east London which, for more than a century, has been a classic centre where immigrants have been welcomed. My parents came to this country in 1950 as immigrants from rural Jamaica. Contrary to what Conservative Members might have us believe, they came — a whole generation of black and ethnic minority immigrants came — not to sponge, not to swamp anyone else's culture, not to provide objects of derision for Conservative Members, but to work. They came for a better life for their children. They also came with pride, as citizens of Britain and its Commonwealth, and believing in that citizenship.

In the quarter-century that has elapsed since 1950, to see what has happened to that notion of citizenship of Britain and its Commonwealth — that once proud ideal — is very sad indeed. We have seen increasing restrictions placed on movement, related to what are, in effect, quasi-racial categories: new Commonwealth, old Commonwealth, patrial and non-patrial. We all know what those categories really mean.

We have also seen an erosion of nationality rights. In my constituency, I have to deal every week with people who are frightened and confused by the new requirement to register. The squalid fact is that that requirement to register, at £60 a time, has made over £6 million for the Government. There has been a shortage of forms, there has been confusion, and there has been fear. None of that has been helped by some of the speeches that I have heard from Conservative Members this afternoon.

Above all, in the past quarter century we have encountered the notion that immigrants, far from being people who cross oceans in good faith seeking to work and seeking a better life, are a kind of plague or contagion. No measure is too botched up, too legally illiterate or too racist to keep them out. Immigration legislation in this country has a squalid and racist history, beginning with the first Aliens Act 1905, which was rushed into being, as some hon. Members will know, to keep out the victims of anti-semitic persecution in Russia, the Jewish victims of murder and pogroms in eastern Europe. As immigration legislation started, so it has gone on, and the Bill is no exception to that tradition.

All the Bill's provisions are unpleasant or unnecessary, or both. I shall not bother to go into the provisions to stop the "great plague of polygamy" that is apparently sweeping the country — particularly Slough, we gather. Even on the Government's figures there are only 25 cases a year, and there is no need for legislation to deal with that problem.

I shall not expand on the provisions that give more rights to immigration officers. Labour Members who deal with hundreds of cases a week know that, far from needing more rights, immigration officers systematically abuse the rights that they already have. Nor shall I expand on the provision that gives the Government power to charge immigrants in the future when they apply for indefinite leave to stay. Let me simply say that the Government intend to make money out of charging people who may have been here as students, and who are probably poor. I ask the same question about that as about the charge of £60 for the right to register: why should black people and other ethnic minorities, who have contributed to this country — who pay their rates and taxes — pay over and above that for their rights of citizenship?

I should like to speak at some length about what I consider the most pernicious and dangerous clauses in the Bill. Let me start by examining the number of limitations that it places on the right to appeal. Overstayers of fewer than seven years can be deported with no appeal, and the same applies to those who come to this country without a passport. These clauses cut across a fundamental principle of government and rule, which is that when people are deprived of basic rights by the Executive, namely immigration officers, they ought to have a right of appeal to the legislature, namely the courts.

I want to talk also about the other "great plague" that the Bill is intended to address, the "plague" of overstayers. The Bill makes overstaying a crime for the first time — not on the first day on which the individual knows that he has overstayed, not within three years, but in an absolute sense.

Contrary to what the frenzied protestations of some Conservative Members might lead us to believe, only 1 per cent. of visitors to this country annually overstay. Moreover, if all overstaying is made a crime — and we know who are the potential overstayers: they are the black and other ethnic minority residents — the police will be given a licence to harass those residents.

That is not only my view. When the issue was last debated in the House, Mr. William Whitelaw, as he then was, expressed from the Conservative Benches his reservations about allowing the police to become involved in what he described as a delicate matter. The Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration said that when it came to dealing with overstayers the role of the police should be minimised. People were aware that if overstaying was made a criminal offence in an absolute sense, the way would be opened for a pass law to be brought in through the back door. However, far from taking notice of their own Mr. Whitelaw and their own Committee, the Government choose not to minimise police involvement in overstaying, but to maximise it, and to criminalise whole sections of the community. We will see what damage that will cause to police community relations.

Let me conclude by referring to the provisions that would remove from those who came here before 1973 the right to bring in their families. We have heard Conservative Members talk about that provision as if it were an anomaly, as if it were a quirk of fate, or a misdrafting. Let me remind them, in case they have forgotten, that the right of settlers before 1973 to bring in their families without let or hindrance was a promise made by successive Tory Prime Ministers. Reginald Maudling and the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond.

Yorks (Mr. Brittan), when they held the post of Home Secretary, promised during election campaigns that, whatever else happened, the right of people settled here before 1973 to bring in their families would be sacrosanct, but the Government have reneged on that promise.

The Government say, "We must see whether those people can afford to keep their families, and whether they have houses in which to put them." Far from African, Afro-Caribbean and Asian people rushing to bring their families in when they have no money to support them and nowhere for them to go, it is precisely because they are so anxious to give their families somewhere to live that so many Bangladeshi, African and Afro-Caribbean males have lived in one room and scrimped and saved for years. There is no evidence that people rush to bring in their families when they have no home and no money. All the evidence shows that they have suffered and deprived themselves, that they have had two jobs and worked night shifts, as well as triple shifts, in order to be united with their families.

Conservative Members have referred to the stress that is caused by arranged marriages. If they want to know about stress, they should sit in my surgery. I have heard of girls attempting suicide because they have had to wait so long for entry clearance for their fiancés. Elderly people, who have worked all their lives here, have been unable to bring their children to this country because of the immigration laws. I have seen parents who have had to face the fact that their children would be deported. Women have come to my surgery in tears because their husbands were to be deported.

Conservative Members talk about stress and human misery. This Conservative Bill, which will split families and cause great human misery, will lead to even greater stress. Let there be no more hypocritical talk about stress. The Bill takes away an absolute right to bring in families, and it flies in the face of the Tory boast that it is the party of the family. The Bill is cruel, inhumane and unnecessary. It breaks a solemn promise. Furthermore, it is racist.

Conservative Members have shed many crocodile tears. They have said, "We need firm and fair immigration control to prevent unacceptable social tension, and we are introducing this Bill to help immigrants." The constant piecing together of incoherent and racist immigration laws that serve no real purpose apart from propaganda heightens tension and stress and makes people feel that they are unwanted. It does more to create division than anything else that I can think of.

Since I was a child, immigration legislation has been used as a vehicle for people to air their racism. This Bill was born out of racism and it will do nothing to improve community relations. It represents a breach of faith with a generation of people who came here with the best intentions and the highest hopes. Their aspirations, their family life and their children are constantly denigrated in the kind of debate and argument that is used to promote legislation of this kind. The Bill is a disgrace, and I urge the House to oppose it.

7.3 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Much though I should like to remain in the House after making my speech, I have a long-standing commitment that unfortunately forces me to leave the Chamber immediately afterwards. I apologise to the House. I hope that hon. Members will forgive me for not staying to hear the subsequent speeches.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) made a most eloquent speech. She spoke with much compassion and commitment and, indeed, with a great deal of knowledge. According to the traditions of the House, we had hoped to hear a little more about the marvellous things that are being done in Hackney and Stoke Newington. We should have liked to hear more about what Hackney council is doing; we hear so much about it in the press. However, the hon. Lady did not refer to such pleasant matters. I am wondering whether that is because the hon. Lady feels that there is not much that can be said for that council.

However, the word "racial" was repeated with passion time and again, and I think that I should address myself to that matter. According to the hon. Lady, a great deal of unfairness and injustice has been perpetrated in the name of racial equality. The hon. Lady told the House about her origins, and said that she is the child of Jamaican immigrants. I have just as much right to speak as she; we have much in common. I was born in Maputo in Mozambique and came to this country as an immigrant at the age of 10. I am now a Member of Parliament, as is the hon. Lady. What more could be said about equality in this great country than that both of us are Members of Parliament and that we sit on opposite sides of the Chamber? It speaks volumes for the way in which successive Governments and generations have dealt with delicate and difficult immigration problems. We have assimilated waves of immigrants at different periods of our history, but difficulty has always arisen over the large number of immigrants.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): The hon. Gentleman says that his party makes immigrants feel at home and that they are assimilated. Why, therefore, are there no black Conservative Members of Parliament?

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman is another example of how wonderful this country is. He is an immigrant. He was not born in this country.

Mr. Boateng: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) to be so nauseatingly patronising?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Ashby: It is the kind of intervention to which we have grown accustomed from the Greek chorus on the Opposition Back Benches.

Mr. Boateng: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West to describe Opposition Members as Greek?

Mr. Ashby: That is a very racist remark. I am sure that there have been Members of Parliament with Greek origins. One hon. Member was elevated to the other place and sits in the House of Lords. He is of Greek origin and is very proud of it. At the last election there were large numbers of Conservative candidates from the ethnic minorities. The fact that they are not Members of

[Mr. Ashby]

Parliament is due to the democracy that brought the hon. Members for Tottenham (Mr. Grant) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington to this place.

My constituency has a very low immigrant population of about 0·03 per cent. Therefore I speak for the indigenous members of our community — the non-immigrants. As I am an immigrant, perhaps I am more qualified than most to do so.

I was quite surprised to hear the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) attacking the Bill on housing grounds as much as anything else and also apologising and saying that there must be local authority housing in his area to cope with the Bangladeshi immigrants. He will be aware that the Select Committee on Home Affairs report on immigration stated that a year ago in Dhaka there were almost 12,500 people who had registered to come to this country and the majority of them said that they had relations in Tower Hamlets. No local authority could cope with that number. Indeed, the figure of 12,500 was thought to be an underestimate.

As many as 30,000 people are believed to want to come to this country and in particular to the right hon. Gentleman's constituency. How could Tower Hamlets cope with up to 30,000 people? What effect would that influx have on the indigenous members of the right hon. Gentleman's community? What would have been the effect on race relations? What would have happened in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency if 30,000 people from Bangladesh had descended on Tower Hamlets? That is the kind of problem that all Governments have had to face and that is why we must have immigration laws and that is why we have had to control immigration.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashby: I will give way when I have finished this point.

It was a Labour Government who were the first to introduce immigration legislation in the big immigration measure, the Race Relations Act 1968.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman is doing valiant service for his party in defending the entire party against his dinner appointment at 7.30 pm. Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the fact that he is talking nonsense, because the Immigration Act 1971 clearly gives a right of entry to dependent families from the Indian sub-continent? This Bill diminishes, if not removes, that right of entry. Bureaucratic delays by the Home Office have created this appalling queue of misery throughout Bangladesh. The hon. Gentleman should address himself to removing that queue of misery rather than raising this old canard of racist nonsense that he presumably reads in *The Sun* every day.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman wants to substitute a queue of misery in Bangladesh with a queue of misery in this country. That is asking far too much of the people of this country and too much of the cause of good race relations. To create such a queue in this country would provide the kind of emotional bloodbath that was suggested about 10 years ago. We have been able to achieve good racial harmony only because there have been restrictions.

The Labour party has always said one thing in opposition and quite another when in power. We are not debating the immigration laws, although we are all aware that the Opposition would like to see the immigration laws removed. The Opposition are aware — they have been very tactful in this respect — that they would be hung, drawn and quartered by their own supporters if they enacted such a policy. We all remember too well that the Labour party conference in 1981 approved a motion opposing the Government's British Nationality Act 1981 on the ground that it continued the racist traditions of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968 — a Labour measure — and the Immigration Act 1971. The Labour party also said that the British Nationality Act 1981 was deliberately ambiguous in its definition of citizenship and thus gave unexplained discretion to the Home Office and immigration officials. There have been further debates on the strength of that.

Small wonder therefore that the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), the Opposition spokesman on home affairs, had to state that his right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) was not correct in his interpretation of Labour party immigration policy. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook stated that the Labour party would increase immigration by about 1,000 people per annum.

That was stated during the election campaign. However, we are not really debating the immigration laws. In the Bill, we are concerned with closing the loopholes and of removing the manifest unfairness that exists in law at present. The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington mentioned the clause that removes the rights of the second and third wives of polygamous mariages to come to this country and said that there were only 25 cases.

It was Martin Luther King——

Mr. Boateng: The hon. Gentleman should not quote Martin Luther King.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must be allowed to make his speech in his own way.

Mr. Ashby: It was Martin Luther King who said that injustice for one is injustice for all. One injustice is one too many and 25 injustices are 25 too many. Those people are jumping the queue. We have heard from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) about the queues of misery. Those people are all waiting and hoping to come to this country in the same way as Dick Whittington wanted to come to London because he thought that the streets were paved with gold. Many people are waiting in a long queue to come to this country, but others are jumping that queue. It would be a manifest injustice if the loophole were not closed.

Similarly, we must consider the people who have broken the rules of entry or who have overstayed. It has been argued that the decision by the courts that the offence is committed only on the day after those people knew that they were overstaying is overwhelming and should remain. However, the purpose of the legislation was to make that a continuing offence and the fact that it was not very well framed and allowed such an interpretation does not mean that the law should be changed. Everyone who overstays is breaking the law and jumping the queue.

Overstayers break the intention of the law and that is another injustice. That kind of injustice cannot be rectified through marriage when families with children seek asylum in a church; those people are still jumping the queue.

Anyone who overstays does so knowingly, and is aware that he is breaking the law. It should be a continuing offence.

It is manifestly wrong that arguments should be made against a proper section of the Bill intended to overcome that injustice. It is wrong to suggest that the section would license the police to harass the black community. We cannot have no-go areas either geographically or in the law. If the rules of entry are broken and a person overstays, it cannot be harassment on the part of police officers to go around——

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ashby: Yes.

Mr. Turner: This will give the hon. Gentleman time to collect his papers. Does he agree that the Bill should contain a clause which provides for appeal against injustice in view of the misery caused to people who wish to bring their fiancées into the country? Surely the hon. Gentleman would agree that that is a case of injustice. That is what Opposition Members are complaining about. There is a lack of humanity and compassion and a failure to recognise that the lives of many thousands of people will be smashed as a result of this pernicious piece of legislation.

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman will know that there is now a great industry of advisers and quasi-lawyers who are preying on those who are attracted to this country. They demand a great deal of money to find loopholes in the law and to evade the intentions of Parliament. They enable people to jump the queue. That is the injustice. Opposition Members talk about compassion——

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman to complain that advisers are helping people to jump the queue when they are merely telling people what the law is?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is in order for the hon. Gentleman to make a speech in the way that he wishes, and it is for us to listen to that speech. Hon. Members can all make their speeches if time permits.

Mr. Ashby: Of course, we must have a great deal of compassion for those who are waiting in the queue to come to this country. However, some people are preying upon others and encouraging them to jump the queue and come to Britain by pretending, for example, that they have British nationality. They are brought here only to have their hopes dashed. I am thinking particularly of the Tamils. It is very hard on those people, but it is right to have firm, proper laws which everyone understands, including those abroad, so that they know exactly where they stand.

The purpose of the Bill is to remove those acts of injustice. We have all heard of the sad cases of Filipino women advertising as brides. We must try to stop the loopholes and get back to some sanity. I do not believe that this will be the last Bill of its kind. I am sure that the people whom I have come across, who are looking for ways to get around the law and advising acts of illegality abroad—there are many cases of that—will look for ways to get around this legislation as well. No doubt the result will be that in five or 10 years there will have to be another Bill to cover further loopholes.

The intention of Parliament is paramount and the Bill carries out the intentions of Parliament in the previous legislation. It merely deals with unfairnesses and injustices and brings fairness and justice to all. That is the whole point of the measure.

7.25 pm

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on the content of her maiden speech, which was most appropriate to today's debate. She echoes the sentiments of most of us on this miserable measure and the Opposition's struggle to make a real contribution. It is among the Opposition that feelings about this are most profound. The Minister should pay close attention to that because he will have to deal with the details of these matters in the future. To me, the Minister is a newcomer. I have had long experience as a Member of Parliament in dealing with these matters, but so far I have had no experience of the new Minister with responsibility for immigration. I shall be happy to visit him before long for a heart-to-heart chat about how he might become an outstanding immigration Minister loved by the ethnic minorities. He is deemed to be not just the Minister for immigration but the Minister for race relations, and I am sure that he will fulfil his duties with great distinction.

I shall be brief, as I know that many Opposition Members, if not Conservative Members, wish to contribute to the debate, but I wish first to dwell a little on the background. In those far off days when I served as an Opposition Member on the Committee that considered the 1971 legislation, we knew that we were in for trouble. I readily deemed that legislation to be a racist measure because at the same time as human movement in the EEC, in western Europe, was being made freer, movement from the Commonwealth was being made more difficult. That was the essence of the situation and I led the first Opposition march in London in consequence of that.

Things have not improved since. Many of us were gravely disappointed that under the Labour Government of 1974-79 no major moves were made, although when Mr. Jenkins was Home Secretary he sought to mitigate the 1971 Act to some extent. That gave rise to a National Front march across London, the counteractivity of the liberalisation movement in which I was deeply involved, and the inquiry by Lord Scarman which emanated from that. It was the first time that racists and Fascists, leaning on the barbarities of the Nazis, had dared to march across London, and there are symptoms of that among Conservative Members. I say "symptoms" because the majority of Conservatives with whom I have had dealings over the years have wanted to do the decent thing. If they did the decent thing today, they would throw out this shabby Bill.

One of the things on which Conservative Members dote is the honouring of pledges. I well recall the Home Secretary in 1971—Mr. Maudling, whose memory is greatly revered by many Conservatives—making the categorical pledges to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington alluded in her brilliant speech. The Government are going back on those pledges.

We must remind ourselves that the Bill seeks to deal with a diminishing number of people as the whole issue was generated by the recruitment of cheap labour in the Caribbean and in the Indian sub-continent by, among

[Mr. Sydney Bidwell]

others. Mr. Powell, the former right hon. Member for Down, South recruiting labour for Britain's medical services when he was Health Minister. He was no paragon of virtue when he jumped on the bandwagon of racist activity succouring the National Front. I do not know how the present situation has arisen. The present Home Secretary was a reputed Tory wet of yesteryear, and I do not believe that his heart can be in the present measure. We need further mitigation and changes. The Labour party gave a categorical pledge to get rid of the British Nationality Act, which deprives children born in this country of the right automatically to be regarded as British citizens, and we talked about reviewing the 1971 Act. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), to his credit, said that nothing short of the repeal of that Act would do and I recall him making those assertions on a previous occasion.

The situation is being made harsher. In one of the last parliamentary questions before the general election, I asked the Prime Minister to disown any candidate who sought to stir up enmity between white and black people. That is exactly what measures of this kind do and what some, though not all, Tory candidates tried to do. Conservative Members know that that is so. The Bill is a backward step. The Minister should be seeking to meet the problems of the ethnic communities and to ease their difficulties in a practical way. Changes are needed in the rules. The primary purpose rule puts applicants wishing to come here into a clamp. The catch question is whether the applicant wishes to marry the woman just to obtain a job in Britain, as though that were a crime, or because he really loves her. Under the rule, the couple must already have met. The girl here may be a fiancée or already a bride. A child may even have been born, but still the authorities dig their heels in and claim that under the rule the husband wishes to go to Britain for economic reasons.

I must get another aspect of this off my chest today. As I have said before, the rules must be changed with regard to old people, who must be wholly or mainly dependent on someone in this country and have no other close relative to whom they can turn. That rule can be interpreted so widely as to include a daughter living 50 miles and many villages away and who never sees her mother, although there may be three sons in this country, one of whom feels an essential responsibility towards the woman who is the grandparent of his children here. All that must be sorted out. It all needs to be extended and changed so that there will be a little humanity. It is a matter not of figures, but of the human treatment of human beings.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is a particularly offensive rule. The more an adult child tries to assist his aged parents overseas by sending money and the rest, the more he undermines the chances of his parent, or parents, being able to come here in their old age, because it would be argued that they are wholly or mainly dependent on a sponsor in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bidwell: I know that my hon. Friend has considerable experience in such matters, as do many Opposition Members.

I appeal to the better Tories to do the right thing, simply be reiterating that it was a piece of electioneering. It was designed to show that a Tory Government would be tougher on immigration than a Labour Government. That was what it was all about. It was designed to divide black workers from white workers. It was designed to divide white workers. That letter on Tory notepaper sent to Mr. Piers Merchant in Newcastle was designed to try to save his seat and to be part and parcel of an intended Tory victory based on confusion in such matters.

Tory Members should be thoroughly ashamed of themselves for bringing this miserable Bill to the House. I invite the best of them to screw its scruffy neck.

7.36 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I have great pleasure in congratulating the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on her maiden speech. She accused Conservative Members of some hypocrisy, and I would be fulfilling that description if I pretended to agree with everything that she said. It was indeed an eloquent speech and I am sure that she will serve her constituency well. I am glad to see her in the House if only as another of the 41 women Members.

I support the Bill. I look not to its immediate enactment or even to its effect a few years hence, but well into the future—20 or 25 years. What sort of society do we want at that time? Do we want a society in which racial harmony is so normal that it is the accepted thing, and we cannot imagine a time when it did not exist? Do we want a society in which the immigrant population and the host community are fully integrated and do not notice each other's colour or racial origins as something special or different? Do we want a common community in which it will be perfectly natural for members of the immigrant community to sit in the House as Members of Parliament representing among their constituents both the host community and the immigrant community, a community in which white people will speak for black people and black people will speak for white people, and for that to be accepted as normal?

Without wishing to disparage a maiden speech, I must say that my major criticism of the speech of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington is that we should have heard more about the interests of her constituents who belong to that host community, as well as about the interests of her constituents who are members of the immigrant community.

Mr. Boateng: Will the hon. Lady assist the House? What is to be described as the host community and what is to be described as the guest community? Am I a host or a guest, having been born in this country? These are highly emotive and insulting phrases and the hon. Lady ought to mind her language. It does the hon. Lady and her considerable abilities no service to talk in such a way.

Miss Widdecombe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. As the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington consistently spoke about the immigrant community, I imagine that she made the division, and I was trying to find an acceptable alternative to describe the indigenous community. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was offended, but I think that it is perfectly all right to comment on a division made by the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington.

In 20 to 25 years will we have that sort of harmonious society, or will we have a society in which immigrants and, for want of a better word, host, indigenous whites

[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] look at each other with distrust? Do we want a society in which every action of the police is regarded somehow as harassment and provocation, when it is carried out in the normal course of investigations of crime? Do we want a society in which grievances are encouraged and the rights of the immigrant community are continually advanced as being in conflict with the rights of the indigenous population?

If we want a harmonious society in which we could not believe that anyone even thought of discriminating on grounds of race, we must work out the best way to work towards it. In doing so, we cannot ignore the necessity of providing reassurance to the immigrant community, that we shall ensure that racial discrimination is against the law, as it is, and that there is no difference whatever between the different sections of the population, and to those sections of the population which regard themselves as the host community, that we shall carefully protect their traditions and take their worries seriously. That second point is important.

I do not have a large immigrant population in my constituency, but for two years I contested a constituency which did. Nobody ever came to my surgery and churned out the sort of nonsense that I often hear attributed to us. I never hear people say, "We don't want these people here. We want them sent back." I never heard that sort of nonsense. However, I heard consistent representations to the effect that people were worried that, for example, 80 per cent. of a class of children did not speak English as their first language. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where was that?"] That is a worry; it is not a statement of prejudice or dislike.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No. I shall not give way now, although I may later.

Mr. Vaz: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No, I have said that I will not give way and I ask the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) to observe the order of the House. In reply to the sedentary interventions coming at me, the answer is Burnley in Lancashire.

Mr. Bernie Grant: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Lady to cast aspersions on schools in Burnley in Lancashire without naming the school concerned?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): That is a point of argument. It is not a point of order for me.

Miss Widdecombe: What the hon. Gentleman has just said entirely illustrates my point. It is not an aspersion that 80 per cent. of a class do not speak English as their first language, and it should not be regarded as such in a society that is truly integrated. If we are to have a society in which that sort of statement is not regarded as an aspersion, we need to have some practical enactment or reassurance.

Mr. Boateng: Is this it?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, this Bill is it. Most of the objections that I have heard tonight, which I believe to be valid and to have force, are about the practical enactment of the provisions on the length of detention and the nature of interviews. Those are valid objections, but they can be addressed at their own level. They do not invalidate the Bill. It is a question of tightening the practice, not the principles of the Bill.

We have heard objections to several parts of the Bill. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a valid point about asylum, and I hope that it will be addressed in the replies to the debate. Apart from that, it seems that those who argue against the new provisions and penalties for overstaying are effectively saying that the longer one gets away with it, the more all right it should be, and that we should not penalise people if they have been getting away with overstaying for longer than others. That is an upside down way of looking at the law. Overstaying may be a continuing offence because it is not a once only offence. One does not overstay simply on the day when one's permit runs out. If one continues to overstay, one continues to recommit the offence. If we are to make overstaying an offence if Opposition Members wish to see it removed completely as an offence, that is one sort of argument it seems perfectly reasonable to enact the law fairly and universally. It does not cease to become an offence simply because it has been going on for rather a long time.

I accept wholly the argument that if an overstayer is being sent back after a fair period of time in the United Kingdom, it can cause genuine heartache. I accept that people can become attached to the country, put down roots, have a family, make a way of life, want the best for their children and not want to return to their land of origin. But all those considerations apply in the deliberations of any offence. There is always suffering when an offence is discovered and brought to book. However difficult it may be, if overstaying is an offence

I accept that for Opposition Members a completely different argument is philosophically tenable we must reasonably require that the law is enforced.

We have heard about the 25 cases of polygamy not a great many and I wonder that they are worth all the fever and heat that they have generated among Opposition Members. But, speaking as a woman, I find polygamy and arranged marriages wholly at odds with what the European Court of Human Rights has said about the equality of women. Both are offensive and should be particularly offensive to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, as she, too, is a woman.

Essentially the Bill seeks to plug gaps, not to introduce an entirely new philosophy, and to plug gaps is to reassure. A future of racial harmony depends on reassuring equally both immigrants and those who regard themselves as the hosts.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No, I will not.

Miss Lestor: As a sister?

Miss Widdecombe: I cannot resist that.

Miss Lestor: So that I may follow the hon. Lady's arguments closely, will she explain whether a black person born in this country is an immigrant or a member of the host community?

Miss Widdecombe: If my understanding of the law is correct, such a person would be a member of this country.

[Interruption.] If Labour Members would be quiet, they may be given an answer to the question. Do hon. Members want an answer? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."]

[Miss Widdecombe]

Then listen. Such a person is a member who has immigrant origins but who has become a member of the host community.

Mr. Boateng: I thank the hon. Lady. Now I know what I am.

Miss Widdecombe: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would enlighten me at some time, because I am not sure what he is.

Labour Members on the Opposition Back Benches have been inaccurately described as the Greek chorus. The purpose of a Greek chorus is to introduce melodic euphony into proceedings. I have not noticed any of that being introduced tonight. The reactions of Labour Members bode ill for the future of race relations in this country because any mention of the word "immigrant" from Conservative Members is racist, but when they mention it they are expressing a legitimate grievance. Any mention of "host community" from Conservative Members is racist, but when Labour Members condemn that community they are again expressing a legitimate grievance. Until we all start acknowledging that there are problems caused by immigration and that we all want to overcome them and want a society where in 25 years we will no longer be talking in these terms, we have to reassure both sections of the community.

I stand by my contention that the Bill is the answer to a lot of worry and fear on the part of one section of the community and that it will not materially harm anybody in the other section of the community, except those who deliberately seek to violate the law.

7.52 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I join other hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on her eloquent speech. We have witnessed a piece of history as she is the first black woman to speak in the Chamber.

I am worried by some of the comments made by Conservative Members and I wonder whether we should suggest at business questions that a racism awareness course be introduced for Conservative Members. Conservative Governments have an obsession with restricting the rights of black and Asian people. It is an obsession born out of prejudice.

The Bill is another example of a refusal by the Government to accept that Britain is a multiracial society and that people of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin should have the same right to family life and family unity as others. As has happened many times before, those who are least able to help themselves will be made scapegoats and will be punished. The police, so often placed in near impossible situations of racial tension — situations created by the policies of the Government — will have to intervene to separate black and Asian families and to criminalise them because they want to stay united.

At a meeting organised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in the Palace of Westminster a couple of weeks ago, the Home Secretary declared uneasily that the Bill would be controversial. I am certain that there was a substantial element of guilt in that statement. The Home Secretary has to pander to the fanatical elements in his party. That is the best way to get on in the Conservative party. After many years of being responsible for the immigration service, the right hon and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) was rewarded with a higher office. After whipping the black and Asian community, he now spends his time whipping the Conservative Back Benches.

Hon. Members will recall that, during the election campaign, Conservative Members, especially the Prime Minister, were keen to be associated with the black and Asian community. Hon. Members will recall the poster campaign launched during the 1983 election campaign with pictures of black and Asian people with the slogan saying:

> "Labour says he's black — we say he's British."

There was no hint then that the black Briton — whether guest or host, I am not sure — would be robbed of his rights of citizenship. Hon. Members will know that the Prime Minister is a patron of the Durbar club, ostensibly an Asian business man's club. In an article in the *Sunday Times* on 2 October 1983 we were told:

> "Most members see the success of the Asian trading community in Britain as being due to hard work and dedication in a strange country where they have had to try harder to succeed, and to the quality of humility, central to the Asian way of business. Of course, the closeness of the family is in the end seen as a key element to trading and to uniting the community for success."

I hope that hon. Members will realise that the Bill will go against the whole nature of the family unity. What hypocrisy and double standards. The Conservative party fraternises with the Asian community at election time and stabs it in the back when the elections are over. If one is white and wants to bring a wife into this country, nobody cares. As the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) said, one can advertise. An advertisement was published in one of yesterday's newspapers. It said:

> "Meet beautiful Phillippine girls. Choose from hundreds of lovely ladies like Rosemarie for friendship and marriage. Whatever your age and circumstances."

I would have asked the hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr Renton) and the Home Secretary, if they were not out having dinner somewhere else, whether that case would come under the primary purpose rule or does it not apply when white people seek to bring wives into this country?

Every hon. Member here today who represents inner city seats knows what it is like to be involved in an immigration surgery. We can compare notes on the hours it takes us to work through immigration cases. Since 11 June, I have taken up over 1,000 immigration cases at my surgery in Belgrave road, Leicester. Yesterday morning 157 people called for advice and assistance. They were in a panic and in utter confusion over their rights of citizenship and settlement. Every day projects such as the Leicester rights centre, the self-help project, the Belgrave residents association and the citizens' advice bureaux are inundated with queries on immigration and nationality.

It is impossible for any hon. Member to remain detached from the suffering of his or her constituents unless the hon. Member happens to come from Slough. Families called Patel, Chouhan, Omarji, Singh, Parmar and Lakhani are just names on the Home Secretary's computer, but to me and to their families and friends those names cannot be recited without deep emotion.

I want to bring to the attention of the House two cases that will be affected by the Bill. First, Mr. Reed came to the United Kingdom on 27 September 1982 aged 15. He came for medical treatment. He arrived from St. Vincent where the treatment was unavailable. He needed an artificial limb, having walked on crutches following amputation at the age of six. He was given six months leave to enter. He forgot to apply for an extension before his leave ran out. He subsequently applied and was refused. He had no right of appeal because he had overstayed. However, he had a right of appeal against deportation at which he argued the compassionate circumstances of his case. There were numerous circumstances. He needs permanent, continuing treatment in the form of maintenance and repair of his limb. He supports the household of his sister who is a single parent, his family in St. Vincent can no longer look after him, and he is employed and they are not. Under the Bill, Mr. Reed would have no right of appeal on the merits of his case.

The second case is that of Mr. Mohammed. He came to Britain in 1965 from Bangladesh. His wife and two of his children joined him in 1982 and he is now applying for his third child to join him. He worked in the United Kingdom for nearly 20 years paying tax and national insurance out of his wages, but he claimed no benefits — neither the married man's tax allowance nor child benefit. He is now exercising his rights, preserved under the Immigration Act 1971. He is trying to bring in his son. Under the Bill he would be unable to do so, because he would not be able to show that he could look after his family without recourse to public funds.

This is a squalid, unnecessary and unwanted Bill. It represents all that is rotten and racist about Conservative immigration law. I came here 21 years ago, when I was nine years old, from a colony called Aden, to where my parents had gone from Bombay — not from Greece. I came on promises that were made to those born in what was one of the last posts of the British empire. The 1971 Act promised to Commonwealth citizens those same rights, but the Bill breaks those promises.

Conservative Members proceed without compassion, with no regard for the harshness and bitterness of the queue, lacking even the most basic understanding of the effect of their policies on black and Asian families. They are utterly inflexible when confronted with legitimate criticism.

Those who have spoken against the Bill want to bring to the attention of the House the misery of those who wait in the queue and are subjected to horrifying delays — those who are, in the words of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, "out of sight." Thousands of people want what we have — the right to enjoy a family life. They are denied it and we speak for them.

Moving the Second Reading of the Immigration Bill in 1971, the then Home Secretary, who has been quoted so often in this debate, said:

> "I commend the Bill to the House as a Bill carrying out faithfully the undertakings which we made at the time of the General Election . . . as a Bill which has been misinterpreted, no doubt unintentionally because of its complication; a Bill which does not affect the community already here and, above all, a Bill which is justified as a contribution to helping us to get the framework and the atmosphere in this country within which alone we can hope that the work of organising unity between the various communities can successfully progress."
>
> [*Official Report*, 8 March 1971; Vol. 813, c. 57.]

Subsequent events have proved him hopelessly wrong. Good community relations are too important to be put at risk by this legislation. I am certain that the black and Asian community in Britain will mobilise against the Government and that the verdict of history will be very harsh indeed.

8.1 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): This is a sector of policy that has interested and concerned me for a number of years. There is little in past immigration measures of which Conservative or Labour Members can be proud. Some of them I have described in other places as being reprehensible. Some of them clearly have been racist in intent. One of the worst examples was the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which has been referred to by hon. Members.

During the 1979 election campaign, as a candidate I dissociated myself from some of the contents of the Conservative party manifesto. It was badly thought through and it caused offence and worry to the "immigrant population" — there has been a long debate about what we mean by that — in the constituency in which I was a candidate.

Having looked at the measures in the manifesto during the election and those in the Bill, having read very carefully what was being said by organisations, such as Greater London Action for Racial Equality and JCWI, which was quoted by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), and by Harrow Community Relations Council, I wondered whether we were going down the same road and with the same sort of approach that I had opposed before. The worries that have been put forward by those organisations and the views that we have heard from Labour Members are a storm in a teacup. This is a package of modest tidying-up measures, yet they are being described in terms that are so ludicrous that they defy description.

What is the worst aspect of what we have been hearing from those organisations and Labour Members? They have stirred up worries for people who will not be affected by this measure. I listened to the LBC radio station recently, when the solicitor who gives advice was present, and his two-hour programme was taken up by people telephoning and asking, "Will I be affected by this new Immigration Bill? I have been told that I will be thrown out of the country if the Bill is passed." Time and again the solicitor had to explain that the Bill would not affect them.

The same is true of my constituency mailbag. I have received many letters from people who have believed the nonsense put about by GLARE and JCWI, which tried to turn this into an election issue and failed — certainly in my constituency. Fears have been stirred up that do not exist. That is what I deplore most about the actions of Labour Members.

Immigration laws must be well understood and clear. I recognise the sentiment of the hon. Member for Leicester, East about the hours that it takes to try to get through the complexities of an immigration case — someone who is under the threat of deportation or someone who is concerned because another member of the family is not to be allowed to enter the country. Sometimes two identical cases are dealt with in different ways, and one wonders why that is. But the law is not understandable. This measure will help some of those cases because the law will be made more understandable. It may make the law tougher, but the reality of the matter is that people will understand the rules by which they can enter Britain. That is particularly true with regard to clause 1.

I do not want to discuss constituency cases, but what worries me is the recent ruling of the European Court of

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Human Rights, which said that section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971 was sexually discriminatory. One constituent of mine will be directly helped by the Bill, so, for her, the quicker it comes on to the statute book the better.

The provisions of clause 3 are reasonable. Why should people who have no right to enter come to this country and expect to be allowed in if it can be established on the ground in other countries—I recognise the difficulties in that regard—that they should not embark on an aircraft? That would certainly be the case if any of us wanted to enter certain countries. When working in foreign countries I have had to deal with their immigration rules, which are tough, so I see no reason why the Government should not introduce this measure.

Some Labour Members have completely missed the point. Good race relations are the issue that we should be discussing. Good race relations are what this modest measure is all about. I want to reflect what was said to me during the election campaign by members of the ethnic minorities who live in my constituency. There is a large Asian population in south Harrow, Pinner and even in the stockbroker belt of Hatch End. When I was canvassing door-to-door they did not raise matters of immigration. I had a huge mailbag during that election campaign, but I did not have one letter about immigration policy. I received many letters from Asian parents who were desperately concerned about education. They were worried that what had happened in Ealing and Brent might spread into the borough of Harrow. They were concerned about things that affected their families—jobs, inflation and education.

As the hon. Member for Leicester, East said, they were concerned about protection from discrimination, racial attacks and harassment. When hon. Members read in *Hansard* what the hon. Member for Leicester, East said, they may think that the Bill will lead to racial attacks and harassment. That is a most offensive way of describing the Bill. The hon. Gentleman spoke in generalised and silly terms about the measure. It is no wonder that he did not go into detail or attempt to deal with each clause individually. The hon. Gentleman made allegations which he knows are not true.

Mr. Vaz: The hon. Gentleman is saying that the proposals will lead to mass immigration and that that will not lead to good race relations. Let us consider Leicester. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) is here. Leicester has experienced massive immigration. Almost 60,000 Asians have come to Leicester in the last 20 years. Race relations in Leicester are excellent. Each community respects the culture of the other.

Mr. Hughes: I accept everything that the hon. Gentleman says, apart from his first words. When hon. Members read *Hansard* they will see that there is no relationship between the first words uttered by the hon. Gentleman and anything that I have said so far. Again, the hon. Gentleman is simply seeking to misrepresent and make points that have no bearing on the Bill.

Mr. Jim Marshall: The hon. Gentleman accuses my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) of making allegations. Some minutes ago in his own speech the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) referred to section 1(5) of the Bill and said that he knew of at least one person—I understood that the person was female—who would welcome the Bill. Why would she welcome it when it restricts the rights of males rather than extends the rights of females?

Mr. Hughes: It would help if the hon. Gentleman read the Bill. He talks of section 1(5). I was referring to section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971, not this Bill, although I did talk about clause 1 of the Bill.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No. The hon. Gentleman had his chance and he messed it up. He is referring to something that is not in the Bill. I am talking about clause 1. That will be clear in *Hansard*.

The 1983 campaign has been misrepresented. I fail to understand the arguments. How can it be racist to say that a person is British, as Conservatives say? Members of the Labour party say that the same person is black. The Labour party is intent only on dividing the nation. We say that people who are in this country are British, whether they are black, Asian or caucasian. If one seeks to create a divide between those people, as the Labour party seeks to do, that is racist. The Opposition do not like to accept that, but it is true.

Mr. Bernie Grant: Does the hon. Gentleman remember the Conservative propaganda in the 1983 election campaign? Conservatives said that they intended to tighten the immigration rules to keep people out in order to look after the people already here. They talked about improving race relations. Can the hon. Gentleman name one single action that the Conservative Government have taken to improve the lot of the black minority in Britain?

Mr. Hughes: The British Nationality Act conferred the right of abode and British citizenship on people who had never had that right and who had been denied it by previous Labour and Conservative Governments. They were given that right for the first time. That is what happened, and that is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): The hon. Gentleman says that we make a distinction between British citizens and black citizens. Under the Government's legislation, 220 million people in the Common Market have more rights than British citizens and 9 million patrials in white Commonwealth countries have rights that are denied to black people, and yet he says that there is not something different between a black and a British citizen.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is well known for his opposition to membership of the European Community. He is entitled to that view, but the matter is outside the Bill and he knows it.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I hope that my hon. Friend accepts that there is no question of the Bill being racist because black Frenchmen are entitled to come here without restriction, as are white Frenchmen. That might be wrong, but it certainly is not racist.

Mr. Hughes: That is a more than sufficient answer to the hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall).

A Bill which affects race relations is now being examined by a Standing Committee. It is not a Home Office Bill; it is a Department of the Environment Bill. I refer to the Local Government Bill, clauses 17 and 18 of which repeal part of the Race Relations Act. People have different views about that, but I regret that provision and I hope that the Home Office is examining it. It would be unfortunate to take away local authority powers to promote good race relations. The principle of the Bill is welcomed by Conservative Members, but I am not talking about the principle. I hope that the Home Office will make representations to the Department of the Environment and that clauses 17 and 18 will be reconsidered.

Time has moved on since we heard the Opposition's arguments. It is like being in a time warp. Backwards and forwards across the Chamber we have heard arguments about who is British and who is not, and what a host community is. I am sad to hear such matters mentioned because one must make a simple declaration — most black and Asian people in this country are as British as I am. Most of them were born here. Most of those who live here but were not born here have lived here for a long time. That must be recognised by hon. Members on both sides. We must stop the silly debate about what a host community is. I am not getting at the Opposition, or the Government, in particular. The debate is sterile. We shall achieve a society that sticks together and succeeds when that is in the forefront of everyone's mind and we try to work together.

Some of the Opposition's arguments lead me to the sad conclusion that they are interested not in good race relations, but simply in a good argument and row about immigration proposals that are modest, fair and reasonable and will not be opposed by the black community in my constituency at least.

8.19 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): This is a sad parliamentary occasion. It is made sadder by the spectacle of a Government whose declared aims and objectives seem to be completely contradicted by the aims and objectives of the Bill. For many years the Government have told us — most recently at the general election — that they believe in family life and unity, yet the Bill will divide families and, for some, destroy all hope of living together in Britain. For many years the Government have told us — most recently at the general election — that they believe in individual freedom, yet the Bill introduces new restrictions and removes rights of appeal from many people who are oppressed by the state. For many years the Government have told us — most recently at the general election — that they believe in promoting better community and race relations, yet the Bill will undoubtedly make that task harder, not least because it requires the police to pursue overstayers, which will lead inevitably to complaints of harassment and may provide further sparks for community conflict.

We have heard much about section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. Successive Home Secretaries, of both Governments, have, rightly, endorsed the clear commitment that was made in section 1(5). We have not been told about the overriding reasons for the repeal of that important promise that was given to people settled here before 1973.

In the notorious letter to Piers Merchant — penned, significantly, in the middle of the general election campaign — the Home Secretary said:

> "The Government is committed to changing Section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971 following a decision by the European Court of Human Rights that its effect is sexually discriminatory. The provision gives an absolute right to those settled here before January 1st 1973 to bring in their wives and children. This provision very significantly complicates the operation of our immigration control and in particular means that many people can come into the country without having to meet the normal maintenance and accommodation requirements of the Immigration Rules. The Government believes, therefore, that there is a strong argument for change."

That strong argument was not deployed by the Home Secretary in his letter to Piers Merchant, nor was it deployed by the Minister of State in his article entitled "Firm but fair controls", which appeared in *The Guardian* on Friday. The drift of the article was disingenuous. On section 1(5) the Minister said:

> "What principle justifies a child born on December 31, 1972 having different rights in relation to bringing a wife or children to settle here in the future from one born the following day?"

The principle is the promise which was made by a Conservative Home Secretary, and which has been repeated by Conservative and Labour Home Secretaries during the 16 years between that Act and the Government's reneging on the promise by this Bill.

In 1982 Lord Whitelaw supported that principle. He said:

> "The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook rightly referred to the danger of breaking up families. I remind him, however, that the Government have remained firmly committed, as they said they would, to allowing in the wives and dependent children of men settled here. The new rules did not in any way affect the continued acceptance of wives and children. Nor have the Government any intention of going back on that commitment." — [*Official Report*, 28 June 1982; Vol. 26, c. 644.]

It will be interesting to see how the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) votes on the Bill, because he was Prime Minister when those clear promises and undertakings were given to men who had settled here before 1973. It will be interesting to see how the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), a former Conservative Home Secretary, votes, because he repeated the promise. It will be interesting to see how the right hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) votes, because he gave the promise, too. My right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and my noble Friend Lord Callaghan also repeated those undertakings.

There is no compelling argument for the changes, except the overriding need of the Government, who have urged themselves on since 1972, to stop as many black and Asian people as possible from coming into Britain. They decided that a neat way of stopping some more would be to repeal section 1(5) of the Immigration Act. Those who have the misfortune to be unemployed or to live in modest accommodation will lose their right — their expectation — to have their families joining them here. The promise has been broken. Many will be from Bangladesh, but others will come from other parts of the Indian subcontinent.

Many references have been made to the Opposition creating needless fear and alarm. In his letter to Piers Merchant, the Home Secretary mentioned the introduction of visas for visitors. He said:

> "We shall continue with a policy of firm controls, equitably administered and operated in a humane and compassionate manner. I am glad that the introduction of visa controls last year on visitors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria has gone smoothly and is

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clearly seen not to have adversely affected the rights of legitimate visitors. The trouble makers and the professional pessimists have been proven wrong again."

The Home Secretary may have been describing me as a trouble maker and professional pessimist, but I have been proved right. Before the introduction of visas I said that it was a deliberate and racist attempt to stop black and Asian people from visiting their relatives and friends. The official figures for July show that 12,000 men, women and children were refused visas, and I will make a small bet with the Secretary of State that the 12-month figures show that upwards of 20,000 men, women and children have been refused visas to visit their relatives and friends. That refusal rate represents a doubling of the refusal rate for visitors coming to Britain before the introduction of visas.

The ombudsman is investigating a complaint from me on behalf of a constituent about why it took seven months for our embassy in Islamabad to grant a visa to a 10-year-old boy to visit his uncle in my constituency. The ombudsman's inquiry seems to be taking almost as long as the entry clearance officials in Islamabad to issue that visa.

I am sad that the Home Secretary turned the screw a little further tonight by announcing that the maximum period for which a visitor can remain in Britain will be six months. The only reason for that was to stop bits of paper floating around Lunar house. I often have the impression that Lunar house cannot be seen for bits of paper floating inside and out. If the Minister thinks that the introduction of a 50 per cent. reduction in the time that visitors can remain here will result in a decrease in the number of bits of paper, I must tell him that as a result of his announcement tonight there will be a large increase in the number of bits of paper written by hon. Members who represent constituents such as mine. The second objective of the introduction of visa controls is to stop Members of Parliament from having any ability to intervene on behalf of their constituents whose relatives and friends are refused visits to this country.

In conclusion, I must add my voice to those of my hon. Friends who have described the Bill as a squalid little measure that is all about introducing new restrictions. Sadly, it takes no opportunity to buttress existing rights still less to create new ones.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury) *rose*—

Mr. Madden: I shall not give way, as I want to finish.

I would have much preferred the Home Secretary to come to the House to introduce guaranteed time limits, for instance, by which entry clearance applications could be considered. I should have liked him to come here with new appeal procedures that provided speedy opportunities for people to appeal against refusals, to give them a proper opportunity to present their cases to the authorities. As we all know, the number of appeals that are successful is substantial, which underlines the inferiority of many of the administrative decisions that are taken. I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell) said. I should dearly have liked the Home Secretary to come to us with new provisions to ensure that many more elderly parents and grandparents could come to this country to live out their remaining days with their families, who are settled in this country and are making an important contribution to its economic and social life.

This squalid, nasty Bill breaks firm promises that were initially made 17 years ago and have been repeated over the years. Many Conservative Members have asked why we object to the Bill so much. It is because many of the people who received those promises believed in them. That is why they do not believe Ministers who stand at the Dispatch Box and say that those who do not seek to register as British citizens will not lose any rights or benefits. The people concerned do not believe that. When one breaks solemn promises that were made 17 years ago, can one be surprised at not being believed? If we are serious about the business of building and promoting better community and race relations, we can build only on the basis of mutual confidence. That confidence is smashed when promises are smashed. We can build only on the basis of mutual trust, and when promises are broken it, too, is broken.

The Bill does not show the way to achieving good community and race relations in our country. We should be building confidence, creating new rights and defending existing ones, not introducing a squalid, unnecessary and unjustified Bill, which underlines that notice which so many black and Asian people have embedded in their minds — "You are not welcome here". That is the message of the Bill, and it is one that I wish we had not been given today.

8.24 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott), who is no longer in the Chamber. The hon. Lady served with me on Westminster city council, where we became used to her contributions, which were always intensely interesting, if not always based as much on logic as emotion.

The hon. Lady is also one of the small minority of women in the House. Some of us feel from time to time that the facilities in this place discriminate against us, and that, by failing to select more women candidates, the population has shown itself a little prejudiced against women. However, whereas the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington might call for legislation to correct that, I would grant people the right to their prejudices. It is foolish to try to legislate to control people's natural wish to keep the company of one sort of person or another. There is nothing wrong with that — it is a perfectly natural way for people to feel.

I sympathise with the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) who said that he had to spend so much of his surgery time sorting out the Patels from the Khans who want to come and stay here. I deplore the fact that these decisions sometimes rest on a degree of fabrication. Occasionally, people have to manufacture reasons to be able to come and stay here. The decision rests with a bureaucracy that may well be unsympathetic to the individual concerned, and I deplore that.

An example from my own constituency comes to mind. Before I became an hon. Member I helped a gentleman — in my capacity as a councillor — to bring his sister into the country. I subsequently learned that he had set up a household and a family, and that the person concerned was probably not his sister. He had used that ruse merely to get me to help him bring her into the country.

I agree strongly with the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) who said that we need stronger arguments for a change in the legislation. Since the 1970s, the House has regularly got itself into a tizzy about immigration. The Bill is another attempt to patch up what is obviously a leaky ship. Those leaks deeply concern many of the indigenous people of this country who are worried that, in some areas, their society is being fundamentally changed by the culture of a people from far away.

Even Labour councils such as Camden must sometimes acknowledge the burden that the problem places on our community. Camden council is trying to send back to other countries people who have landed themselves on its doorstep and asked for accommodation to be provided at the ratepayers' expense. As councillors in Westminster, we were constantly up against that problem. Sometimes we had to house families from abroad—I remember in the not-too-distant past a family of 10 members which came from an African country and cost our council thousands of pounds in accommodation, because under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 we were forced to take responsibility for it.

I sympathise, and I should be surprised if other hon. Members — including Opposition Members — did not share my sympathy, with the feelings of the citizens of this country who believe that people can arrive here and climb on to a raft of welfare benefits for which the indigenous population has already paid out of its earnings.

It is wrong that the discussion about immigration is always based on paternity, nationality and whether relatives are already living here. It is nonsense for us to offer rights in perpetuity to certain people to come here. I do not believe that we have such obligations to people in countries in which our writ does not run, and whose laws are not governed by this Parliament. To accept such a responsibility would be an open-ended commitment by this country's citizens to support people who have decided that they may have a better standard of life here.

We should have other criteria on which to decide who should or should not come to live in our country. There are places in other parts of the world where that is done. It is clear that citizenship of our country is a great prize, which many millions of people would dearly love to possess, but that does not mean that we have to award that prize on the basis of long since finished obligations that our country once undertook. There is another method of dealing with such a valuable prize——

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Lady mentioned the lack of rights of people who come from countries where our writ does not operate. Will she explain to the House when our writ finished? She said that it has long since passed. What is the cut-off point for our writ?

Mrs. Gorman: The hon. Gentleman is asking me for precise detail or a date. From the time when we no longer had an obligation to those countries, we were extremely unwise to extend British citizenship to them, but that is a fact of the past. I am talking about immigration control in the future. I am putting before the House the proposition that, as many people wish to come and it is absurd to suggest that we can accommodate them all, we should instead prize and value our citizenship so that those who can demonstrate their ability to support themselves and their families, if they are allowed to bring them, should be permitted to come here on the basis of paying for that privilege.

At the moment our citizens often pay for the cost of people who wish to settle here, but cannot support themselves. One cannot settle in Jersey, Guernsey, Switzerland, Monaco, or half a dozen other countries unless the judiciary and the Government of that country decide on the individual case and unless one can demonstrate that one has substantial resources to support oneself. A case might well be made for that principle to apply here. That would remove a great deal of the legitimate concern of our citizens, who sometimes feel that they are being swamped with people who arrive here without resources and make demands on our very limited housing, education facilities and job opportunities.

As we know, in many parts of the country unemployment is still acute, although we also know that the situation is improving day by day. We shall begin to improve our education system by giving more choice to parents. I greatly sympathise with the parents of Dewsbury whose children were sent to a school in which the dominant language and culture had altered substantially—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It should not—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is entitled to a hearing.

Mrs. Gorman: It is understandable that our citizens often feel that they have those worries thrust upon them. If our education system is more diverse, as our Government intend to make it, and if it becomes possible for parents to choose the school for their children rather than be directed there by a heavy-handed Labour authority, that will alleviate some of those people's fears. But we still do not have an open-ended obligation to take people into our country just because they would like to come here.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does not my hon. Friend agree that all the babble on the Opposition Benches is indicative of the fact that the Opposition do not have a policy in this area? For example, is it not strange that when the Leader of the Opposition went to India he had to have a visa, but when we imposed a similar requirement on visitors coming here the Opposition could not even agree to that?

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful contribution.

The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Wall) referred to the Common Market. Our laws are being harmonised, whether we like it or not, with those of the EEC. The citizens of Europe have rights to come here, as we have rights to go to their countries. That is entirely different from allowing open immigration for not only individuals, but their extended families so that they can come here and settle among us.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): The hon. Lady talks about fairness and open immigration. I should like to give an example of a case that I dealt with in Manchester, in which a woman had waited so long to come to this country from Pakistan that she gave birth to a baby before she could come here. The baby did not show on the passport. That poor woman, who came from a village, was put on an aeroplane and the baby was kept in Pakistan by the immigration authorities. She had to go through the humiliation of proving that she had given birth and had been breast feeding a baby. If the hon. Lady were that woman, would she be in a tizz, as she put it?

Mrs. Gorman: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman. He brings to our attention a case where lack of humanity and compassion are demonstrated, but that is because of the law as it stands, which discriminates against people coming to this country on the grounds of paternity and family relationships. I advocate a system that would allow people to come here in their own right, by permission of the host society, if they can demonstrate that they can support their relatives—whoever is allowed to come—under the terms of the legislation.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is often a lack of humanity and compassion. We have heard from Opposition Members that sometimes families who wish to look after elderly relatives are kept apart, but there is no reason why those families should not be reunited in their country of origin. There is no reason why this country should accept into its welfare and pensions structure people who have spent the rest of their lives contributing their work effort to a different society.

Mr. Bidwell: The hon. Lady may be alluding to my contribution to the debate. I feel deeply about the matter as the Member for Southall. If the son is getting a livelihood here and making an important and valuable contribution to the British economy, and if he still feels a sense of responsibility to his widowed mother, is the hon. Lady saying that she must not join him here?

Mrs. Gorman: There is no reason why the son cannot support the mother in her country of origin. It may be cruel to a person who has lived all his life in a foreign land, speaking another language, existing in a foreign culture, to root him up and bring him to this country. It would be much more sensible for the mother to remain there, looked after in her own society, even if supported by the resources earned in this country by members of her family.

Bills such as this would not need to be brought to the House from time to time if we rethought the structure of our immigration policy and took into account the legitimate worries of our citizens. I speak not only of our white citizens but of our black and brown ones who are concerned that too many too soon could cause too many problems. We should reconsider our attitude to immigration and base it not on the past obligations to the empire, but strongly on the current wishes and desires of the great majority of our people.

8.51 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): I hesitate to follow the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman), and I shall resist any temptation to be controversial. However, I will say that, although the name and the sex have changed, the message remains the same. The hon. Lady's speech could well have come from the lips of her predecessor.

Every time I hear a Government Minister, especially a Cabinet Minister, attempting to talk down a Government Bill—as the Home Secretary did by saying that these are purely technical changes, plugging a bit here and plugging a bit there—I think that the House has a right to feel that the Bill has far deeper meanings than the Minister would have the House believe. I am driven to the conclusion that the Home Secretary, having stood up to the Tory Right on capital punishment, and having resisted the temptations at the Tory conference to go down that path, has given in to the Tory Right on another issue, its next pet hate—immigration. He has said to them, "You cannot have hanging, lads, but we will keep a few more blacks out of the country for you." That is pandering to the Tory Right at the expense of human feelings and emotions and will lead to distress.

I am tired of the crocodile tears of Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said that the Bill was modest, fair and reasonable. I hope that when it becomes an Act the hon. Gentleman will come along to my office and explain to Bangladeshi citizens why they are no longer able to have their wives and families join them in Britain. That is a right that they were guaranteed 16 years ago, but the Government now intend to withdraw it. My Bangladeshi citizens will find it difficult to accept the Bill as modest, fair and reasonable, because it will shatter the prospect of family life that was held out to them under the terms of the 1971 Act.

The Home Secretary, the Government and all Conservative Members are impervious to the distress that successive immigration changes have caused. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), I wish that they would come along to my surgery and hear the distraught wife say, "Why me? Why have they refused my husband when the husband of the girl next door has been given permission to join her in this country?" There is no rational reason, other than the whim of the entry certificate officer, why one should have been given a certificate while the other was refused. I wish that Conservative Members could be there when the distraught father comes along and says, "What more evidence do I have to produce to convince them"—meaning the Home Office—"that these are my children?". One cannot offer any rational explanation.

Mr. Thurnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Marshall: No, I will not. Conservative Members have been playing ducks and drakes with the time of the House for the past one and a half hours and it is my intention to be relatively brief to enable another of my hon. Friends to participate in the debate.

Mr. Boeteng: Two.

Mr. Marshall: I cannot guarantee that Conservative Members will not waste more time.

The Bill will make the situation even worse. The House has long recognised that section 1(5) of the 1971 Act is racially discriminatory. If the Government had any sense of decency, they would remove the discrimination, not by reducing the existing rights of males, but by extending the rights of females so that the rights of the two sexes would coincide. It is predictable that the Government should continue to be perverse and in the name of equality reduce the existing rights of one sex rather than advance the rights of the other. Consequently, the Government have decided to repeal section 1(5) and to remove the absolute right given to Commonwealth citizens by the 1971 Act.

We should remind ourselves again and again that an absolute guarantee was given in 1971, but now, at the whim of the Government, the House will remove that guarantee. What will these people face instead? They will face two new hurdles. The first is the employment test that is implicit in the no-resort-to-public-funds test, and the second is the accommodation test. A great deal has been said about the accommodation test, but the employment test is equally pernicious, if not more so.

The employment test will apply at the moment of application for the family to come and join the father and husband and everything that has gone before will be ignored. The man may have been in permanent employment up to the day of application, with all that that means in terms of the contribution in taxation and national insurance. All that will be to no avail at the moment of application if he is unemployed and unable to give the guarantee that his family will not resort to public funds. That is grossly unfair and hon. Members should vote against the Second Reading. I wish that we could defeat the Bill on Second Reading, but parliamentary arithmetic dictates otherwise. Despite protestations from the Government Benches, the Bill will do nothing to improve race relations. On the contrary, it is likely to make them worse. It will further diminish and tarnish our international reputation and we should vote against those consequences.

8.58 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), in his excellent speech, said that he thought that the Bill was a further turn of the screw. Many Conservative Members think that that is what the Bill does. For one category of immigrant, it makes it more difficult for them to enter our country. On the other hand, I disagree with the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) who said that it would make race relations more difficult. We have to consider the Bill in relation to all the legislation that the Government have put forward on immigration. There has been a policy of firm control of immigration which basically has been based on fairness. I challenge Labour Members to say that the legislation has led to a deterioration in race relations.

As someone who lived in and represented a constituency in Glasgow, where there was a substantial number of immigrants, and who now represents an area in Southend where there is a similar number, I have gained the impression that race relations have improved. Whereas 20 or 30 years ago immigrants were regarded as a burden and a problem, there is now a much greater realisation that immigrants have made a considerable contribution to society. The aging immigrant community is better behaved. Recorded offences among immigrants are lower and their family unity is remarkably strong in comparison to the rest of the population. We have the second highest divorce rate of any European country, after West Germany. Children of immigrants have shown remarkable scholastic performance.

I accept that there are problems coming from racist minorities, but by and large race relations have improved. There is no doubt that the legislation and the Government's policy of being firm but fair have made a real contribution. I accept that clause 1 is a change of policy and I accept that it is significant because it was laid down almost as a pledge. It is difficult to justify that, simply because of the date of arrival, one group is entitled to bring in a fiancée or a member of their family, while others have to go through a strict employment and income test. I wonder whether it would help race relations if, in areas of massive housing stress, serious unemployment and social problems, we limited immigration. Those various turns of the screw may cause unhappiness and distress, but the basic policy of firmness and fairness has made a considerable contribution to the improvement of race relations. Conservative Members who have supported those measures would support the Government 100 per cent. in their endeavours to ensure that every citizen has guaranteed full and equal rights.

I think all hon. Members are aware that, whereas we have tight control on new immigration, our Community obligations make it inevitable that we must offer the freedom of settlement, employment and welfare services to about 200 million people who live within the confines of the EEC. I do not wish to argue that issue tonight because that happened some time ago. I believe that in various ways we regret that decision, but that is a wider issue. The Bill places greater restrictions on Commonwealth citizens coming into the country, yet many of those people live only miles away from — in some cases next door to — citizens of foreign countries who are entitled to come, settle, live and work here and to obtain all the advantages of our welfare state. I refer to France's overseas territories.

If one is a citizen of British Guyana, under the legislation one will have great difficulty getting into this country. One has to wait for months to get an interview. One has to apply and prove all sorts of things. One has to show that there are resources in the United Kingdom to support one. However, a person living in French Guyana is regarded as a citizen of a French overseas territory, part of the French Republic. Under the legislation we are tightening control of immigration from a former British colony, yet we are opening a wide door to every citizen of French Guyana, which is only next door. Citizens of Jamaica or other West Indian islands will find it difficult to get into the country under the legislation, but again there are other islands in the West Indies which are part of France's overseas territories — Martinique and Guadeloupe. Are citizens of those islands, which, by some administrative quirk, happen to be regarded as part of France, to have virtually unfettered entry to this country? We are placing tight controls on the Asian sub-continent. But plenty of islands in the Indian ocean and elsewhere are, for the purposes of Community law, part of France. It seems that citizens of places such as Reunion, Mayotte, and St. Pierre — which, of course, is in a quite different part of the world — will be automatically entitled to settle and work in this country, and to be given the advantage of the welfare servicies that it provides.

Is there nothing that we can do about this? Like others, I accept the reality of our membership of the EEC, but it appears that laws that are linked with that membership discriminate against our country as they do against no other country. For example, we have an appalling trade balance in the EEC. A major part of that is because West Germany has a special arrangement whereby goods can flood in from eastern Europe through East Germany under something called the inner German trade agreement. I have asked whether anything can be done about that. The answer is, apparently not.

Here we have another nonsensical administrative nightmare that discriminates against our people, our country and our Commonwealth citizens — people who have been our friends and allies, and who fought for us in the war. I have no objection, in the interest of good race relations, to telling many of my constituents and others that it will be more difficult for them to get over the hurdle, because we must try to persuade them that strong immigration at a time of serious housing stress would make race relations more difficult. But how can I, in all honesty, say that it should be more difficult for them, when citizens of countries just beside them — in the West

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

Indies, Guyana and elsewhere have unfettered rights of entry, simply because they are regarded as part of France's overseas territories? How can I tell my West Indian constituents, "Life is more difficult for you; if you were a Frenchman living in Guadeloupe or Martinique, it would be okay—anything goes"? How can I tell a constituent who comes from British Guyana, "We can do nothing for you, but if you were in French Guyana, the doors would be open and all the resources of the state would be available"?

The Government must try to do something. I appreciate the difficulty of getting anything done in the EEC. We have been trying to reform the CAP for decades; yet nothing happens, and nothing will happen. The Government know that as well as I do. We have been trying to do something about the nonsense of the inner German trade agreement. Again, nothing happens and nothing will happen. But here we are dealing with real people, real families, real friends of Britain. We have a duty and an obligation at least to raise in the Council of Ministers the nonsense and unfairness of what we find when we compare ex-British citizens with present French citizens.

I hope that the Government will accept that there is an anomaly. I have great hopes of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Some time ago I raised with him another nonsense which I felt would put British lives in danger—the Common Market's grand plan to allow mutual recognition of firearms certificates. That would mean that, despite all our controls, people from the Common Market could walk into the streets of London, or elsewhere, with a Kalashnikov, or any other gun, so long as they had a firearms certificate from their own country. I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend, unlike certain Cabinet Ministers, has taken up the matter. He is fighting it tooth and nail, and I believe that he has a good chance of stopping it, although it is subject to a majority vote.

My hon. Friend the Minister has a good record on these matters. He knows them back to front, because he used to be in the Foreign Office. Here is a little crusade for him. Let me at least ask, if we are to support this law as a law of fairness and objectivity, that my hon. Friend should go to Brussels and say, "We are bringing in tough rules to control immigration, but we want something to be done about the absurd nonsense whereby French Guyana receives wonderful liberties and opportunities that are not available to British Guyana, and people coming from French islands in the West Indies receive benefits that are not available to former British islands in the West Indies."

I hope that in his reply my hon. Friend the Minister will say that he will take up the matter and, if possible, get something done about it. I hope that we shall hear what he has to say about an obvious and great injustice.

9.9 pm

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on a most eloquent, moving and passionate maiden speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) pointed out that it was a historic occasion because she was the first black woman ever to speak in the House of Commons. After her performance today, I am sure that the standard of debate in the House will be enhanced

We listened carefully and with interest to the Home Secretary's speech in order to try to establish the purpose of the Bill. He said that the Bill was needed to reinforce fair and firm control. He referred also to the system being overloaded. However, at the end of the Home Secretary's speech most hon. Members were bemused and were no clearer about the need for the Bill. The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) suggested that the Bill does nothing for immigrants, but she added that it gives the impression that something is being done for them.

With one exception, the Bill takes away basic rights and privileges. It is negative and unfair. It is also a wasted opportunity. Furthermore, it is incoherent. The Bill should seek to unite families, improve race relations and enhance basic human rights—for example, by improved rights of appeal.

The Conservative party claims to be the party of the family. In 1979 it published a paper entitled "Family Policy", which referred to putting the family

> "at the centre of the political debate."

One of the five tasks that the first Thatcher Government set themselves was "to support family life". That rings hollow, as one of the consequences of the Bill will be that many families are kept apart. The repeal of section 1(5) of the 1971 Act will mean the removal of the right of those who settled here before January 1973 to bring in their wives and children. A promise has been broken.

Article 16 of the United Nations declaration of human rights says:

> "Men and women . . . have the right to marry and to found a family. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state."

The Bill does not protect family life. It attacks it.

The European Court of Human Rights found recently that the application of section 1(5) is sexually discriminating. There are more rights for men than for women to unite with their families. Why have the Government taken away rights from men instead of giving them to women? If the aim of the Government is to improve family life, why should they not level up rather than level down?

Mr. Thurnham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Randall: I will give way when I have finished making my case.

The effects of the Government's decision are restrictive and seriously detrimental for family life.

Mr. Thurnham: The hon. Gentleman has referred to levelling up. Will he explain exactly what he means by that? During the period of the previous Labour Government, immigration rose by 30 per cent. whereas under this Government it has been reduced by about 40 per cent. When the Leader of the Opposition went to India, he said that he would repeal the existing legislation and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chief Whip calculated when he was a Home Office Minister that that could lead to 10,000 more immigrants. Is that what the Opposition want?

Mr. Randall: The numbers game is not the issue at stake. I have tried to show that through the European Court of Human Rights findings the Government's action has resulted in families being prevented from uniting and that has been the thrust of my point. The hon. Gentleman's intervention was irrelevant to my case.

I believe that there is a serious erosion of human rights in the Bill. For example, it removes the effective rights of appeal in deportation cases. Secondly, the right to attend appeal hearings where a person's claim to British citizenship by descent is challenged. The Opposition are not asking for more people to become eligible for settlement. We are merely asking for people to have a fair hearing.

There is immense scope for improving race relations in this multiracial society in which we all live. The Bill is a wasted opportunity for introducing new measures to improve the working of our society and to remove the many inequalities of opportunity that exist for black and Asian people. Instead, the Bill will be seen by many people to be petty, nasty and irrelevant to their needs. That is no way to enhance race and community relations in our country.

Clause 1 deals with the repeal of section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. As I have already mentioned, promises were made that those who settled here before 1973 had a clear-cut right to bring their wives and children here. Many people who will be affected by the repeal have been here for many years. Many of them have also served their country in times of war — certainly in the Falklands. Many have paid rates and taxes and, often, because their families are overseas, they have not made many claims on the education or health care systems. Indeed, many have made a net financial contribution since coming here. Now they will be ruthlessly penalised by the Bill.

Currently those settled before January 1973 need only to prove relationship in order for the spouse to join them. The Government seem to be moving the goal posts. They are now creating a new set of more difficult criteria which need to be satisfied before settlement can take place. Again, the consequence is that it will be more difficult for families to be united in the United Kingdom.

Will the Minister of State tell us whether it is one of the Government's aims to use those additional criteria to restrict black immigrants from entering this country because of inadequate housing, especially in the south-east and in London? For those settled here before 1973, the new criteria for settlement of families are a "Catch-22" on housing. Councils will often not provide family-type accommodation until all the family members are in the United Kingdom, yet entry clearance will not be granted unless family-type accommodation is already available in the United Kingdom before the family arrives. The Bill will create great problems for many families to whom this and previous Governments have made promises about their rights.

Mr. Watts: The hon. Gentleman refers to council housing as if it were the only type of housing available. Does he recognise that the vast majority of people in the Asian community — I speak from the experience of my constituency — want to own their homes and that the vast majority of them do? That is how they provide housing for their families, not by going to the local authority for a council house.

Mr. Randall: Frankly, I do not care whether it is private or public housing. In parts of London, there are thousands of homeless people, so it is not right for any politician to die in a ditch about whether it is private or public housing. People in bed and breakfast accommodation live in appalling conditions and it is the Government's responsibility to sort it out.

Any claim for housing and other benefits could disqualify a spouse from gaining admission for settlement in the United Kingdom. For example, a man could be made unemployed through no fault of his own a couple of weeks before his wife's arrival. He would fail the maintenance test because he would have to resort to public funds. Families should be together when the man is unemployed, but the Bill would keep families apart because of the recourse to public funds.

The repeal of section 1(5) would extend the primary purpose rule to all spouses coming to the United Kingdom for settlement. That would open the way for the same discriminatory tests for those settled here before 1973. The primary purpose rule is discredited. It is unacceptable to many of the people directly affected by it and to many entry clearance and immigration officers. It is the wrong basis for deciding people's lives and futures.

The repeal of section 1(5) would have a serious effect on the number of homeless people and those living in bed and breakfast accommodation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said that there are 1,200 families in bed and breakfast accommodation in Tower Hamlets.

Mr. Hurd: It is not the repeal of section 1(5), but the section itself which has a bad effect on homelessness.

Mr. Randall: I take the Home Secretary's point. The measure would remove people's privileges and rights and, therefore, they would be susceptible to the primary purpose rule. That would be a consequence of the Government's action.

The purpose of the housing investment programme is to provide housing investment to satisfy defined need. It is a disgrace that the Government do not collaborate with councils with chronic housing problems to provide housing to meet needs and to stop wasting massive sums of money to keep hundreds of families in bed and breakfast accommodation. If housing is needed to bring families together it should be provided. There is no excuse for a country as wealthy as this not making available adequate housing to meet people's needs. The Prime Minister's antipathy towards local government is at the root of the homelessness problem in our inner cities and especially in London.

Clause 2 deals with the admission of polygamous wives. The Government have introduced a clause with 10 subsections to deal with a matter which produced only 25 cases last year and 75 cases in the past three years. That seems absurd. With such small numbers, it would clearly be far more appropriate to consider each case on its merits. The Government seem to be trying to create a problem so that they can be seen to have produced a solution. It is a sop to the Tory party conference. To play with people's lives in that way is a disgrace. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Southall (Mr. Bidwell), who has vast experience in race relations matters, believes that this was done for political purposes in relation to the general election and I am inclined to accept his judgment.

Clause 3 removes the right of appeal in the United Kingdom from people claiming to be United Kingdom citizens by descent. Since last May, the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act has been in operation. Perhaps the

[Mr. Randall]

Minister will tell us how many people will be involved. I suspect that the numbers are tiny. The immigration appeals tribunal decided that people claiming to be British citizens should be able to make a claim on entry to this country and have a right of appeal in the United Kingdom if required. It seems that as the Home Office has failed to change the views of the appellate authorities it now wishes to change the law by means of clause 3. The consequence will be that children who could be eligible will be kept out of this country if their claim to be British is challenged and will thus not be present at their appeal hearings. The clause seeks to limit the legal remedies available to people challenged by the Home Office when those remedies need to be strengthened.

Clauses 4 and 5 substantially limit appeals against deportation. Under clause 4, anyone given permission to enter Britain less than seven years before a deportation order is made will no longer be able to present compassionate circumstances to the appeals authority. That effectively removes the right of appeal against deportation. It may create considerable anomalies. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said, the seven-year period starts from the last time leave to enter was granted, so a person who has been here for more than seven years but has travelled outside the United Kingdom on holiday might not be able to exercise full rights of appeal against deportation. Perhaps the Minister will clarify that, as it could have a very serious effect on some people. I should also appreciate the Minister's comments on the effect of clause 4, and perhaps also clause 5, on asylum seekers.

Clause 5 addresses the question of overstaying. Currently, the Home Office has two sets of powers against overstayers. First, it can deport them under the 1971 Act. In those circumstances, the person has a right of appeal. Secondly, deportation can arise through prosecution in the courts, as overstaying is a criminal offence. In the latter case, no effective right of appeal would exist as compassionate circumstances would not be taken into account. The Bill would not give new powers to the Home Office to remove overstayers, but more overstayers would be criminalised and fewer would have the full right of appeal.

The Home Office already has adequate powers to remove overstayers. Those powers ensure that the appellate authorities can review a deportation decision and take into account compassionate circumstances. That safeguard is vital, as some people have been in the United Kingdom for many years and have roots here, for example, asylum seekers. The Government's adoption of this criminal route to deportation could encourage blackmail, for obvious reasons. I should appreciate it if the Minister of State would tell us what measures he will introduce to minimise that threat.

I have listened to the whole debate and I know that most Opposition Members cannot understand why the Bill was introduced. It is a mystery Bill, and a nit-picking Bill for bureaucrats. There are no positive measures to improve the community and race relations. It represents a lost opportunity by this incompetent and insensitive Government. It discriminates against British people. As the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) said, Germans, French and nationals of other EC member states can bring to Britain wives, children, parents and grandparents, but British people do not have that right in their own country. Why should not British people be treated in the same way?

The Bill is about criminalising people. As well as removing fundamental rights of appeal, it contains broken promises from this Tory Government and is full of petty restrictions. In addition, it removes rights of reunion for mums, dads and children. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will vote against this nasty, vindictive, negative and irrelevant Bill.

9.32 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): I join the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) in at least one thing—paying tribute to the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) on her maiden speech this afternoon. I congratulate her and hope that we shall hear her speak many more times in the House. She must be proud to be the first black woman to have spoken in the House of Commons. I was glad that she paid tribute to her predecessor, Mr. Ernie Roberts. He had a reputation for being a very good constituency Member and was a decent member of the Labour party.

There were many other things in the hon. Lady's speech, some of which I shall refer to in due course, with which I did not agree. There was one comment which she made at the start of her speech which I found very sad. She told us about her parents who emigrated here from Jamaica in 1950, and she said that ever since then there had been decline. However, in 1950 when her parents came here, there were about 200,000 people in Britain from the New Commonwealth which then included Pakistan. There are now nearly 2·3 million people here from those countries. Does the hon. Lady not regard as some measure of progress the fact that things have changed in this country and that the ethnic minorities, about whom she is rightly concerned, have increased so greatly in number in the mere 30 years of which she spoke?

I shall deal with one specific point in her speech, which was taken up by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West, about clause 5 which refers to overstaying. The hon. Lady appeared to be under the impression that we were making overstaying a criminal offence for the first time, but that is not so. The 1971 Act made overstaying a criminal offence, and when the Labour Government were in power in the mid-1970s they did nothing to change that. It is only now, as a result of two court judgments, which we believe have weakened the deterrent effect of this offence, that we think it is right to return to the original position. In passing the 1971 Act Parliament intended that those who offended against the immigration laws should be liable to prosecution through the courts. Illegal entry is a criminal offence and we see no reason why the same deterrent effect, both the prosecution procedure and possible deportation, should not also apply to overstaying.

I regret that the debate has been punctured with cries from Opposition Members, not least the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the hon. Lady, that the legislation is either racist or discriminatory. It is a tragedy that whenever the Government propose anything to do with the sensible reinforcement of the controls on immigration, Opposition Members go on to autopilot and, without any thought of the consequences for their constituents and for the Afro-Caribbean or Asian minority communities, start shouting hostile, frightening words. They should think twice before doing so because such accusations can only bring discredit to those who make them. They should wonder whether the status and acceptance of the ethnic minorities is not harmed by those words. Above all, they should consider whether they should cause this worry among the ethnic minorities——

Mr. Vaz *rose*——

Mr. Boateng *rose*——

Mr. Renton: No, I shall finish this point first and then give way — without any attempt to explain to their constituents the technical details of the Bill.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Renton: I said that I would give way to the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng).

Mr. Boateng: Will the Minister take on board the fact that we well understand the technical details of this legislation and that it is because we and our constituents understand them that we are worried? This is a racist Bill in intent and effect. If the Minister had any decency he would withdraw it immediately.

Mr. Renton: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. From the comments that hon. Gentlemen have made on overstaying, appeal rights in relation to deportation for overstayers and the abolition of section 1(5) of the 1971 Act, it is clear that they do not understand the Bill and have not tried to explain it to their constituents.

None of our proposals is racist. The Bill seeks better race relations. Our proposals — this point was made strongly by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) in a powerful speech — bear equally outside the European Community countries on all who wish to enter the United Kingdom, either as visitors or for settlement, no matter whether they come from the Caribbean, the United States or the Indian sub-continent.

Our proposed changes are clearly and evidently non-racist. The abolition of section 1(5) of the 1971 Act has rightly taken up a great deal of time. After the Bill has been passed, every British citizen and all Commonwealth citizens settled here who wish to bring in a wife or dependent children must ensure that those dependants go through the same tests regarding marriage or accommodation and maintainence without recourse to public funds. If anyone is to be affected by this change, it is fair to say, as Ian Macdonald did in his article in *The Guardian* last Friday, that those most affected are likely to be white British citizens who were born here or settled here before 1 January 1973. They will now have to go through the tests as well.

This afternoon my right hon. Friend announced the limitation of visas to six months. Among the greatest number of applicants for initial visas of more than six months extending to 12 months are Australians and Americans. However, I hear no voice raised in the House today saying that they are being discriminated against.

The fact that the changes we are proposing in the immigration rules are of universal application ensures that they cannot fairly or justly be described as racist. It is possible to see racism in the Bill only if one defiantly refuses to understand the facts behind it. If we were to say that Britons or Bangladeshis who had been here from before 1 January 1973 were to continue to benefit from section 1(5) and that no other Commonwealth country immigrants would benefit, that would be racist. However, we are not suggesting any such exclusions or omissions. Those who continue to say that the Bill is racist remind me of people with hearing aids who ask a question and then switch off the aid before they can hear the answer.

Labour Members, beginning with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, have had a problem dealing with the Bill because they do not know whether to regard it as too big or too small a Bill. That came over in the contributions from the Opposition Front Bench. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, it is a modest Bill.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Hear, hear.

Mr. Renton: I am grateful for the support.

The Bill deals with a number of anomalies and fills loopholes that have emerged in recent years. We believe in fairness between immigrants and that, if we see loopholes in immigration controls, we should fill them. That is the reason behind the Bill.

I was surprised by the concern of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West about the clause that makes it impossible for a second polygamous wife to enter this country for settlement purposes. I believe that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is in favour of women's rights, but he also appears to be in favour of polygamy. I find that an odd attitude—*[Interruption.]* As my right hon. Friend has made plain, we are talking about 25 households a year. A few years ago the Select Committee recommended that we should stop allowing second or third polygamous wives to enter the country. We have accepted that recommendation and are getting on with it . That is the long and short of the matter.

Ms. Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford) *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I will give way to the hon. Lady with pleasure, but I do not believe that she was present during the debate.

Ms. Ruddock: I would like to take the Minister up on one point. I wonder how he sees that women's rights would be served by forcibly excluding a woman, even if she is a second or third wife, from joining her husband when she is legally contracted to be in that relationship.

Mr. Renton: As I have already said, the House of Commons Select Committee recommended——

Mr. Corbyn: Answer the question.

Mr. Renton: I will answer the question. The Committee recommended that, as the entry of polygamous wives into Britain was not an acceptable custom, it should not be continued. That was the recommendation of the Committee. I see no objection to it and we are going ahead with putting it into law.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I shall not give way; I want to move to the abolition of section 1(5).

Fourteen years have passed since this section came into effect. Those who were adult males at the time have therefore had 14 years in which to bring in their wives and dependants. The point that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not pick up is that those who are receiving

[Mr. Renton]

the benefit of section 1(5) are not those who were adult males at the time of the 1971 Act but the young children who had then just been born.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*

Mr. Renton: I want to finish this point, so the hon. Member is wasting valuable debating time.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is fairly clear that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Renton: Those who are now benefiting from section 1(5) are the children of adult males who were born just before the Act came into force. This section discriminates against women, children and the siblings of those children, and increasingly does not protect those whom it was intended to protect.

When the 1971 Act was passed there was doubt among the minority communities about their future in this country. However, I am glad to say that the current position is different. It is clear that section 1(5) was inserted into the 1971 Act to offer reassurance on this point. Our commitment to racial harmony and to the rights of those who have legitimately settled here to remain in this country and make their future here has been made clear on many occasions. There is no longer a need for section 1(5), particularly when its operation is unfair in effect and produces results that no sensible person could claim to be right. It is anomalous and discriminatory and we shall abolish it to ensure that all who come here as spouses and children will have to undergo the same test.

Mr. Hanley: Before my hon. Friend departs from clause 1, he might like to know that in an intervention in my speech the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) said that the Conservative Government introduced the primary purpose rule. I have researched this matter in the Library and discovered that on 22 March 1977 the Labour Government introduced the primary purpose rule when they changed the immigration rules. Is my hon. Friend aware of that fact?

Mr. Renton: Yes, I am; and it is right and proper that my hon. Friend should remind the House of it in view of the cant that we have heard from Labour Members. The first primary purpose rule was introduced in 1977 by a Labour Government to deal specifically with marriages of convenience.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Minister be kind enough to tell us what it said and compare it with the present one?

Mr. Renton: I have it here, by mere coincidence. It was the first limited introduction of a primary purpose rule that was restricted to marriages of convenience. If the right hon. Gentleman has forgotten its contents I shall send them to him in a letter tomorrow.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: No. I want to get on. I shall send the details to the right hon. Gentleman tomorrow.

Mr. Hattersley *rose*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Both Front-Bench spokesmen cannot be on their feet at the same time.

Mr. Renton: Many Opposition Members have said that the appeal rights under clause 4 will be truncated. This is another instance of the Opposition's dismal lack of understanding about the Bill. Clause 4 does not in any way truncate or diminish appeal rights by a court. All that it does is limit the right of appeal against administrative deportation. The right of appeal to a higher court following prosecution and recommendation for deportation will not be affected. The hon. Members for Brent, South, for Kingston upon Hull, West and for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) might have taken that on board before making their speeches.

I shall explain, because the matter is important and I realise how strongly the House feels about appeal rights. In many of the cases affected by clause 4, the appellant will already have had an opportunity to argue the compassionate circumstances of his case before an adjudicator when exercising his right of appeal against refusal of an extension to stay. It has become clear that in many cases people appealing against a decision to deport them do so with the main aim of using the appeal system to extend their stay here. It is wholly reasonable in our opinion that such a person should have the restricted right of appeal which will in future be available, given that the Secretary of State takes all the compassionate factors of each case into account before deciding to make a deportation order. Those are the facts and hon. Members should have considered them more closely before making their remarks.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) for his wise and sensible speech. For a long time he was a member of the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. I thank him for his tribute to the immigration officers and to the Home Office and Foreign Office. He is right that when the Labour party was in office it did nothing to change the Immigration Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes asked me about the tape recording of interviews in the Indian sub-continent. The matter has been looked into carefully. I looked into it myself in 1985 when I was in the Indian sub-continent. Based on the need for interpreters in the United Kingdom and overseas to listen to the tapes, the cost involved and a number of other factors, we decided that it was not practical to tape-record interviews. The Sub-Committee considered that carefully.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) for his speech. He asked about registration. I was distressed to hear him say that the Labour party had been stirring up fears about what is to happen on 31 December when the basic right to register for citizenship will end. Such action is to be deplored. The ending of the right has been known for six years. Plenty of forms are available.

Mr. Corbyn: Where?

Mr. Renton: We have sent forms to citizens' advice bureaux throughout the country and to community relations councils. If anyone is in any doubt, they have only to get in touch with Lunar house in Croydon.

My hon. Friend asked me about DNA testing, which could be an important development—*[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members are interested in immigration practice, they should listen to what I am about to say on DNA testing, because it concerns some of them closely. The last few test results in the 40-case field trial are expected soon. A report will be prepared, a copy of which will be placed in the Library. We have yet to decide the

Government's policy on public funding of DNA testing. We shall decide it in view of the results of the trials. Meanwhile, commercial testing is available and I expect it to be used increasingly.

I listened with care and interest to the speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), because I recognise the great problem with the number of Bangladeshis in his constituency. He said that the housing crisis in his constituency is more serious than anywhere in Europe. I must ask him: why make it worse by extending the protection of section 1(5) to husbands as well as to wives? It must be reasonable, given the problem in Tower Hamlets, Camden and similar boroughs with immigrants who are immediately rendered homeless, that those who bring spouses and children to Britain should show that they can maintain them without recourse to public funds. That must be common sense.

Mr. Shore *rose*——

Mr. Renton: I will not give way to the right hon. Gentleman, because I have very little time left.

Mr. Shore *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister has made it clear that he is not giving way, and time is getting short.

Mr. Bidwell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not a firm tradition in the House that if a Minister alludes to an Opposition Member, he should allow an intervention in his speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is a matter for the Minister.

Mr. Renton: In the 1970s, the Conservative and Labour parties understood — this did not change when the Labour Government were in office between 1974 and 1979 — the need to restrict the number of people who emigrated to Britain. There was a tacit understanding that the numbers could be only as many as could be absorbed by our housing, hospitals and community services, and that immigration should not damage the standards of our existing communities, which were increasingly multiracial and of all ethnic origins.

That consensus went by the board at the Labour party conferences in 1981 and 1982, when the debates on nationality and immigration led to the adoption of the nationality and immigration section of Labour's Programme '82. It states:

> "The repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 British Nationality Act will be among the highest priorities for the next Labour government."

That remains official Labour policy. The Labour leadership has swept it under the carpet in the hope that it will not be noticed, but today we heard nothing of what the new Labour Opposition would put in its place.

In India, the Leader of the Opposition repeated that Labour would repeal the 1971 and 1981 Acts. The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) tried to play that down by saying that Labour's policy would lead to an increase of only a thousand immigrants a year—10,000 is a more likely figure. So be it. If that is Labour's policy, let Opposition Members say so clearly and openly, and stop attacking these minor reforms as racist while giving no hint of what they would put in their place. Humbug and hypocrite are the names that properly apply to those who speak on these matters from the Labour Front Bench. They may try to fool the ethnic minority by saying that they are promising much, or the majority of the country by saying that they are promising little, but they will not fool the House of Commons. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 258, Noes 221.

Division No. 70] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*

Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mudd, David

Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Patnick, Irvine
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Ryder, Richard
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Stephen Dorrell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney

Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob

Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam

Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*

Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Immigration Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Immigration Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of that Act.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I would not normally seek to speak to the money resolution, but the House ought to be aware that during the previous six hours of debate 21 hon. Members addressed the House. Conservative Members spoke for a total of 210 minutes, and Opposition Members for a mere 137 minutes. We see the reason for that in the Division figures. Few Government Members turned out to support the Bill in the Division Lobby.

The Government had problems all afternoon, and we had the unseemly sight of the Government Chief Whip running around like a conscription agent dragging Tory MPs out of the Tea Room to address the House on a subject about which they know nothing and on briefs that were just thrust into their hands. They mouthed a lot of parrot-like phrases, such as the Tory party does, suggesting that there is always a need to tighten yet further the screw on immigration.

The Bill is a nasty attempt to make life even more difficult for the Bangladeshi and other communities than it was under the 1971 legislation, which I regret was not repealed by a previous Labour Government, although I very much hope that it will be repealed by a future Labour Government. Some hon. Members wish to oppose the money resolution because we believe that the Bill will cause untold difficulties for many people in our constituencies, or, in my own case, for the National Union of Public Employees, by which I am sponsored. Those hon. Members and I daily go through the experience of our constituents seeking entry for spouses, largely from the sub-continent, who, under the terms of the 1971 Act, have every right to enter the country. However, under the proposals in the Bill that right to come here will be further reduced.

Tonight we had the most disgraceful statement in the closing remarks of the Under-Secretary of State, who said that since 1971 conditions had changed, so that many of those who were eligible to come here as dependent relatives no longer meet those conditions. The reason is quite simply that in many cases bureaucratic delays, deliberately incurred under successive Home Secretaries, went on for so long that many of those children who had a right to come here have now passed the age where they can legally enter the country. The Home Secretary knows that what I am saying is absolutely correct. He also knows that the Bill builds on a whole series of attitudes of the immigration service and the Home Office which, frankly, border on the racist and the disgraceful.

I spend numerous weekends in endless telephone calls about people — *[Interruption.]* I am glad that Conservative Members find the matter so amusing. If they had to go through the indignity that others do on arriving in the country, they would not behave as they do. A white person who arrives at Heathrow airport has little likelihood of being detained for any length of time by immigration officers, yet the arrival of Bangladeshis on a flight from Dhaka is a signal for every immigration officer to rush to the scene and detain people for as long as possible. That happens every time a flight arrives from Dhaka, India or any other non-white Commonwealth country.

My experience is that, in the majority of cases, statistics are drawn up that seek to show that Commonwealth people from non-white countries are a greater problem than those who come from the old white Commonwealth. Those statistics are entirely false and bogus, because they are a self-fulfilling prophecy. If immigration officers detain a group of immigrants for long enough, then claim that the were forced to detain them because they believed them to be a problem, and then announce that they are a problem, inevitably the statistics will show that to be so. The previous legislation was based on that, and the Bill is also designed to do that.

I am concerned about the expenditure of public money under the Bill, and also about the many defects that there are in the measure. For example, there is the lack of a right of appeal. It is serious and ominous that those who arrive in the country as bona fide, legitimate visitors are told by immigration officers that they must leave immediately. They have no right of appeal against that unless they are from a non-visa country and a Member of Parliament can be contacted and is able to prevent their being removed.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On several occasions during the Second Reading debate, you, and previous occupants of the Chair, reminded the House that hon. Members have the right to be heard. I realise that the Government have suffered a severe embarrassment by failing to secure more than a very narrow majority for the Second Reading of this squalid and shoddy Bill. Nevertheless, will you ensure that, in the debate on the money resolution, all hon. Members are heard, as they were in the Second Reading debate?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I hope that those hon. Members who are not listening to the debate will carry on their conversations elsewhere.

Mr. Corbyn: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I was discussing the lack of a right of appeal. The Bill is fundamentally flawed, in that not only does it refuse to face the consequences of previous House of Commons Committee decisions that there should be a right of appeal —and recommendations from many reputable outside bodies— but goes further by specifically removing the right of appeal in cases in which immigration officers have made entirely unjust decisions.

Immigration law in this country goes fundamentally against the principles on which British law operates under which a person should be assumed to be innocent until proved guilty. People arriving at airports, especially those arriving from the Indian sub-continent, are far more often than not assumed to be guilty of attempting to enter the country illegally, until they can prove themselves legally entitled to come here.

In his winding-up speech the Under-Secretary spoke of the——

Mr. Ian Bruce (Dorset, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to follow the Order Paper.

but the hon. Gentleman's remarks seem to have nothing to do with the money resolution. Will he keep to the motion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) has said nothing that is out of order. The money resolution on the Bill allows a fairly wide, though short, debate.

Mr. Corbyn: I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is unfortunate that Conservative Members should try to curtail debate on such a serious infringement of human rights.

When the Under-Secretary wound up the Second Reading debate he mentioned the entry clearance queues at many sub-continent posts, the longest being at Dhaka. The others are considerably shorter. The Under-Secretary should remember that the Commission for Racial Equality's report on the operation of the immigration service was able to prove conclusively that successive British Governments had succeeded in deliberately keeping that queue at enormous length by understaffing posts in the sub-continent.

Along with many other hon. Members, particularly Opposition Members, I have had the welcome opportunity of visiting India and Bangladesh, and going to the villages in Bangladesh which dependent relatives are trying to leave. I was also able to discuss with immigration officers at the high commission posts how they go about their business, and how they decide who should be allowed to join relatives on whom they are dependent.

Two things occurred to me during my visit. The first was the sheer misery that many of my constituents and others undergo in being separated for year after year from their families by bureaucratic delays, and the unpleasantness that that must involve. The other was the misery of life for many families who exist in poverty in small villages in northern Bangladesh and who are are expected to travel a considerable distance, and at great expense, to Dhaka to be interviewed under some incredibly complicated procedure that has little relevance to the communities of the people with whom we are dealing.

For example, the Home Office is obsessed with the need to establish true family relationships. It asks the high commission staff to request birth and marriage certificates, and proof of residence and land ownership. Such proof does not necessarily exist in villages in Bangladesh or in many other parts of the world. The purpose is to seek to prove that one child out of three or four children in a family is not the legitimate child of the parents who have made an application to visit this country. The Government ignore the fact that even if one of the children is not necessarily the child of both parents, but is the child of a previous marriage of one of the partners, that child is still part of the family unit. The spirit of the European Court's decision is that family unity should be maintained and preserved by the European legislation, but the Bill goes very much in the opposite direction.

Ever since I have been a Member of Parliament I have been dealing with one family that will be adversely affected by clause 1. I refer to Mr. Hardeep Singh, who many years ago came to this country from the Indian sub-continent. For 15 years he has been arguing that his wife and children should be allowed to join him. We can imagine what misery life has been for the wife of Mr. Hardeep Singh. She has been unable to join her husband here because of endless, petty wrangling about their children. The result is that three of the children are now over 18 and therefore are not allowed to come here under the provisions of the Immigration Act 1971. That is what has happened under the Tory party, which talks such sanctimonious nonsense about the unity of family life. It has deliberately allowed the Hardeep Singh family to be separated for 15 years, with the result that the children hardly know their father. All they know about him is that he sends endless letters from England saying that he is having talks with lawyers about the possibility of their being allowed to enter this country.

In this debate on the money resolution I hope that the Minister will reply to some of the points on which he was too frightened to give way when he wound up the Second Reading debate. He made much of the fact that the registration forms that have to be completed under the British Nationality Act 1981 are widely available. If they are widely available, I should be grateful if he would get into his ministerial car after this debate and come to Islington with a supply of forms, because we are short of them. When he leaves Islington, I suggest that he should go on to Leicester, Hackney and every other place that needs the forms. When I wrote to the Minister protesting about the shortage of forms, a month later he sent me six. We are obliged to him for the six forms, but we need considerably more than that.

We need also a ministerial decision, late though it may be, to reduce or to remove the exorbitant £60 charge for registration, particularly for those on supplementary or unemployment benefit. The way in which that legislation is operating is disgraceful.

In the last four years I have addressed the House on the problems that refugees and asylum seekers face when they seek political asylum here under the terms of the 1951 United Nations Geneva convention. The Minister has often parroted the Home Secretary to a quite disgraceful extent. He has said that this country cannot cope with more refugees. He has told us that we are overburdened with refugees and that this country cannot bear the responsibility of every dispute that happens in the world. No country can bear the responsibility of what happens in every other country of the world. However, this country willingly signed the 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention and the Home Secretary gets up and proudly says that we abide by it. Therefore he should bear in mind the figures produced by the Swedish immigration service about the number of asylum applicants in Europe between 1984 and 1986. The total for that period in Sweden was 41,300; in West Germany it was 208,000; in the Netherlands it was 14,200; and in Britain it was 13,300. The figure for Britain is one of the smallest. If we compare asylum applications per million inhabitants of each country, we find that for Sweden the figure is 1,598, for West Germany it is 1,117, in the Netherlands it is 330 and in Britain it is 80. The figure for Britain is by far the lowest for any European country.

If we consider figures for the proportion of population to refugees, we find that the most extreme example is Jordan, where one in four of the population are refugees. In Sweden, one in 195 are refugees and in Britain the figure is one in 400. Similar comparisons can be made on a European basis which will show that this country is doing the least for refugees and asylum seekers, yet we have had

[Mr. Corbyn]

the most disgraceful examples of the way in which the Government operate in connection with the asylum seekers.

The Earl William was taken out of service only after a terrifying night of hurricanes, during which legal asylum seekers were tossed around until the ship finally ran aground on a sandbank, and they were taken off the ship 24 hours later. It was only by a stroke of luck that there was not serious injury or death among those on board. I regret to say that that ship was taken out of service, not as a result of representations from me or my hon. Friends, but as a result of the hurricane. I would be grateful if the Minister of State would give us an undertaking that there will be no repetition of the use of the ship — *[Interruption.]* I am glad that Conservative Members find the hurricane funny. I was referring to the way in which people were locked up in dangerous conditions on board that ship. I realise that it is far too late in the evening to ask Conservative Members to take anything seriously, so perhaps they had better shut up and listen instead.

Recently I drew attention to one case of asylum seekers who had arrived in this country and the way in which they were treated. Mr. Abdul Behvand and his wife Parivash Moosavi are an Iranian couple. Mr. Behvand is an opponent of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime and an opponent of the Islamic republic. He has been active in trade unions — *[Interruption.]* He was an active member of trade unions in Iran. After several of his — *[Interruption.]* I am delighted that Conservative Members find the prospect of trade unionists being executed in Iran so amusing. Conservative Members are producing a disgraceful performance after a disgraceful showing of ignorance and an uncaring attitude in the debate on Second Reading earlier.

When the Iranian family concerned were able to escape from Iran, they went first to India and from there to Sweden, where they sought political asylum. Their application for asylum in Sweden was refused — [Hon. Members: "Oh!"] I take no pride in that. It was disgraceful that they were refused asylum in Sweden. They were then escorted from Sweden to London by two immigration officials, to join an Iran Air flight to return them to Tehran. They were absolutely terrified at the prospect of what would happen to them, their three children and Mrs. Moosavi, who was seven months pregnant at the time. Fortunately, in the transit lounge at Heathrow airport they met an Iranian man who was able to put them in touch with agencies in this country and myself and we were able to stop them from being removed from this country. Their case was then considered. Five weeks later, unusually, they were told to report to Heathrow airport on a Saturday morning for an interview on the question of their right or otherwise to remain in this country. There was no such interview. It was a piece of double dealing and duplicity of the worst order. They were told that they were to be put on a plane that evening to return to Sweden, which had already tried to send them back to Iran.

I made representations the same day in an attempt to prevent their removal from this country, but those representations were unsuccessful and I was given a totally misleading interpretation of what they had said to a Farsi interpreter that day. I had them interviewed by an interpreter whom I knew and trusted and was given a quite different version of what they and the immigration service wanted. I communicated that information to the immigration service at 4.30 pm. The plane was due to take off at 7 pm. The immigration service refused to allow them to remain in this country for at least another two days so that I could contact the Minister and discuss the case with him. As soon as I put the phone down after speaking to the immigration officer, and before I could even ring a solicitor, the family was bundled on to a plane two hours before it was due to take off.

At that point, out of sheer panic, Mrs. Moosavi slashed her wrist. The Scandinavian airline crew, who regarded all this with some concern, said that they were not prepared to take off with the family on board, so the family were taken off the plane and given permission to remain in this country for a further four days during which representations could be made. Legal action has now been taken against the Home Office Office so that the case for political asylum can be properly considered.

I take no pleasure in telling the House that harrowing story, but if the House ignores the plight of legitimate asylum seekers fleeing the horrors of the Islamic republic in Iran, passes legislation of this kind and supports the Government's attitude, terrible disasters of that kind will happen to other people from equally oppressive regimes.

I ask the House seriously to consider the plight of political asylum seekers. I believe that 35 Members of the House are direct descendants, if not actually the children, of people who have sought political asylum in this country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) said, they may be descendants of Jewish people who fled the pogroms in Russia in 1905 or the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s, people who fled from Spain at the end of the civil war or people who fled the horrors of Fascist or authoritarian regimes elsewhere in the world. I ask the House to consider seriously the whole question of refugees.

I spend a great deal of time dealing with problems of immigration and of asylum seekers and all that goes with that, because my constituency is one to which people come from many parts of the world. Forty-one different languages are spoken in my constituency and we take pride in that. In a moving speech my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington spoke of the pride with which many Caribbean, Asian and other people came to work and to make a contribution to this country and were told that citizenship would be theirs. Some 25 years of oppressive and frankly racist immigration and refugee legislation has forced those people into the most appalling circumstances. People in my constituency and elsewhere who are technically illegal immigrants are afraid to go to the doctor or the hospital in case their names are given to the Home Office, and frightened to work openly or to join a trade union in case the employer phones the Home Office.

In a civilised, democratic society it is not acceptable for people to have to lead a twilight existence on the fringes of society because they could be shopped to Big Brother at the Home Office at any time. The Bill will criminalise such people, but they are not criminals. They are bringing up their families in the best way that they know and making the best contribution that they can, but all that the House can offer them is the smug self-satisfaction of racist headlines in *The Sun* whenever we raise the problems caused by immigration laws.

We shall oppose the Bill in Committee because this is an uncivilised piece of legislation which will further drive decent, hard-working, respectable people into the ghetto of being technically illegal immigrants. The Bill will prevent legitimate visitors from visiting this country. It will continue the misery and horror of family separation for black people from Africa and the Caribbean and for Asians, but not for white people, who are protected by the 1971 Act—the most racist piece of legislation on which all the rest has been constructed.

I look forward to a future Parliament which will repeal the 1971 Act and this Bill, and which will put an end to the racism implicit in our immigration legislation.

10.40 pm

Mr. Cyril Smith (Rochdale): I did not intend to speak in the debate or on the money resolution, but I listened to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and I do not believe that it does immigration or our immigrants any good to overstate their case and to speak as he spoke. Therefore, I enter the debate to make three short, sharp points.

First, I had no hesitation in voting against the Bill because some clauses are unacceptable, particularly those on deportation without the right of appeal.

Secondly, I, too, deal with dozens of immigration cases and the main problem—this is relevant to the clause on homelessness—is the long delay in determining cases—I do not mean in approving cases; I mean in reaching a decision. I constantly have people at my surgery saying, "It is promised that somebody from the Home Office will come and interview us, but nobody has come." We are even receiving letters from the Home Office saying that there is a long waiting list, it has all the papers from abroad and it knows that it must hold an interview, but the process is taking a long time and it cannot promise when the case will be dealt with. I hope that as a consequence of the Bill there may be some money in the system to speed up the procedure.

Thirdly, in the light of the hon. Gentleman's speech, I wish to place on the record my sincere appreciation of the way in which the Minister and his staff have dealt with the cases that I have referred to him since the general election. He has not approved them all, but at least I believe that they have been dealt with fairly. They have certainly been dealt with courteously and I appreciate the way in which the Minister does his job.

10.42 pm

Mr. Pat Wall (Bradford, North): A vote for money for this Bill is entirely unnecessary.

Apart from the emergency debate on the arrival of a planeload of Tamil refugees fleeing from violence in Sri Lanka, it is over a year since the House debated immigration. At the end of October 1986 the House debated a proposal to introduce visas for people from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana and Nigeria. The debate took place in an appallingly emotive climate. The announcement of the introduction of the visitors' visa system led, not unnaturally, to an increase in the number of Asians and Africans arriving at our major airports, rightly fearful that the visa system would prevent them from visiting friends and family. That influx, of overwhelmingly short-term visitors, was used by the gutter press deliberately to inflame racial tension. Far from being visitors, they were made out to be a massive wave of permanent immigrants. They were victims of long delays, appalling overcrowding, rudeness and, on not a few occasions, open racism. They were made out to be the perpetrators of the chaotic scenes which shamed the country and its claim to be a civilised society.

At least this debate is taking place at a time of relative calm, when unemployment figures, scandalously high as they remain and doctored as they certainly have been, are in a period of slight decline.

The fact that the climate is in a better state than it was a year ago and during other major debates on immigration poses direct questions. Why should we vote money for a Bill which is based, according to the philosophy outlined in the Minister of State's reply on Second Reading, on the question of the number of immigrants in this country, when the number is falling? Why should we vote money for the Bill when guarantees that were given to Commonwealth citizens settled in the United Kingdom by 1973 with regard to the settlement of their wives and children are now 14 years old and the numbers so entitled must be declining sharply.

The Government claim that unemployment is falling and that our economy is better placed to face the future than almost any other economy in the world. If all that is true, why is the Bill necessary? Why is it necessary to take petty and vindictive steps against, according to the Government, a small number of people? The Bill arises not from any real change in circumstances with regard to immigration or from any extra economic pressures within British society or from any particular change in circumstances in the rest of the world. I can assume that it arises from the prejudices of the Home Office or from promises given to Tory conferences. The removal of section 1(5) of the 1971 Act is an attack upon the Bangladeshi community as the last numerically large group of immigrants to come to this country. Does it include the 9,000 people going through the system now. What will be their status?

With my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) I share one of the largest Bengali communities in our country. They suffer some of the worst conditions of any members of our society. They are made homeless in Tower Hamlets. They have been subject to terrible racial attacks in the Brick lane area. In Bradford a report recently produced shows that the Bengali citizens suffer some of the worst housing conditions of any section of the population. Some 75 per cent. of wives and 93 per cent. of children are covered by the provisions of the 1971 Act. Now, more people will suffer the arbitrary measures of primary purpose and the adequate means test.

The issue of polygamous marriages faces, perhaps alone now, the Bengali community. During the few short months in which I have been a Member of Parliament I have not had to deal with a case in which somebody has tried to bring in a second or third wife. However, I have experienced objections and obstructions from the Home Office against people attempting to bring one wife here because they made an appeal, perhaps five, 10 or more years ago, for another wife to be brought to this country.

I support my right hon. and hon. Friends in their opposition to the removal of the right to appeal. The Government call people involved in that issue "over-stayers". Some of them, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said, may be seeking refugee status. The Home Office is putting a great deal of pressure on such people, despite the fact that Pakistan remains a dictatorship, and despite the obstruction to political parties in Pakistan, the fact that no general

[Mr. Pat Wall]

election has been called and that local elections have been interfered with. The Home Office is putting pressure on the people fleeing from that regime and coming to this country. Indeed, I have been involved in a case this week in which a political refugee from Pakistan was summoned to the Home Office. Such people, who had been given political refugee status in this country, are now told that it is all fairly normal and that they should go back. That pressure is beginning to build. If we allowed the Home Office to make decisions about appeals what would happen to the 55 Tamils whom I spoke about earlier? The courts found that 54 of them had the right to stay here, but the Minister said that none of them had such a right. One out of 55 is not a good record and if the people who wish to appeal will have to rely on this process it does not bode well for the future.

The Government refer to these people as overstayers. Some of us remember the British overstaying on the Indian sub-continent for 200 years. They did not require visas, and some of us remember that the primary purpose of that overstaying was to hold down the Indian sub-continent by force, to divide and rule and to exploit the natural resources and people of that country. That has also been the philosophy of Tory Governments towards the working-class people of Britain.

The Bill could have contained sensible proposals. It could have abolished primary purpose. I am sure that even in the immigration service—especially out in the sub-stations—nobody believes in this arbitrary, Catch-22 system.

The Bill could have changed the support and accommodation rules. I do not know whether hon. Members will agree, but I seem to be permanently carrying letters from banks, building society statements and letters from employers saying so and so works for so much money. I do not know how many hours is spent on this nonsense, but it must be a drain on the economy. We are dealing with a money resolution and it seems that that is a waste of money.

I shall recall two simple cases that I have been dealing with recently, not by far the worst. The first relates to two brothers who live in adjacent houses. They are both quite comfortable, with nice houses and good jobs and they want to bring their parents, who are aged over 70, to this country. They have been told that they cannot do so because they are in receipt of pensions in Pakistan amounting to the magnificent sum of £700. Those elderly people cannot have children; they will not break up and remarry; they will not be a burden on the economy. Why has entry been refused?

In the spring I applied on behalf of an old man of nearly 90 who is blind and crippled with arthritis for a multi-entry visa. His son asked that it be done quickly so that the old man could visit in the summer because he could not stand the winter weather in Britain. He has no intention of staying here permanently; he has been here on 20 occasions in the past and he comes only for short visits. That 90-year-old man was told that he would have to travel 300 miles to be interviewed. How will he do that? That is the degrading treatment that these applicants are receiving. Finally, because he could not be dealt with through the immigration office in Islamabad, on the same basis that he would be looked after by the airlines, I managed to obtain the concession of a multi-entry visa. However, I applied on his behalf in the spring; the visa arrived in the autumn, by which time he could not make the visit because the weather was bad.

That sort of treatment, coupled with the visas for five nations arrangements and this Bill create a climate in which Asian people in my constituency feel that they are being treated like second-class citizens.

My predecessor as the hon. Member for Bradford, North said in a debate on the visas for the five countries that only 1 per cent. have been refused in India and only 2 per cent. in Pakistan. He said that, overall, less than 5 per cent. of people would be refused entry, yet my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West told us tonight that the figure is likely to be 20,000. My predecessor said that 95 per cent. of applicants would be dealt with in 48 hours. In Bradford visitors, especially if they are male, of marriageable age and not already married, have no chance of getting a visa to come here for a wedding within two months, let alone 48 hours.

Different rules apply to the people of Asian origin in my constituency. Nine million Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders have patrial rights which are denied to Africans, West Indians, Asians and other black citizens of the Commonwealth. In addition, 220 million Common Market citizens have rights denied to British citizens. Residents of the USA and South Africa can come here without visas, but people from the New Commonwealth have to get visas.

Added to that is the reality of economic hardship. In July 1986 only 30 per cent. of Bradford's school leavers had jobs. The figure for Asian children was less than 10 per cent. Asian and black workers suffer double the general unemployment level. They also suffer the problems caused by the tightening of the screw, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West said.

I should like to have talked about the history of the people brought here, of the numbers and the fact that half a million more have emigrated than have entered. The real problem of immigrants is the colour of their skin; it is not a question of numbers.

The Government claim that the economic position has improved, but in Bradford large-scale unemployment still exists. Pay is the lowest in Britain, and it is even lower for Asian workers. In Bradford 30 per cent. of schools were built before 1906 and they are still in use. In our city there are massive deficiencies in house improvements and renovation. It is one of the worst-treated cities in terms of urban aid and housing grants.

I oppose the Bill because it adds to the indignities and pressures on the 15 per cent. Asian community in my constituency. It is yet another move to divide the people. Far from being on the verge of economic upsurge, which would have made the Bill unnecessary, we are on the verge of a further recession which will make racism an even bigger weapon in the hands of the Conservatives. They have already used Mr. Honeyford and halal meat to distress the Asian and Jewish communities.

I stand for the unity of all working people against unemployment, poverty, bad housing and bad schools. In that struggle and the search for unity, we can have no truck with any form of racialism, so I ask the House not to vote money for this mean and squalid Bill.

10.58 pm

Mr. Paul Boateng (Brent, South): The Secretary of State spoke of the need to eliminate every pointless bit of paper that we could get rid of, in order to minimise delay for others. It is good to see at this late hour so many Conservatives on the Government Benches, because they were not there this afternoon. They were not here earlier this evening.—[HON. MEMBERS: "We were here. Where was the hon. Gentleman?"] They are more enthusiastic about the money than the measure. That must be a great comfort to the Minister.

We were told that we must get rid of every pointless bit of paper. Having heard the arguments for the Bill ad nauseum, having heard the contributions from the Conservative Benches, having seen the opening of the Pandora's Box that the Bill represents, having heard the racism that Conservatives express every time the topic is discussed, having seen the divisive nature of the Bill between black and white, this Bill is the pointless bit of paper that we should be getting rid of.

It being three-quarters of an hour after the commencment of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted Business)*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Immigration Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of that Act.

IMMIGRATION BILL *[WAYS AND MEANS]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Immigration Bill ("the Act"), it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the charging of fees for applications under the Immigration Act 1971 for indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom and for the grant of such leave; and

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums received by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Food Protection

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I remind the House that, in accordance with the order of the House on 12 November, the Chair must put the Question on each of the motions relating to public health not later than one and a half hours after the first of them has been entered upon.

11 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I assume that all three motions will be taken together. May I ask for some clarification on the papers in relation to item No. 7 on the Order Paper, which is Statutory Instrument No. 1894 relating to Wales? The papers that are available from the Vote Office are completely incomprehensible. The version that has been printed has missed out entire sections of the order. I have been back to the Vote Office to check whether I received a faulty copy, but it appears that all the papers that are available contain the same error. They start at page 1 and then miss everything from sections 1 to 5 inclusive, apart from the latter parts of section 5, and then go on to section 6. The order as it stands is utterly meaningless, and I should be grateful for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I regret this very much. It has only just this moment been brought to my attention. I do not know whether the Minister can help us on these papers.

11.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Ian Grist): I beg to move,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 3) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 1837), dated 21st October 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 22nd October, be approved.

I suggest that, with this, it will be convenient to take the following motions:

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 4) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1888), dated 3rd November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th November, be approved.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 5) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1894), dated 5th November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th November, be approved.

These are the latest in a series of orders controlling the movement and slaughter of sheep in parts of north Wales and Scotland since the Chernobyl incident. It is about 12 months since the House last debated those restrictions, and it may assist hon. Members if I briefly recount the stage that we have reached.

Mr. Wigley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have a set of papers here that makes no sense of what we are discussing, and no other papers are available from the Vote Office. Either we have the appropriate papers on which we can make a decision, or we shall have to put off the debate on this statutory instrument until we have them.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand the difficulties in which hon. Members have been placed. I am having some inquiries made and I will report as soon as I can. It has only just this moment been drawn to my attention.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Chairman. I have just had a brief

[Mr. Ron Davies]

consultation with the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), and I should tell the House that I obtained a complete set of documents from the Vote Office last week. To strengthen the hon. Gentleman's representations, may I say that although the Order Paper would have us believe that the papers were laid on 5 November, they were not available in the Vote Office, even in the form in which I have them, until Friday of last week. That does not give us much time, even if we had complete sets.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do I understand that they were available to the hon. Gentleman on Friday of last week?

Mr. Davies: Yes.

Mr. Grist: When, following monitoring of a wide range of agricultural products in the aftermath of Chernobyl, we first found it necessary in June 1986 to introduce restrictions to sheep in certain areas, about 8,900 holdings and some 4 million sheep in England, Scotland and Wales were originally affected.

At first, a complete ban on movement was imposed, but such a drastic step could be only a short-term measure. We subsequently devised, in consultation with the farming unions, a modified scheme of control, known as the mark and release scheme, under which sheep were allowed to leave the restricted areas in accordance with normal farming practices provided that they were given a distinctive paint mark. This identified them as ineligible for slaughter.

A refinement of the scheme became possible from October 1986 when the availability of reliable machines for live monitoring of individual sheep in the field meant that only sheep that failed the test needed to be paint-marked. Previously, the only reliable way of monitoring was to kill the sheep in order to obtain a meat sample for laboratory testing.

Experience has proved that, once sheep leave the restricted areas and graze on clean pasture, their radioactivity levels fall rapidly. Therefore, a further refinement of the mark and release arrangements was introduced, whereby purchasers of marked sheep could apply to have them re-monitored. If then their radioactivity has fallen acceptably, the paint mark is effectively cancelled by the attachment of a distinctive ear tag, and they may be sent for slaughter. By regularly changing the colour of the paint we can ensure that we know which sheep have been out of the restricted area for sufficient time, and as soon as we have sufficient re-monitoring evidence to justify it all sheep with a particular colour mark can be released for slaughter.

These arrangements may seem complex, and they require regular adjustment to the prohibition orders. However, they work smoothly in practice, and I can confirm that they have the full support of the farming unions. They ensure that interference with normal farming practices is kept to a minimum and that the marketing of sheep can proceed with full protection for the public food chain, while enabling buyers to have a good idea of how long they may have to hold sheep before they can go to slaughter.

At the same time as we were devising the mark and release arrangements, we were continuing to undertake intensive monitoring of particular areas to establish when restrictions could be removed altogether. The numbers of holdings and animals were gradually reduced, so that by the end of the 1986 marketing season we had been able to remove restrictions from the whole of Scotland and from all but about 318 holdings with 145,000 sheep in Wales.

However, our scientific advisers suspected that in 1987 there could be some recycling of radiocaesium in the poorer, often, peaty, soils of Cumbria, Wales and Scotland, where the lack of minerals, which would immobilise the radiocaesium in other soil areas, would leave the radioactivity free to be absorbed through the pasture roots. An experiment undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the results of which were published in April, confirmed that possibility. The Government therefore undertook extensive precautionary monitoring during the late spring and summer. As a result, evidence was found of a few sheep exceeding our 1,000 bq/kg action level, and therefore we reimposed restrictions in a few small areas of Wales and Scotland that we had de-restricted last year and, in Scotland, extended restrictions to some additional areas that had not previously been subject to controls. Those actions are also covered by the orders.

Even with these additional restrictions, only 485 holdings are now subject to control in Scotland and Wales, compared with the 7,100 holdings in June last year. Even on those holdings, comparatively few sheep are a problem. For example, in Wales this year approximately 150,000 sheep have been live-monitored in order to leave the restricted area, and only about 15 per cent. failed the test. In saying that, I have no desire to appear complacent. One holding under restriction is one too many. The Government are continuing to sponsor research to increase our understanding of how radiocaesium behaves in upland ecological systems. We have also investigated possible remedial treatments of the land or animals affected. Most have drawbacks of one kind or another, and, after discussion with the farming unions, we believe that for the immediate future the present movement and slaughter restrictions provide the best means of ensuring the continued safety of the food chain and the maintenance of confidence in the lamb market with the minimum disruption to farmers' normal husbandry practices.

While the restrictions continue, so does the compensation scheme introduced for farmers affected by them. It is made up of four separate elements that reflect the ongoing developments. The first — Leg 1 — compensated producers of released holdings for loss of variable premium on over-fat animals sold, and for any market price loss. Leg 2 provided compensation for market price loss to producers who were still restricted and selling under the mark and release arrangements. Leg 3 covered certain direct losses for each week the animals were held back by the restrictions. Leg 4 covered monitoring and marking costs that were involved before the animals were moved, under consent, on or after 29 September 1986. Legs 2 and 4 of the scheme continue in operation, and, since the introduction of the restrictions, we have paid out to producers over £3 million in Wales, about £1.5 million in Scotland, and, in total, almost £4.9 million on 9,444 claims.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): What the Minister says is all very well for the producer, who will be rather generously compensated, but will he say a word about the consumer and the ways in which radiocaesium and other radioactive elements enter through the food chain, by various paths, into the bodies of human beings? The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), is sitting on the Minister's left, rather inappropriately. On behalf of the Secretary of State for Scotland, will the Under-Secretary of State say why he has consistently refused any sort of systematic examination of radioactivity in human beings? It has been proposed by the Scottish universities research and reactor centre at East Kilbride, and others, that it would now be appropriate to have systematic whole-body monitoring of people in Scotland to find out the cumulative effects of the ingress of radioactivity through the food chain. Why are the Government so concerned about compensation to producers, not about the health of consumers?

Mr Grist: The hon. Gentleman runs the risk of arousing a certain amount of over-concern in the matter. In fact, the amounts of radiation that we are talking about, affecting human beings, are minuscule. Tests are carried out. For instance, at Ysbyty Gwynedd in north Wales, whole-body monitoring has been carried out. There is regular testing of all fresh foodstuffs in Wales and Scotland. There is absolutely no cause for concern. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Grist: No, I shall not at this stage.

Over the past 16 months——

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister had replied to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Grist: The hon. Gentleman made a long intervention. I am sure that he can make his own speech later.

Over the past 16 months there have been extensive consultations with the farming unions and others about both the principle and detail involved. The unions welcomed the various elements introduced to reflect ongoing developments as providing speedy, appropriate and fair compensation and accepted that there would inevitably be an element of rough justice in the direct losses element of the scheme, which was designed to put money into producers' pockets quickly. Equally, it was generally agreed that that money should be targeted to those in genuine need and through a scheme that was seen to be fair, legally defensible, affordable and reasonably straightforward to administer.

Subsequently, however, the National Farmers Union put to Ministers the submission that while most producers had been adequately compensated, it considered that for some farmers the existing arrangements had not provided fair compensation. That matter was considered with great care in discussion with the farming unions, but it did not prove possible to find a sound basis for avoiding the rough justice, which it was always agreed would inevitably be a feature of the compensation arrangements.

It is important to see the matter in perspective. Some 2,400 Welsh claims have been paid under the direct losses elements of leg 3 of the scheme and have been accepted as satisfactory by the producers concerned. The NFU has put forward 49 Welsh cases that claim to have received too little compensation. Of those 49 cases, 29 have already received compensation for direct losses in varying amounts up to £3,670. The remaining 20 chose, as a matter of commercial judgment, to sit outside the scheme and market their animals later.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales agreed to review those cases if they could be shown to contain any special problems or anomalies not already covered by existing compensation arrangements. At present the NFU in Wales is reviewing the details of those cases to see whether any of them fall outside the criteria governing the various elements of the compensation scheme already applied and whether there is adequate evidence available to support such claims.

Mr. Wigley: The Minister is aware that representations on those cases have now been made for many weeks and that the farmers involved have been suffering claim losses for many months. Will he tell the House when a decision will be reached, in view of the difficulties faced by many of those farmers?

Mr. Grist: As I said, they will have to wait for the NFU to finish its review of the outstanding cases. As I told the House, my right hon. Friend has undertaken to review their cases in the light of the NFU submission.

It would be wrong of me to finish without paying full tribute to the co-operation that we have received from the farming unions in devising the mark and release and compensation arrangements and from farmers generally in making the restrictions work successfully.

11.15 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am concerned about the matter raised by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). Normally, his hon. Friend the Member for Meirionnyd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) joins us in debates such as this. If the orders are not available in the Vote Office, I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would regard that as an important and serious matter. I gather from the signs that you are making to me that they are available in the Vote Office. Perhaps one of my hon. Friends can leave the Chamber and get a complete set.

I have an important question to ask the Minister, and perhaps he could give it careful consideration. These orders were tabled on 5 November and were not available in the Vote Office until Friday. Given the way that the House operates and that it was announced on Friday afternoon that the orders would be on today's Order Paper, I am sure you would agree, Madam Deputy Speaker, that, given constituency commitments of hon. Members, one day's notice is inadequate. I do not want to labour the point. I have put it to the Minister and I am sure that he and his hon. Friend will look at the matter to ensure that we do not have such difficulty in future.

There are three orders before the House, and I shall speak especially to the one that affects Wales. Their purpose is to give parliamentary authority to the orders that the Minister was responsible for tabling in the summer. The complacency that the Minister displayed in commending the orders to the House was breathtaking, although the hon. Gentleman denied it. My hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who has now left the Chamber, but is coming back, I hope, questioned the Minister about the potential effects on human health as a result of the ingestion of

[Mr. Ron Davies]

radioactive material. I was astonished to hear the Minister's assurance that there were absolutely no grounds at all for concern.

I know that the electors of Cardiff, Central are fastidious in their choice, but I did not know that at the last election they sent someone to the House who is not only blessed with the ability to carry out medical examinations, presumably, on the hundreds of thousands of people in Wales who are potentially affected, but also possesses a capacity for understanding nuclear physics. The Minister gave us absolute guarantees that the current levels of radiocaesium in sheep in north Wales are such that they present no hazards at all to humans. I was surprised to hear the Minister say that, but no doubt he is about to enlighten me.

Mr. Grist: I shall give the hon. Gentleman a little illustration. The average consumption of lamb in Britain is 5 kg a year. If every 5 kg consumed has had 1,000 bq, the ingestion of radiation would be about the same as that ingested in travelling from London to Aberdeen or from London to Cornwall. That puts the matter into some context.

Mr. Davies: Is that a scientific opinion? The Minister nods in approval. I am delighted at that, because less than a fortnight ago the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said at the Dispatch Box, when moving the motion on a European document, that the criticism of the scheme was that it had no scientific basis. The Minister tut-tuts and shakes his head, but I think he acknowledges that he has dropped something of a boo-boo. The Minister of State told us that we could now safely raise the level from 1,000 bq to 5,000 bq. His argument was that that was the only scientifically determined level. I suggest that the Minister should consult his colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food before he gives such guarantees to the House.

Despite my comments, in broad terms the Opposition welcome the continuation of the order, because it provides some measure of public safeguard and ensures the continuation of compensation payments. It gave us some cause for amusement to hear the Under-Secretary's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon about there still being 49 cases outstanding. It now appears that the National Farmers Union is the executive arm of the Welsh Office. The Under-Secretary of State said, "It is okay. We will not debate it as we are waiting for the National Farmers Union to reach its conclusions." It is perhaps proper for the Welsh Office to consult—and I want the Welsh Office to consult—but I remind the Under-Secretary that at the end of the day the responsibility for judging those matters rests not with the National Farmers Union, however convenient that might be and however cosy the relationship is, but with him. I ask that the Minister and his hon. Friend should discuss this matter and that, during the winding-up speech we should be told that the ultimate decision will be taken by the Welsh Office, not by the National Farmers Union.

It is ironic that on 28 October, when we were discussing the proposal from the European Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would have had us believe that the current level of 1,000 bq/kg was so low that, with no danger at all, we could countenance the removal of all restrictions which formed the basis of the regulations and have the accepted level increased to 5,000 bq. Given the comments that we have just had from the Under-Secretary, that is ironic. Nevertheless, it is worth reiterating that Labour Members support the continuation of the orders even though on 31 October the EEC regulations that underpin them were withdrawn.

There has been a lot of criticism about the piecemeal nature of the orders and the way that they were developed during the summer. I do not share that criticism. I understand the way in which the orders progressed. I think it appropriate that the Government arranged periodic monitoring and, quite sensibly, imposed restrictions when it became apparent that they should be imposed. I do not think that the arguments that they were on one year, off another year, or that there was a building-block approach, are valid.

I would appreciate it if the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is to reply, would comment on the fact that in certain areas in Scotland the radioactivity levels are higher this year than they were last year. That must be of concern.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley has returned to the Chamber, because he put a grave allegation to the House which was flippantly answered by the Under-Secretary of State. It illustrates that there is cause for concern. What I found worrying was that there was no humility in the approach of the Under-Secretary of State. There was no suggestion that there were questions that were unanswered or that we were dealing with a new phenomenon. There was the brash approach, "Everything is okay. Leave it to us and the National Farmers Union."

The brief of the Under-Secretary of State is not quite accurate, because he told us that everything was okay, that the National Farmers Union had agreed and that we could all proceed quite merrily. I shall read from the *Farmers Weekly* of 21 August. I suspect that the member of staff who wrote the speech will receive a rocket tomorrow about what he wrote, because the union that supports the Government and all their works had this to say:

> "The raggedness and tattiness is perceived in the way in which this, and previous governments, have handled the issue of radio-activity, either home-grown or imported. Is it a coincidence that each polluted area has its own nuclear power station or waste-processing plant? Can we be sure that every single becquerel being ingested by the half million or so sheep carries the Chernobyl signature and was not, in fact, vomited from the orifices of nuclear installations at Hunterston and Chapelcross, (south-west Scotland), Sellafield (Cumbria) and Trawsfynydd (north Wales)?"

The Minister has said that we can. Perhaps the Government can justify that. In his peroration, however, the Minister said that they would continue their investigations and research and fund the work being done by Liverpool university. If there are elements of doubt—if there is a grave rift between his Department and the National Farmers Union—it does not become the Minister to come to the Dispatch Box with the complacency and self-satisfaction that we saw earlier. He should at least give us some indication that there is doubt in the minds of the experts.

I have referred to the people who write the Minister's speeches. I should also like to mention those who write letters on his behalf. On 24 February this year, a Mr. J. I. Davies, of the Welsh Office, wrote to producers:

> "A second factor will be the new growth of herbage since the increasing bulk of vegetation will have the effect of

dissipating what radiocaesium remains. Lower levels of radiocaesium in spring pastures will result in lower levels in sheep than those experienced last year."

The exact opposite happened. When the fresh growth came in April and May, it was that fresh growth particularly that gave rise to increased levels of radiocaesium during the course of the year. The Minister said, "It is all okay. We understand it all. We have all the answers. We do not need the research. We do not need to question or consult." That really will not do.

The Minister suggested that the question of compensation had been adequately dealt with. I do not think that he or any of his colleagues—with perhaps the exception of the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) — serve on the Standing Committee that debated what became the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, under which the orders have been laid. During that Committee stage, we questioned the Minister at length about compensation. The then Minister—now the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—said, "Do not worry about compensation; everything will be okay. We shall operate on the basis that the polluter pays. If any compensation is required over and above what is afforded by that principle, it will be covered by insurance." We asked whether that would always be the case: would there never be any circumstances in which the Government would have to intervene? We were assured that it would not be necessary. But the Minister has now told us—I am not sure whether he did so proudly, or with some contrition—that £5 million in compensation had been paid.

The point was put when we debated the orders on 24 October last year. My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) asked then what would happen about compensation. It is interesting to look back 12 months. The Minister said:

> "We have reserved our position on whether the Soviet Union will be required"—

not requested—

> "as it should be if the case is proved — to pay compensation. Whatever comes out of the discussions, whether or not the Soviet Union pays up and whether we have an international agreement, the crucial point for the British farmer is that he knows that compensation is not dependent upon . . . international discussions.—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1986; Vol. 102, c. 1455.]

As it happens, I agree that the question of compensation should not be dependent on those international discussions. The Government evaded answering that question in Standing Committee. They also evaded it when the matter was discussed 12 months ago. Therefore, we are entitled to ask two blunt questions. First, has the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Scottish Office or the Welsh Office requested the Soviet Union to pay the £5 million? They would probably say that that is taking glasnost too far. Secondly, has there been international discussion of this matter? I should hate to think that since the Chernobyl disaster there has been no discussion between scientists, civil servants and politicians of the after-effects of the disaster and who will have to foot the bill. These are serious questions and they deserve an answer.

The Under-Secretary of State said that the Government had provided compensation amounting to £3 million. It is important that the hon. Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and for Caernarfon should know, because of the nature of those communities and of the sheep-farming enterprises in those constituencies, whether the capital values of those farms will be substantially reduced.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): We need to know how long the restrictions will remain in force. The Government have a duty to say what the best scientific advice is about the time that these restrictions must remain in force.

Mr. Davies: It would be unfair of us to expect the Government to say that they will remain in force for 12 months, or for two or three years. The Departments have to reserve their position. They say that if the level rises again next year they will reimpose the restrictions. The hon. Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and for Caernarfon would want the restrictions to be reintroduced to safeguard public opinion of Welsh lamb, which is very important to us all, and to preserve the confidence of the producers. However, that approach does not coincide with the view of the Under-Secretary of State. According to his speech, he has all the answers. Therefore, the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy is entitled to ask him to give a precise date. The Under-Secretary of State cannot do that. It provides another graphic illustration of the weakness of his arguments.

It is vital to maintain the confidence of both producers and consumers. We must ensure that nothing that we say during this debate or in future discussions prejudices the interests of the producers, or causes concern to the consumers. This is a voluntary scheme. It relies to a large extent on the willingness of farmers represented by the hon. Members for Caernarfon, for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) to participate fully in the scheme. The Minister said nothing about enforcement. However, he has virtually no option but to ignore that as it would be almost impossible. I do not wish to consider evasion as it would lead to another debate.

The Government have taken the view that all things can be left to the scientists and that all the questions are answered. I believe, however, that this is one of those issues where we must learn as we live. We have asked the questions, but we have not had the reassurances to which we are entitled. If the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is to reply, cannot provide such reassurances, we might be inclined to divide the House.

11.35 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The fact that my hon. Friends the Members for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) and for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) are also here shows the significance of this matter for my county of Gwynedd and our constituencies.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) touched on issues of concern to the farming community in Gwynedd. I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for clearing up my question about the order. There has been some mistake in compilation and things have appeared in the wrong order. I am sure that it will not happen again.

We support the orders, because it is necessary to have some semblance of certainty, although there is some doubt about how long they will continue. The hon. Member for Caerphilly is right. If uncertainty continues and the orders come up year after year, the capital value of farms is bound to be affected. I do not think that there has been a massive

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

effect so far, but if farms in Gwynedd, the north-west of England and parts of Scotland are identified as having a long-term problem, compensation for the lost capital value of the farm will be needed as well as compensation for revenue losses. I hope for some assurance that the Government will bear that in mind if the problem continues.

The Minister said that there are a handful of unresolved compensation claims in Wales. I think he said that there are 49. He said that the claims are in the hands of the National Farmers Union, which is trying to establish a definition of an adequate basis of compensation. The claims have been going on for months. I have constituency cases about which farming unions, I and others have made representations many times, but they have not been resolved. One such is that of Richard Jones of Penygroes, which I discussed with the Secretary of State four weeks ago. Thousands of pounds have been lost. It is not doubted that a loss has been sustained; it is merely a matter of quantifying it. If up to 49 cases remain, I urge the Minister seriously to try to find means of settling them without delay. We are talking about sums which are relatively small in Government terms, but which can make the difference between life and death in terms of cash flow for farmers, many of whom are being squeezed by the banks.

Dr. Thomas: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a strange feature of Government policy on compensation that they should ask the farming unions to present them with a formula for resolving outstanding compensation cases? Does this not show how the Government have handled post-Chernobyl compensation?

Mr. Wigley: Yes, that has clearly been a massive problem for the Government. I well recall the debate in July 1986 when Mr. Mark Robinson, a former Minister at the Welsh Office, replied to the debate and referred to the likelihood that the problem could be wound up in a matter of months. I realise that there was uncertainty in the Government's knowledge at that stage, and all hon. Members would urge the Minister to acknowledge that there is still uncertainty, that we do not know all the answers and that we must be very careful indeed how we treat the problem. As we do not have all the answers, it is unreasonable to pass the buck to the NFU or anyone else to work out the compensation. As we heard earlier, if necessary, ex-gratia payments should be made to help the farmers in the absence of being able to arrive at a scientific formula that bears scrutiny if circumstances change, as indeed circumstances might well change in future.

I want to consider the source of the radiation, as questions over the source of the radiation continue to cause concern in my county. The radiation overwhelmingly came from Chernobyl. The levels should therefore be declining, and that is happening, albeit far too slowly. Scientists have noticed — this was reported in a HTV film a couple of months ago — that the ratio of the radioactive isotopes concerned had not changed in the way in which the scientists had expected. That showed that radioactivity might be coming from another source and that that was compounding radioactivity from Chernobyl.

Given that the areas where radioactivity is affecting sheep lie in the vicinity of nuclear power stations, the coincidence is too great and the question must be considered in depth. Indeed, the affected areas in north-west Wales, north-west England and Scotland are all close to nuclear power stations. As we know, radioactivity builds on itself. A little radioactivity from one source added to a little from another source adds up to a level which then causes alarm. It is absolutely correct that strict rules should be applied by the Government and the farmers in deciding what is acceptable. We should congratulate the farming fraternity on the way in which it has operated the rules so that Welsh lamb, Scottish lamb and English lamb are commodities that reach the housewife and the shops with utter confidence that they are completely edible.

To that extent, we welcome the Government's approach. However, we urge the Government to be very careful and to use every technique available to identify the source of the radiation that may be affecting sheep and the general environment in the areas close to nuclear power stations. That is particularly relevant when the possibility of new nuclear reactors is being discussed for Wylfa and Trawsfynydd. If the uncertainty that we have seen over the past year continues, it will have a material effect on the attitude towards new reactors at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa. I hope that the Minister will understand that and realise why people must have answers to these questions.

I urge the Government to make clear in future what lessons they have learnt in a more general context. If, God forbid, there were another disaster in the United Kingdom or in a nuclear power station in Europe and a tragedy hit our agricultural fraternity again, how would the Government tackle these matters? What additional techniques and resources are available? How would they ensure that the farmers and others dependent on the farming economy were not hit as hard as they have been over recent years?

In allowing the orders to pass tonight, we do so because we believe that to oppose them would stop something that is necessary for the farmers. Allowing them to go forward does not mean that we are entirely happy with the situation. There are far too many unanswered questions for that to be the case.

11.44 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): So far, the accents in the debate have been either Welsh or Anglo-Welsh. I wish to introduce a Scottish accent to make it clear that the Opposition's concern stretches across Scotland as well as Wales and the north of England.

There are many farming interests in my constituency, from the south-west, where early potatoes are growing, to the north-west around Muirkirk, where there are mainly sheep farmers. The concern therefore stretches right across the board. Conservative Members do not always appreciate that some Labour Members represent large farming constituencies, especially in Scotland, such as my own and that of my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Not only Labour Members.

Mr. Foulkes: The same applies to Alliance and Scottish National party Members.

It would be counter-productive for any of us representing farming constituencies to be involved in any way in creating the kind of atmosphere that might result in any kind of scare that might worry consumers or create losses for producers. I say that because the Scottish Office Minister who is to reply to the debate has an unfortunate tendency to accuse the Opposition of scare tactics, extremism and other unfortunate tendencies. Perhaps it is a case of motes and beams. I therefore make it clear that I have no intention whatever of creating any kind of problem along those lines.

I emphasise the comments the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about post-Chernobyl losses and the necessity for speedy and adequate payments to be made to people, including some of my constituents, who are suffering great losses. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) rightly said, we were utterly astonished when, instead of removing or reducing some of the restrictions in the current year, the Scottish Office not only reintroduced restrictions but extended them to areas not previously covered, thus confounding its own previous statements. It is vital for the economics of the farming interests concerned that compensation should be speedy and adequate.

As I said in an intervention, there is also concern about the cumulative effect on health of various paths in the food chain leading to the build-up of radioactivity in human beings. The hon. Member for Caernarfon rightly pointed out that although Chernobyl is the largest and most clearly identifiable problem—I accept that by spectral analysis one can identify the sources of radioactive substances—there are other sources of radioactivity, such as Sellafield, Hunterston and Chapel cross. Recently we have seen statistics showing the high level of leukaemia near nuclear power plants, which can only reinforce our anxieties.

After Chernobyl, Professor Murdoch Baxter of the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre said that there should be a ban on milk for three or four weeks, but the Scottish Office rejected that. The result was that all of us in the south-west of Scotland continued to consume milk which, according to some experts, was highly radioactive.

We know that there have been restrictions on lambs with radioactivity above a certain level, but the fact that the limit was set means that we have been consuming meat from lambs where radioactivity is just below that level. Therefore, radioactive lamb has been consumed, albeit below the critical level. Indeed, we continue to consume such lamb, as I did the other day.

As I am sure the Scottish Office Minister is aware, it only became clear a few days ago that trout in Loch Doon and Loch Dee in my constituency have a level of radioactivity three or four times higher than the permitted level. Some people may say that few people eat a great deal of trout, by my constituents at Dalmellington and Bellsbank, 40 per cent. of whom are unemployed, supplement their diet by catching trout — legally, if course—so they will be consuming that radioactivity.

Mr. Wigley: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that before the Chernobyl disaster fish were caught in Trawsfynydd lake with radioactivity in excess of 1,000 bq/kg? That shows the validity of our questions.

Mr. Foulkes: That would come from the outflow into Trawsfynydd, which would affect the trout. That certainly reinforces the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Recently we received information that hare and rabbits in the south-west of Scotland have 4,500 bq/kg. Add to that the effects of root crops, fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs, and we are seeing a build up of radioactivity in people in the south-west of Scotland and, presumably, in other parts.

As the Minister knows, I have suggested, and, more important, the SURRC has suggested to the Scottish Office a programme of systematic whole body monitoring of the people in the south-west. Until now volunteers have been able to have whole-body monitoring, but there has not been a systematic, scientific study and analysis of the effects of the build up of radioactivity in our bodies. Elsewhere, random samples have been taken. Recently I read of a farmer in Yorkshire who had had his body monitored and found that he had a high level of radioactivity. There have been random examples in Cumbria and elsewhere which have caused anxiety.

The SURRC is suggesting a systematic scheme of whole-body monitoring for people in Scotland, particularly the south-west. The Minister of State, the noble Lord Sanderson, has, unfortunately, rejected that. The Minister who will reply to today's debate answers for him in this House and I hope that he will give us a clear indication of the position.

On several occasions my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has called for an inquiry into the effects of Chernobyl, but he has constantly been turned down by the Government. They seem to want to keep it quiet. As I said before, none of us want to create a scare. That is the last thing that any of us would want to do. However, if there is a real problem, we want to identify it and do something about it. The Government seem to want to cover up any problem that may exist for human health.

I may have gone a little wider than the orders, but I have drawn from them, and I hope that in his reply the Minister will say why the Scottish Office consistently turns down the excellent proposal for checking whether those of us who live in the south-west of Scotland have been affected adversely by Chernobyl and other radioactivity in the area, which is continuing. If a systematic study proves that there has not been a build-up of radioactivity in the bodies of those of us living in the south-west of Scotland, as one of them, there will be no one happier than me.

11.55 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): The Minister likened the ingestion of 5 kg of irradiated lamb to a train ride to Aberdeen. As a scientist, I find that comparison strange, to say the least.

The problem not faced by the Government's arrangements is the cumulative effect of caesium 137 and other isotopes. The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) touched on the fact that trout in Trawsfynydd lake had high levels of radiation—over 1,000 bq/kg—and that they were present as far back as 1978. That would not necessarily be the result of the outfall from the nuclear installation because, as it is a gas-cooled reactor, any leak of radiation is vented into the atmosphere and would require precipitation to come back down and into the lake. Therefore, it is likely that there is a large area around Trawsfynydd — as there may be around some of the other older type reactors — that is contributing to the levels that were discovered through the Chernobyl incident.

On the assumption that people do not live by sheepmeat alone, there may be a considerable accumulation of caesium and other elements such as strontium 90,

[Mr. Martyn Jones]

which lodges in the skeleton and has a half-life of several thousand years. Therefore it is much more dangerous to the biological systems of livestock and humans in the downwind area of Trawsfynydd and other reactors. I believe that further testing should be part of the arrangements made by the Government for the good of the human population and I agree with the hon. Member for Caernarfon that the source of the radiation should be identified. I believe that it should be easy to do that.

11.58 pm

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): It gives me great pleasure to support the orders. We are duty bound to support all our constituents and all the people in various parts of Britain who are facing this problem.

I will not pursue what has been said by other Opposition Members. I believe that the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) has said it all. Many of his constituents are involved. He knows all about it and he knows the history of it. The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) outlined the problem well, as did the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

I should like to ask the Minister a few questions. In my view the problems facing the farmers in my constituency in north Wales and various parts of Britain are, first, compensation, secondly, restrictions and, thirdly, lamb sales.

We all assume that the majority of farmers have been fairly compensated. However, last year many farmers in north Wales—whom I know very well—and in many parts of Britain were not adequately compensated. I am sure that the Minister is aware of that fact. At this late hour, I make a plea that the Minister will reconsider the financial problems facing those unfortunate farmers who were not properly compensated last year. He believes in justice, so I am sure that he will reconsider their case.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) asked how long the restrictions will last. It is a major problem for those who live outside the area in mid and south Wales. Many of my constituents ask whether the restrictions will last for another 12 months, three years or five years—some have suggested 100 years. If that matter is clarified it will relieve the worries of many of my constituents.

The largest problem is Welsh lamb consumption and the lamb trade in this country and within the Community. The Minister, having had a word with his seniors and other officials in the Ministry, should consider giving additional financial aid to Welsh Lamb Enterprise for its excellent marketing of lamb and to the Meat and Livestock Commission, which operates so successfully in various parts of the country.

The Minister knows that many parts of the country are dependent on the sheep sector, so the interests of the industry must be safeguarded. I hope that the Minister will consider compensation restrictions and give additional financial aid for lamb sales.

12.1 am

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has made it clear that the official Opposition support the orders, which are intended to protect the public from the risks of food that has been contaminated by radiation.

It is important and significant that the Government are introducing the orders, and that the House is debating them, under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1965 nearly 19 months after the Chernobyl disaster.

I shall concentrate on the Scottish order, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly dwelt on the Welsh aspects. I understand that there will be a separate debate for England in due course.

I pay tribute to sheep farmers in the affected areas of Scotland for their full and wholehearted co-operation with the monitoring operation and the restrictions that have been necessary under the scheme. Those restrictions on the movement and slaughter of sheep have undoubtedly caused difficulty and hardship for a number of farmers, particularly hill farmers, although we accept, understand and are grateful for the fact that the compensation scheme now seems to be operating reasonably satisfactorily in Scotland, despite the difficulties in Wales that a number of other hon. Members have referred to. Those farmers and their employees have co-operated fully and accepted the need for restrictions in the interests of public health and the reputation and quality of Scottish lamb. It would be disgraceful if the contamination threshold were to be increased from 1,000 bq/kg, as it presently stands, to 5,000 bq/kg, as has been suggested by the Euratom article 31 committee. I am referring to the European Community document 7183/87 which we debated on 28 October.

We understand that consideration is being given to increasing the threshold which triggers action such as that represented by the orders. The Labour party thinks that such a watering-down of the precautions would be wrong in the light of the scientific evidence from Japan and the more stringent precautions which apply in some other European countries. It would make a mockery of the orders and of the restrictions which have applied since June 1986.

Consumers have confidence in the current precautions. That is why there has been no significant change in the market for lamb in the last 18 months. Any increase in permitted contamination would damage consumer confidence in lamb and in other products from the affected areas.

If the Government lift the threshold they might seek to extricate themselves from a longer-term and more expensive commitment than was originally expected in the immediate aftermath of the Chernobyl incident. If that is what they have in mind I suggest that they forget it.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has already made an overwhelming case for an inquiry to make it possible for all shades of opinion to draw all the lessons to be learnt from Chernobyl. It seems unreasonable that the Government should refuse to respond to that request.

The industry and the public are entitled to expect the Government to maintain the highest safeguards against the effects of radioactive contamination from any source. The hon. Member for Galloway and Upper Nithsdale (Mr. Lang), whose constituency is affected by the orders and who also happens to be the Minister of State responsible for industry and energy at the Scottish Office, made a statement last week claiming that detailed contingency plans for a major accident at a Scottish nuclear installation were not justified. That is not acceptable in the light of experience.

I shall make four specific points. First, we understand that the restrictions apply to 130,000 sheep on 69 farms in nine districts in Scotland. The biggest concentration is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). What will be the cost of monitoring, administering and paying compensation as a consequence of the orders?

Secondly, I understand that 78,000 of the sheep, on 39 farms, were not covered by previous orders. Why and how are areas which were not affected by fallout from Chernobyl last year apparently affected this year? Could it be that we have in Scotland another hot spot of the kind found in Yorkshire last year? The House and the country are entitled to an explanation.

Thirdly, is it possible that further areas will be affected? Most importantly, how long will the problem continue? We understand that the half-life of caesium 137 is 30 years which might cause long-term problems. The Government have had time to obtain full scientific advice and evidence and should know how much longer such areas will have to labour under restrictions.

Fourthly, will the Minister say something about contamination in the ground, heather, grass, wild animals and in people who live in the affected areas? If lambs are being contaminated, it is probable—to put it mildly—that other species will be affected, too. We are entitled to some explanations about that.

We support the orders and welcome the debate. We want clear undertakings that the Government will maintain and, where necessary, improve the safeguards against radioactive contamination from any source, whether at home or abroad. Complacent reassurance can be no substitute for effective precautions from the Government.

12.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): We have had a constructive debate on the orders, which continue the emergency provisions on the movement and slaughter of sheep in north Wales and in certain parts of Dumfries and Galloway, and Strathclyde and Central regions, including my constituency. Several detailed points have been made, and I shall try to cover as many as possible during the time available to me.

I should tell the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) that there is no complacency in the Government. Nor is there the scaremongering that we have heard from him and some of his colleagues.

I am delighted that the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) is in her place. I was interested to hear her comments on Radio Scotland this morning. She said that the orders related to increasing compensation and that she opposed them because she thought that more compensation than was being provided should be paid, but she thought that they were a step in the right direction. I hope she now realises that the orders have nothing to do with compensation and that, contrary to what she said this morning, farmers in her constituency will be allowed to move their sheep. There are no restrictions on the movement of sheep. The orders relate to the slaughtering of sheep.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I have listened carefully to the debate, and it is clear that compensation underpins many aspects of the orders. As has been made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and others, farmers are still worried about compensation. Although the National Farmers Union may accept the broad principles of the orders, as do all hon. Members, there must be a case for reconsidering the capital values of farms in the long term.

Mr. Forsyth: On the radio this morning the hon. Lady said that the orders dealt with compensation. I assure her that the farmers in her constituency and throughout Scotland, who have been ably represented by the Scottish National Farmers Union, are content with the orders and have co-operated splendidly in——

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister has not answered my questions.

Mr. Forsyth: I am coming to the hon. Gentleman. Several of his points were in the scaremongering category. The substance of his argument related to whole-body monitoring. He accused the Government of not being prepared to consider whole-body monitoring and of having resisted it. The Government have contributed towards whole-body monitoring of people by several laboratories, including the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre at East Kilbride, where a project has been under way since late 1986 to measure radioactivity in people from all areas of Scotland.

No doubt the hon. Gentleman will be delighted to learn that the results of the research will be published in March or April next year, and that results to date confirm that decisions taken following the Chernobyl accident were based on a sound assessment of the doses likely to be received following consumption of foodstuffs affected as a result of post-Chernobyl deposition. I hope that we shall hear no more scare stories such as those that we heard from the hon. Gentleman tonight about trout, hare and rabbit.

Mr. Foulkes: I accurately predicted what the Minister would say. We know him only too well in Scotland. Will he confirm that the only people who have been given whole-body monitoring in East Kilbride are those who have volunteered? Therefore, the study is in no way systematic. Will the Minister also confirm that Professor Baxter and his staff have put forward a proposal to the Scottish Office for a systematic scheme, which the Minister and his colleagues have turned down, in spite of the fact that such a scheme would show clearly whether there is an effect, rather than just taking in people off the streets?

Mr. Forsyth: Not being a scientist, I am content to wait for the results to be published in April next year. No doubt the hardworking people in the Scottish Universities' Research and Reactor Centre at East Kilbride will take grave offence at the doubt into which the hon. Gentleman casts the quality of their work.

Dr. Thomas: The Minister will be aware that a whole-body monitoring study has been carried out at Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor, with some serious results, including the discovery of a level of 3,000 becquerels per kilogram in one of my constituents. Will the Minister comment on that?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that, because I was coming to his point about the influence of nuclear power stations.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) seemed to suggest that we should have a lower limit than the 1,000 bq/kg that is applied to sheep. I want to reinforce what my hon. Friend said about that. He described eating 5 kg of lamb as broadly equivalent to taking a journey to Aberdeen. I am sure that both experiences are equally pleasant. Perhaps I could give another analogy. If one ate 5 kg of lamb a year, the dosage would be equivalent to 0·06 mSv. A comparable example might be a chest X-ray, which represents 0·1 mSv. My hon. Friend was right to put these matters into their proper context.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Minister is really misinterpreting the exchange. My point was that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales was speaking with great authority, as if there could be no possible questioning of the scientific evidence. We do not accept that radioactivity and the cumulative effects of radioactive poisons can be the subject of that much scientific precision.

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that these are areas of uncertainty and difficulty. I hope, therefore, that he will pay tribute to the way in which the Government have tackled the new, post-Chernobyl position and ensured that there has been no contamination of the food chain.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly, and other Opposition Members, asked why some areas of Scotland had higher levels of radioactivity this year than last. The hon. Gentleman will chide me for my certainty, but when the radioactive cloud deposited caesium 137 through rain last year, the radioactive contaminant was on the surface of the grass and was taken in by animals and subsequently discovered. In the following year the caesium had been washed into the ground, and, depending on the nature of the subsoil, the minerals present in it — especially in clays — absorbed the caesium. In areas that were mineral deficient — particularly in north Wales and parts of Scotland — the effect was to concentrate the levels of caesium 137, which then became part of the plant structure. I hope that that explanation will help.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn) *rose* ——

Mr. Home Robertson: I am glad that the Government — like the rest of us — are learning about the issue. Is the Minister in a position to inform the House whether the problem is likely to recur next year, or the year after that?

Mr. Forsyth: I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government will continue to ensure the protection of public health. We are not in the business of anticipating what will happen. Frankly, had it not been for experiments carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food last year, we would not have been able to anticipate the higher level of radiation arising from the vegetation. If the hon. Gentleman knows the answers to those questions, as he clearly does, why has he asked them of me from the Dispatch Box?

The other great scare that was put forward by Opposition Members was that the fall-out might have come not from Chernobyl, but from nuclear power stations. That is stretching the truth to an extraordinary extent. It is evident that the caesium isotopes that have come from Chernobyl have a distinctive fingerprint. Caesium 137 and 134 isotopes appear in the ratio of 2:1. The fall-out that one would expect from a nuclear power station would normally show a ratio between those two isotopes of about 10:1. So the Chernobyl fingerprint is clear, and stretches across north Wales as well as Scotland. It is irresponsible to suggest that the problems that we have came from anything other than Chernobyl and to advance arguments against nuclear power in this context, which is what Opposition Members are about.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I must press on.

The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) asked how long the restrictions would last. They will last as long as the monitoring shows that there is a problem of radioactivity in sheep.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly asked about compensation from the Soviet Union. The USSR is not a party to any of the international conventions relating to third party liability in nuclear energy, and is therefore not subject to any specific treaty obligation to compensate for damage caused outside its national boundaries. I hope that that will help him.

Compensation cases in Wales were mentioned by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). Surely the point is that the NFU has been asked whether there is any additional information or argument in support of its members that it wishes to put to the Secretary of State before he comes to a decision on the claim. I understand that we are still waiting for the NFU to give that information to the Secretary of State.

The Government recognise that the restrictions occasion difficulties and additional costs for sheep farmers affected, and we are currently providing compensation in two ways, which I believe have been broadly acceptable to the industry as a whole. It is difficult to forecast with any precision to what extent caesium arising from the Chernobyl incident will continue to cause a problem. However, at this stage I cannot rule out the possibility that some restrictions will remain necessary in the future.

We are continuing to monitor the situation carefully. I assure the House that we are unwavering in our determination to ensure that the public are not exposed to any unacceptable risk. We are continuing to examine what long-term measures may be required. However, for the immediate future, we believe that the present movement in slaughter controls provides the most practicable way of ensuring the continued safety of the food chain and the maintenance of public confidence in British lamb with the minimum of disruption to farmers' normal husbandry practices. Accordingly, I commend the orders to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 3) Order 1987 (S.I. 1987, No. 1837), dated 21st October 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 22nd October, be approved.

FOOD PROTECTION

Resolved,

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (No. 4) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1888), dated 3rd November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 4th November, be approved.

That the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (Wales) (No. 5) Order 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1894), dated 5th November 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Grist.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (Wales) (Miscellaneous Changes) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 9th July, be approved.

BUILDING SOCIETIES

That the draft Building Societies (Limited Credit Facilities) Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 21st October, be approved.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents.)

PRICING OF MEDICINAL PRODUCTS

That this House takes note of European Community Document Number 4105/87 on the pricing of medicinal products for human use; and supports the Government's intention to ensure that the adoption of such measures will be consistent with the arrangements satisfactorily operating in the United Kingdom at present.

PRICE INDICATORS FOR FOODSTUFFS AND NON-FOOD PRODUCTS

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 4083/84, 4687/84 8599/85, 5808/86 and 6213/87 on consumer protection in respect of the indication of prices of foodstuffs and non-food products; agrees that legislation in this area is desirable; and supports the adoption and implementation of an effective measure to assist consumers in making price comparisons.

KNITTING YARNS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 11063/86 (Part 4) on standard sizes for knitting yarns and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 5th May 1987; agrees that legislation in this area is desirable; and supports the adoption of an effective measure, which will help the creation of a common market for knitting yarns.

HAZARDOUS IMITATION PRODUCTS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9592/86 on hazardous imitation products; agrees that legislation in this area is desirable; and supports the adoption of an effective measure, which will remove barriers to trade and help protect consumers throughout the Community from dangerous imitations.

TOY SAFETY

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 10443/86 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 30th March 1987, and 8845/87 on the safety of toys; endorses the view that the proposed legislation is necessary; and supports the Government's intention to work for the early adoption of measures which will provide more comprehensive protection in the field of toy safety.

PRE-PACKAGED LIQUIDS (BOTTLE SIZES)

That this House takes note of European Community Document 11063/86 (Part 3) on the making up by volume of certain pre-packaged liquids, and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 23rd October 1987; agrees that legislation in this area is desirable; and welcomes the United Kingdom's endeavours to encourage the adoption of an effective measure which will help towards the creation of a common market for alcoholic drinks.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the matter of Economic, Industrial and Commercial Development of Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet, and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 88 (Meeting of Standing Committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before 4 o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for 2 hours at the sitting.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

PETITION

Anna Chertkova

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of members of the Church in Wales in Holyhead. This petition relates to the detention of the Soviet Christian Anna Chertkova, who is detained in a prison psychiatric hospital.

The petitioners pray that

the House of Commons do encourage the Foreign Secretary to make representations to the Soviet Government for the purpose of achieving Miss Chertkova's release and reunion with relatives in the West.

There are 23 signatories to the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

North Sea Cod Quota

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

12.28 am

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): My reason for raising the matter of North sea cod quotas is that our fishermen in Yorkshire and East Anglia feel that they are being treated unfairly. Last year the cod catch by the Yorkshire and Anglia Fish Producers' Organisation was 6,800 tonnes. This year's quota was fixed at 3,560 tonnes because of a 28 per cent. reduction in the United Kingdom's quota on 1986. However, the scientists got their estimates and sums wrong. There was a glut of cod in the North sea. Therefore, later in 1987 the United Kingdom quota was considerably increased, but the Yorkshire and East Anglia quota rose to only 6,250 tonnes—well under last year's catch. We believe that we should have had at least 1,000 tonnes more cod quota in Yorkshire and East Anglia and that, because fishermen and other producers will not reach the quotas that they have been given, that will perhaps be used as an excuse by the EEC for lowering our national quota next year. A far better way of conservation is to have a larger mesh size rather than smaller quotas.

Pressures grew on the fisheries scientists in the first half of the year to review their assessment of the North sea cod stock, because fishermen's observations contradicted their scientific advice. Eventually, they revised their recommendations for the North sea total available catch to 175,000 tonnes, a 40 per cent. increase, bringing it roughly on a par with last year's figure. The United Kingdom quota was consequently increased to 74,290 tonnes. Meanwhile, repeated attempts were being made by all the producer organisations to find out what their sectoral quotas would be this year. Repeated promises were made, but we were not given any final confirmation of our sectoral quota for North sea cod until 22 July, the day after a delegation from the Yorkshire and Anglia Fish Producers' Organisation visited the Minister to express concern over North sea cod quotas. The quota allocated to YAFPO on 22 July was 6,250 tonnes, representing 8·4 per cent. of the increased United Kingdom quota that was then in force. That was considerably less than we had anticipated.

In April 1986 our quota had been unilaterally reduced from 7,125 to 6,170 tonnes, with no satisfactory explanation. We expected the restoration of at least some of that 1,000 tonnes cut, but little was restored. We ask the Minister to explain why that was done, because the fisheries association in Yorkshire and East Anglia believes that that has not been done.

By the time the quota was given to us, we had already taken about 5,700 tonnes—over 90 per cent. of our annual quota. That left us in a virtually impossible position for the remainder of the year. Stringent restrictions were applied immediately to our boats for the months of August and September, but we could not avert our annual quota being exhausted well before the end of the year. On 10 September a YAFPO delegation was again invited to meet the Minister, but he declined to give us an additional allocation of North sea cod quota. On 11 September we calculated that our annual quota had run out and we duly informed the Ministry. On 18 September our members' cod licences were revoked so that they could no longer retain on board or land any cod from the North sea.

Repeated requests have been made to the Government to reallocate to YAFPO some of the North sea cod quota that other producers oganisations are not likely to catch, but so far those requests have fallen on deaf ears. The FPO Ltd.—the deep-sea PO, based in Grimsby—recently gave up 500 tonnes of its North sea cod quota, but we have only received our pro rata allocation of that, 44 tonnes. That will not significantly improve fishing opportunities for us.

We did not know the size of the North sea quota until 22 July. We received significantly less quota than anticipated. No special consideration was given to inshore fishermen like ourselves who are dependent on a single stock. That is the position of all our members, for at least part of the year. In Yorkshire, cod is the premium catch all year. In East Anglia, the boats rely on cod from October until March. Drastic cuts in quota are not necessarily offset by significant fishing opportunities for other species.

I agree that some small block allocations have been made to the Yorkshire cobles—50 tonnes—and to boats in the southern part of East Anglia—20 tonnes—in recognition of their particular reliance on the winter cod fishery. However, the bulk of our fleet remains on a 5 per cent. catch only. We have been criticised by the Government for being too generous towards our members in the first part of the year. We have significantly restricted our boats all year, yet we still ran out of quota in mid-September. Most of the Scottish POs have operated higher quotas than us nearly all year, and, right on our doorstep, Grimsby fishermen have had virtually unrestricted North sea cod fishing for most of the year. Even now, they have quota remaining. How can such a quota distribution possibly be fair?

Let me suggest the action that is required for the future. For the remainder of this year, our only hope is to secure an additional quota from the amount that is unlikely to be caught by other POs. However, POs are naturally reluctant to give up any fish at all, and, barring 500 tonnes from The FPO Ltd., nothing has yet been forthcoming. If a reallocation is not made soon, there will be insufficient time left in which to catch it, and the United Kingdom will again fall short of its national quota.

In my view, the Government need to re-examine the figures on which they base their quota distribution for next year, and explain convincingly why YAFPO has run out of fish quota well before the end of the year, rather than other POs that gave their members more generous quotas.

There must be an end to the wild fluctuations of 30 to 40 per cent. which we frequently see in total allowable catches from year to year. Such enormous variations do not encourage rational forward planning. We need to know what our sectoral quota is going to be much earlier in the year. To manage it properly, we need to have it by mid-January at the latest, rather than mid-July. We need more effective technical conservation measures. Our fishermen are committed to conservation because it is their livelihood. We contend that quotas have limited value for conservation, as they are easily circumvented on the continent—witness the Belgian experience this year. Any fish that is inadvertently caught in excess of the quota must be dumped back into the sea, by which time it is already dead.

Both we and the scientists agree that far too much immature cod is being caught in the North sea, but they place their faith in the quota system. To prevent the unnecessary slaughter of young fish, we say that measures are needed, such as larger mesh sizes, larger minimum fish landing sizes and prohibitions on fishing in areas where there are significant concentrations of spawning or immature fish.

I hope that the Minister will give a sympathetic reply to my points. I shall now make way for some of my hon. Friends who feel just as strongly as I do.

12.38 am

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) for giving me time briefly to put one or two points that are especially important to the Bridlington fishermen.

The fact that 90 per cent. of the quota had been used by the time that the 1987 quota was finally allocated by the Government at the end of July was a particular blow to the Bridlington fishermen, who are 90 per cent. dependent on one species — North sea cod. Their position is much worse than that of fishermen in areas where the fishing effort is spread over a number of species.

I feel, therefore, that special consideration should have been given to YAFPO when the Government obtained an extra 1,000 tonnes of North sea cod quota from the Germans under a swap arrangement. Despite representations from me and from the industry, that did not happen. We received only 84 tonnes, the rest going pro rata to other areas that still had quota left.

We felt even more aggrieved when recently The FPO Ltd., the deep sea fish producers' association based in Grimsby, gave up 500 tonnes of North sea cod quota. As that FPO is based on the Humber, special consideration should have been given to the east coast fishermen in YAFPO, who by this time were restricted to a 5 per cent. by-catch. Once again our fishermen received only 44 tonnes — a pro rata allocation — the balance going to areas such as Scotland that still had plenty of quota left.

Due to poor weather in October, the landings of cod in Scotland have been lower than expected. If no Government action is taken, it looks as though the United Kingdom cod catch could be 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes below the 1987 quota. That would be tragic, as the Bridlington boats will have been unable to fish for cod for almost five months. That could reduce the United Kingdom's total quota for next year.

The following immediate action is required. There must be a reassessment of the take-up of quota and a reallocation of the likely shortfall to FPOs that have no quota left for normal fishing. What is even more important is that this should never happen again. It is essential that the basis of the allocation of quota should be re-examined and made more equitable. Something is clearly wrong when Bridlington boats run out of quota by August, despite strict catch restrictions, while Grimsby has been free fishing all year, without any catch restrictions, and still has quota left. If that continues next year, the obvious answer will be for Bridlington boats to leave YAFPO and join the Grimsby FPO. That shows just how stupid the present situation is. As my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich pointed out, we need to know the quota for next year by January so that we can manage it effectively.

Quotas are inefficient and have been proved to be an unfair method of conserving fish stocks. YAFPO maintains, and I agree with it, that the best way to conserve fish stocks is to prevent the slaughter of young fish. Much bigger net sizes are needed. Fishermen in Bridlington and in the rest of YAFPO have set an example by voluntarily increasing their mesh size. We feel that this gesture should be recognised by the Ministry and that it should mean that they qualify for an increased quota next year.

I appreciate that in the EEC negotiations my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary and his colleagues have been fighting for increased mesh sizes. This is another example of the EEC acting against the interests of this country. The situation in Bridlington is desperate. I emphasise the word "desperate." Urgent action is needed to get surplus quotas reallocated. For far too long Scotland has had too great an influence in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food — probably because it has a Member in the Cabinet. We look to my hon. Friend the Minister to start the pendulum swinging back and to give English east coast fishermen a fair crack of the whip.

12.42 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) for initiating a debate on the North sea cod quota. It is one of the major interests of fishermen along the east coast of the United Kingdom. In his typically generous and fair-minded way, he has allowed my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) to join in the debate. Both my hon. Friends have, as I expected, referred to problems that are causing concern to fishermen in their constituencies. However, I am sure that they will bear with me if I seek to set local concerns against the wider background.

The total allowable catch—TAC—for North sea cod is set each year by the Council of Ministers of the European Community in the light of the available scientific advice and of consultations with Norway, who shares joint ownership of the stock. The United Kingdom is guaranteed, under the 1983 common fisheries policy settlement, the very favourable share of 47 per cent. of that part of the TAC available to the Community. That represents over twice the share allocated to any other member state.

The scientific advice on the North sea cod stock is provided by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea. The ICES scientists, who, of course, include our own scientists, have been drawing attention for some years to the overexploitation of the North sea cod stock and the consequent decline in the spawning stock. The management advice for 1987 was that fishing mortality, which corresponds with fishing effort, needed to be reduced by at least 30 per cent. to allow more of the cod to reach spawning age. The scientists preferred a TAC of 100,000 tonnes but recommended that in no circumstances should it exceed 125,000 tonnes. Faced with this advice and in agreement with Norway, the Council of Ministers set the TAC at 125,000 tonnes, which was a sharp reduction on the 1986 level. The United Kingdom quota was set at 54,770 tonnes.

In May this year, however, ICES approved an upwards reassessment of the strength of the 1985-class of North sea cod, which first entered the fishery in late 1986 and early 1987. That reassessment, based on an international young fish survey, is now considered to have been rather

[Mr. Donald Thompson]

overoptimistic, but the ICES advice in May was that if the current TAC was maintained, the reduction in fishing effort would have to be much higher than intended and the TAC could safely be increased somewhat while allowing a significant recovery in the spawning stock.

In the light of that advice, the United Kingdom pressed the Commission to approach Norway and propose an increase, which it accepted. Agreement was reached on an increase to 175,000 tonnes, which the Council formally adopted on 30 June. The United Kingdom quota was revised at a level of 74,290 tonnes—from 54,770 tonnes—which is higher than our total recorded catch last year. In August we negotiated a quota swap with Germany which brought us an additional 1,000 tonnes. I hope, therefore, that my hon. Friends will recognise that the Government have done everything possible to obtain for British fishermen the maximum possible availability of North sea cod, consistent with the scientific advice on the conservation of the stock.

I must emphasise the importance of following scientific advice. That represents the only rational hope of conserving stocks for future years. I know that fishermen can always produce anecdotal evidence that seems to challenge the validity of that scientific advice, but my right hon. Friends the Minister and Minister of State, who are more involved in fisheries matters than I am, are fully satisfied that the development of the cod fishery in the North sea this year has been entirely consistent with the overall view taken by scientists. There is a scarcity of mature cod and a relative abundance of young fish as my hon. Friends have said, but the essential need from a conservation point of view is to allow a sufficient proportion of these young cod to survive to maturity to rebuild the spawning stock on which all our future livelihoods depend.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Will my hon. Friend comment on the larger mesh sizes, or was he about to do so?

Mr. Thompson: I shall. I come now, with apologies to my hon. Friends, to the matter which touches them most closely—how we have managed the United Kingdom quota in 1987.

The arrangements for managing our quotas have been devised and refined in close consultation with the United Kingdom industry as a whole. In matters like this, there will inevitably be conflicts of view and differences between different groups of fishermen, but our aim has been to operate on a basis which is accepted as widely as possible as fair and reasonable.

In the case of North sea cod and certain other white fish stocks, the fisheries departments have gone so far, in terms of involving the industry, as to introduce a system of sectoral quotas which allows individual producer organisations to obtain a share of the United Kingdom quota for the year to manage as they think best in the interests of their members.

For fishermen outside such sectoral quota arrangements, the fisheries departments monitor closely the level of catches against the residual quota availability and, in regular consultation with the organisations concerned, take appropriate action. This year, it was necessary to impose monthly catch limits per vessel from as early as February, and they have been maintained and intensified, despite the increase in the United Kingdom quota which I mentioned earlier, as the year has advanced. But I think that the fishermen whom my hon. Friends represent are fishing under sectoral quota arrangements and I will briefly describe those.

Sectoral quotas are calculated on the basis of the share of the total United Kingdom catch taken by vessels in membership of the organisation in question over a recent reference period. There clearly has to be an objective basis for calculating such quotas and the only reasonable basis which we have been able to devise, in consultation with the industry, is on the basis of vessels' track records. The system, as it operated up to this year, involved awarding a provisional sectoral quota on the basis of the organisation's share in the previous year, with a deduction for safety, and, once the final catch figures for the previous year are known, the recalculation of each organisation's definitive sectoral quota. Unfortunately, because of complications introduced with the method of calculation to provide adequately for vessels with incomplete track records, the calculation of the definitive sectoral quotas this year was not completed until July and my hon. Friends complained bitterly about that. We are approaching next year's arrangements on a different basis to avoid that undesirable element of delay. Once the organisations have got their sectoral quotas, whether provisional or definitive, it is up to them to manage their members' fishing to remain within the quotas. They are also obliged to report their total catches regularly to the fisheries department concerned.

After a long-winded explanation of the background, I come to the problems of the Yorkshire and Anglia Fish Producers' Organisation. I understand full well the concerns raised by my hon. Friends in relation to that organisation. The producers' organisation had meetings with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State in July and again in September and there has been a considerable correspondence, including with my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich, so I can assure my hon. Friend that the ground has been very thoroughly covered, but I shall briefly outline the position as we see it. YAFPO elected to take a sectoral quota for cod at the beginning of the year and undertook the responsibility to manage it. YAFPO's provisional allocation, given in March, was 3,560 tonnes. This represented the organisation's 1986 share, which was 8·1 per cent. of the original United Kingdom quota for 1987, with a safety margin deducted. It was clear that the definitive allocation would be a little higher, but YAFPO had at that stage no reason to expect that it would be substantially higher. The prospect of an increase in the TAC did not become clear until mid-May, yet by the end of April YAFPO had, as I understand it, taken over 3,000 tonnes and by the end of May had in fact exceeded the provisional allocation for the year. YAFPO did impose quota restrictions on its members in March, April and May but these were substantially more generous than those imposed by fisheries departments on the non-sectoral fisheries from February onwards.

Help came in the form of the increased TAC which gave YAFPO another chance to get its fishing under control. Even though the calculation of the definitive allocations was delayed, YAFPO had no reason to assume a substantial increase over their 1986 share of 8·1 per cent. in fact the final allocation notified to YAFPO in July was 8·4 per cent. of the revised United Kingdom quota, amounting to 6,250 tonnes. However, the quotas set by YAFPO for its members for June and July were only slightly below the levels of March to May and were again very substantially higher than the quotas applied to the non-sectoral fishery.

Mr. John Townend: I do not wish to delay my hon. Friend, but as time is pressing perhaps he will address himself to two matters of great interest to us. How can it be that Grimsby, which has had no restrictions and free fishing all year, still has plenty of quota left? Secondly, when we had 1,000 tonnes from Germany and 500 tonnes from FPO Limited, why was not a larger allocation made to YAFPO so that the fishermen could continue fishing, rather than allocating it to other areas which still had quota left?

Mr. Thompson: I was just coming to that point.

It came about that YAFPO found itself in early September having exhausted its sectoral quota. The organisation approached my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and asked for help, in particular for a preferential share of the 1,000 tonnes that we had obtained from Germany, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington put it, on swap.

My right hon. Friend made it quite clear to YAFPO, as he had to, that he was not in a position to give it more cod quota without obtaining the agreement of others in the fishery who had a claim to it. He undertook, however, to give its case what support he could. Accordingly, the matter was discussed at a meeting with the North sea white fish industry generally on 22 September, at which we obtained agreement to an additional allocation to YAFPO of 150 tonnes above its pro rata share of the 1,000 tonnes, giving a total quota increase of 234 tonnes. That additional 150 tonnes was justified in terms of compensation for opportunities which YAFPO had lost as a result of others' overfishing to the west of Scotland, but other organisations similarly affected were not given any compensation this year—so YAFPO received preferential treatment, albeit on a limited scale.

We have, of course, continued to monitor closely the non-sectoral fishery and the uptake of the other sectoral quotas. We have recently been able to persuade one organisation, the Fish Producers Organisation Limited of Humberside, to release 500 tonnes of its uncaught balance for reallocation to others in greater need. But given the current state of non-sectoral fishery and the fact that all other sectoral groups had taken at least 86 per cent. of their quota, we had no alternative but to reallocate the 500 tonnes on a pro rata basis, giving YAFPO an additional 44 tonnes. We shall continue to monitor quota uptake and pursue any further scope for reallocations, but I have to say that we have little hope of finding further quantities, as most, if not all, of the sectoral groups, as well as the non-sectoral fishery, expect to have difficulty living within the quota which they have left.

The limited relief that we have been able to give YAFPO has, as I understand it, allowed YAFPO members to resume landing cod within strict limits. My hon. Friends are understandably concerned at the severity of those limits as they affect YAFPO members whom they represent. My understanding of YAFPO's latest catch position on the basis of my Department's figures up to 24 October is that it has 169 tonnes left.

I hope that what I have said will have helped to put the problems facing the fishermen whom my hon. Friends represent in a wider perspective. I assure my hon. Friends that I will draw the points that they have made——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Monday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 17 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

DYFED BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third reading read.
Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time and passed, with amendments.

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[LORDS]*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[LORDS]*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered Tomorrow.

TRADE

Resolved,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, that she will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid before this house a Return of Statistics relating to Overseas Trade of the United Kingdom for the year 1988 and for each month during 1988.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Employment Service

1. **Mr. Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the aims and objects of the employment service.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): The employment service will bring together the work of jobcentres and benefit offices to provide a more effective service for unemployed people, particularly the long-term unemployed, by offering them a range of opportunities to help them back into work as soon as possible.

Mr. Patnick: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will the new employment service ensure that Sheffield employers and the unemployed in my constituency receive the same quality of service from the jobcentres?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, Sir. The aim is to ensure that all our services are properly co-ordinated—particularly to help unemployed people—and I believe that the new service will result in an improvement in service to the public.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Secretary of State ask the jobcentres in the Bootle area to encourage management at the Girobank to recruit labour locally rather than to send middle and top management to South Africa to recruit labour, as it has done recently? Is that not a scandal in an area with 30 to 40 per cent. unemployment?

Mr. Fowler: That has next to nothing to do with the employment service or jobcentres. However, I shall certainly consider the hon. Gentleman's point, if he has a point.

Mr. Barry Field: Will my right hon. Friend consider lifting the restriction on the Manpower Services Commission requiring it to seek a union waiver to allow community programmes to be used to clear up the storm damage? Does he agree that the obduracy of the unions is unforgivable, especially in my constituency where, unfortunately, unemployment increased last month? Will my right hon. Friend consider making a statement about the matter?

Mr. Fowler: I shall certainly look at the matter further. I know of the problems that there have been in the Isle of Wight. In fact, the community programme is being used to seek to deal with some of the damage caused. I shall certainly talk to the director of the Manpower Services Commission to discover whether further action can be taken.

Ms. Short: Will the Secretary of State admit that the reorganisaton of the employment service is intended to be used, in combination with the new power to stop benefits for six months if a person leaves a job or refuses a reasonable offer, to force people into schemes that are so low paid and poor that unemployed people will not accept them voluntarily?

Mr. Fowler: That is not remotely the purpose. The purpose is to provide a better service for the public. It is not a question of hounding people off the register. If they are genuinely unemployed and seeking work they are entitled to prompt and courteous service. However, if they are not genuinely available for or actively seeking work it is the duty of the service to identify them.

MSC Facilities (Southall)

2. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what fee was paid by the Ealing, North Labour party for the use of Manpower Services Commission facilities at 10 King street, Southall, for the use of personnel and computer facilities in May and June 1987; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Employment (Mr. John Cope): There are no Manpower Services Commission personnel on computer facilities at 10 King street, Southall, but 11B King street is the headquarters of Southall Community Projects Committee Ltd., which is an agency for the community programme. I understand that some facilities at the latter address were used during the election campaign for the translation of political material. Such activity is against the rules of the community programme. The agency investigated the matter and put a stop to that activity. No fee was paid by the Ealing, North labour party.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that such breaches by the Labour party, or anybody else, are serious? Will he undertake to investigate correspondence, which has been sent to me, showing that at the general election the Labour candidate for Ealing, North, Mr. Benn-Junior, used the facilities extensively in his campaign, and that the national executive of the Labour party had the leader of the Labour party's speeches translated into ethnic minority languages by that very office? The matter is serious because the office's normal work could not proceed. Will my hon. Friend investigate the matter?

Mr. Cope: The translation work to which I referred related to a speech by the Leader of the Opposition. It was in the course of translation when work was stopped, and, therefore, there was no circulation of speeches from the community programme source. I shall certainly investigate the other allegations that have been made by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that No. 10 King street is actually a halal butcher shop and that it would seem most appropriate that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) should be taken outside and ritually slaughtered for that piece of nasty non-information that he offered? Is the Minister further aware that the area manager, Mr. Spicer, investigated the matter and found no reason to make a formal complaint, that such translations are a normal feature of the office and that, in the past, they have also involved political speeches by Conservative Members? Will he also—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a debate.

Mr. Banks: Is the Minister aware that Ealing, North Conservative Association has been using House of Commons stationery to circulate party political information?

Mr. Cope: That is not a matter for me. *[Interruption.]* It might have been before, but it is no longer a matter for me. It is a fundamental rule of the community programme that projects must not involve political activity. Of course, it is perfectly legitimate for that agency to go in for translation, but not of political material. I deeply deplore that.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places are available under the job training scheme; and how many of these are occupied in the most recent period of record.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission has provision for up to 110,000 trainees on the new job training scheme. At 25 September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 22,111 people in training.

Mr. Sheerman: Is not the deplorable take-up a sign that the pre-election gimmick, the job training scheme, has been a total and utter failure? Everyone in the country, especially the long-term unemployed, saw it as a pre-election gimmick. They also saw that it did not create jobs and that it was not quality training. In many cases, it was job substitution and cheap labour. When will the Government recognise that the people of this country want well-paid quality training? The incentive must be quality and pay, not compulsion.

Mr. Cope: It is precisely because we have put quality before quantity that the take-up is as it is. We believe that the principles of the JTS are entirely right: practical training for the long-term unemployed and allowances based on needs.

Sir Anthony Grant: I wholly support the job training scheme, but is my hon. Friend aware that there is a danger of its being interpreted somewhat bureaucratically? May I send to him the case of one of my constituents who has happily completed two weeks with a company under the job training scheme, only to be told that he cannot continue because he has not been on the dole long enough? Will he look into that sort of tomfoolery?

Mr. Cope: I will certainly look into any case that my hon. Friend or anybody else sends to me.

Mr. Leighton: Is not the JTS monumentally unpopular with employers, clients and those agencies that work with the MSC in running those programmes? Is it not obvious, from the Minister's answer, that less than a quarter of the number intended are on JTS, that many of those leave early, and that that is because the whole concept of working for benefit is flawed and misguided? Should he not discontinue the scheme and replace it with a much improved one?

Mr. Cope: The take-up of the JTS has been slower than we anticipated or wished. However, I believe that no one should be denied training because of the loss of income from benefit. Allowances based on needs is the right concept.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he has no plan for benefit sanctions on JTS?

Mr. Cope: We have no immediate plans to change the situation.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the trend of unemployment over the last 12 months.

Mr. Fowler: As I announced on Thursday, there has been a record annual fall in unemployment since October 1986. New figures that I am publishing today show that there has been a record fall in long-term unemployment. Long-term unemployment fell by 169,000 in the 12 months to October, to its lowest level for nearly four years.

Mr. Watts: I thank my right hon. Friend for that encouraging news about the trend of unemployment generally, particularly for the long-term unemployed, but can he confirm that unemployment among under 25-year-olds is also continuing to fall and that it is now well below the EEC average?

Mr. Fowler: I can confirm both those points. It is certainly below the average of many European countries. The latest figures show that unemployment among under 25-year-olds showed a fall of 227,000 over the past year—a reduction of 20 per cent. Unemployment among the under 25-year-olds is now the lowest for over five years.

Mr. Barry Jones: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that there is no room for complacency? May we please have real jobs for the long-term unemployed? I remind him of the early 1980s redundancies in steel, coal and textiles and the fact that many of those unfortunate enough to lose their jobs at that time in those industries are still without work. I also remind him that in the travel-to-work area of my constituency more than 10,000 people are out of work.

Mr. Fowler: There is certainly no room for complacency. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the major priority must be the long-term unemployed. On the other hand, I think that the hon. Gentleman, with his customary fairness, will acknowledge the great improvement that there has been in employment, particularly over the past 12 months.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware that not only has unemployment in my constituency fallen by nearly one tenth in the last month, but that such is the confidence of local firms in the Government's policies that no fewer than 66 per cent. of them plan to increase labour over the next six months? Will he tell the House by how many the number of 18 to 23-year-olds in employment has increased since 1983 and by what percentage unemployment for that group has fallen?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot give the figures that my hon. Friend has requested, but I can say that there has been the fall in unemployment that I referred to of almost 230,000 for under 25-year-olds. The general point is clear, and it is made clear again by the figures that I shall publish today, that long-term unemployment is coming down. As my hon. Friend reminds the House, there is no question but that new jobs are becoming available.

Mr. McLeish: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the suspicions that surround the method of producing the unemployment figures? Is he willing to tell the House about the claims experiment, started by his Department on 1 September and to last for three months, which seeks new ways of harassing the unemployed to ensure that they leave the register and thus contribute to the claimed glowing Conservative success.

Mr. Fowler: There is no question whatsoever of harassing the unemployed. Checks will certainly be made to ensure that people are available for work, but that has been the position under all Administrations.

In response to the hon. Gentleman's question about the figures, I remind him that there has been a fall in the number of unemployed every month over the past 16 months. That has been the trend. It ill becomes the Opposition to complain about that extremely good news.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there has been a substantial fall in the level of unemployment in my constituency over the past 16 months and that a great deal of that is due to Government-backed training schemes, which are very popular, not only with those who are looking for jobs, but with employers in the district?

Mr. Fowler: That is right. It is also clear that schemes such as YTS, are leading increasingly to people entering permanent employment. It is about time that the Opposition recognised the success of those schemes.

Job Training Scheme

6. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to pay a higher wage to participants in the job training scheme.

Mr. Cope: Participants in the new job training scheme are trainees and receive a training allowance equivalent to their benefit entitlement, which increases when benefit rates increase.

Miss Mowlam: Will the Minister explain why allowances are related to benefits and needs, as he stated in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman)? Why do people's needs differ when they are training from their needs when they are in work?

Mr. Cope: Their needs are the same whether they are on the unemployed register or whether they are training. That is the basis of their allowances while training, and that is the right basis for them.

Mr. Baldry: Is it not right that more than 50 per cent. of the unemployed have no skills or qualifications whatsoever and that we must all be in favour of a skills crusade? Therefore, every penny available should be spent on training, and that is what the job training scheme involves. It ensures that people get skills to get employment. Unless they have skills, they will continue to be unskilled, unqualified and unemployed.

Mr. Cope: Exactly so.

Mr. Meacher: Is it not obvious that if the JTS and community programme are merged, the community programme will turn out to be as much a monumental flop as the JTS, and for exactly the same reason, namely, that payment at or near benefit levels smells of industrial conscription? Will the Minister confirm that benefit-plus will be much nearer £5 a week than the £15 a week mentioned by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry during the election campaign? Will he also confirm that of the 80 per cent. of present members of the community programme who are single, that represents a cut in pay of almost 50 per cent. from £67 a week to about £35 a week? That is scandalous, and it is the biggest cut in low pay yet engineered even by this Government.

Mr. Cope: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we are considering the future of adult training, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment will make a statement as soon as possible. However, it must be right to pay allowances based on needs, purely because no one should be denied training by the drop in benefit that that would otherwise entail. One of the disadvantages of the community programme is that it appeals only to those at the lower end of the scale, for example, unmarried people, and not to those who are married with families, for whom it represents a big loss in benefit. That is one of the difficulties with the community programme.

Industrial Training Boards

7. **Mr. John M. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the future of industrial training boards.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): The representations that we have received most recently have concerned our proposals to appoint additional members to the boards, together with representations concerning the role of the engineering industry training board.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, but does he agree that while some industry training boards may have some continuing and residual usefulness, others have become burdensome and oppressive to the industries that they are supposed to serve? Should not their continuing existence be reviewed?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is right to say that before the last series of reforms many employers felt that these boards represented an unnecessary burden, and that is why we reduced their numbers. Having said that, we keep under review the future of industrial training boards, which obviously includes the EITB.

Mr. Eastham: Is it not a fact that when employers approached the Government to reduce the number of industrial training boards they undertook to deal with the shortage of skills, yet in several questions today it has been pointed out there is a serious shortage of skilled people? Is that not an indictment of what happens when the number of industrial training boards is reduced?

Mr. Nicholls: If industrial training boards are not doing their job, that can be the case only if the non-statutory training organisations are doing theirs properly. There are some good NSTOs and some bad ones. Currently, studies are considering the effectiveness of those training organisations, and we shall consider the position in the light of what we hear.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that some trade unions are still set on demarcation? Is that why the construction industry training board is opposed to the multi-skill courses? Is it not sensible for a plasterer to be able to tile, or vice versa, in case it rains?

Mr. Nicholls: In this day and age the mere mention of demarcation has a very dated sound to it. It is fair to say that in some industries the concept dies harder than in others. One of the matters with which we must get to grips is that the days when apprenticeships were done purely on a time-serving basis have long since passed.

Mr. Meacher: Was not the Secretary of State's announcement last Friday of a further review of Government skillcentres, which have already been cut from 90 to just over 50, simply a device to cut the number by half again to pave the way for the real objective of the Government—the privatisation of training? When will the Secretary of State get the message that the private sector in Britain already provides the worst trained work force in Europe? It is because we spend only one twentieth of the comparable training bill of Germany, Sweden and other European countries that a public sector lead is vital. The number of skillcentres should be increased, not cut.

Mr. Nicholls: The skills training agency stands or falls on its ability to deliver training efficiently and at the right price for our work force. We need no lectures from Labour Members about our record on training. In 1979-80 Britain was spending only £458 million on youth and adult training; this year we shall spend £1·8 billion.

Labour Statistics

10. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently in full-time jobs; and what were the comparable figures in June 1979.

Mr. Fowler: In June 1987 there were 18,737,000 people in full-time jobs in Great Britain and a further 5,622,000 in part-time jobs. In June 1979 there were 19,950,000 in full-time jobs and 4,817,000 in part-time jobs. In the past 12 months, 372,000 new jobs have been created, of which the majority—206,000—were full time.

Mr. Evans: Will the Secretary of State confirm that those figures are a clear demonstration of the real nature of unemployment in Britain today? Will he acknowledge that more than 1 million highly paid and highly skilled full-time jobs have been lost since the Government took office, but the replacements that he has managed to find are part-time and poorly paid?

Mr. Fowler: I do not remotely accept that criticism. One of the reasons for the loss of jobs was that the Labour Government failed to take the necessary action in the 1970s, and that led to a job shortage. There has been an increase in the number of full and part-time jobs in Britain, and I should have thought that any sensible person would welcome that.

Mr. Roger King: Does my right hon. Friend agree that very many people welcome the opportunity to add to their family income by taking on a part-time job? Does he further agree that, as industry and commerce generally increase their productivity and output, part-time jobs often become full-time?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with both the points that my hon. Friend, with his knowledge, has made. The labour force survey showed that most people working part-time do so because they want to. Indeed, for married women with children, part-time work is one of the only options open to them.

Mr. Terry Fields: Despite the figures that the Secretary of State has given, is he aware that currently 124,000 people are unemployed on Merseyside? There are 28 people chasing every vacancy. Despite the propaganda, particularly from Tory party conferences, where challenges and gauntlets are thrown down and unemployed people are denigrated by the likes of the Bournemouth window cleaner, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that when 55 people went down from Merseyside they found only five vacancies in the Bournemouth jobcentre? The Merseyside unemployed want decent jobs, decent rates of pay and proper training.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as anyone that new jobs are being created on Merseyside. He also knows—or should do—that the number of jobs now available at jobcentres is at an all-time record high.

Mr. Terry Fields: Rubbish.

Mr. Fowler: That is a simple fact. The number of jobs that are available in jobcentres is at an all-time record high. The fact of the matter is that unemployment is coming down and that the number of job opportunities is going up.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend note that, in the past three months, 53 per cent. of companies on Teesside have taken on staff and that 28 per cent. of companies expect to take on somebody in the next three months? Will he also note that in the past year large numbers of companies—some 6,000—registered for VAT purposes in the northern region? That is the reason why so many jobs are being created in the northern region, and it may well be time for the Labour councils that plague our region with unemployment figures displayed on every town hall to stop embarrassing themselves and the region and take those figures down.

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. The rate of unemployment is coming down fastest in areas such as the west midlands, Wales and the north-west. That trend is not remotely confined to the south and the south-east. The decrease in unemployment in the country is affecting every region.

Mr. Strang: Will the Secretary of State put the fall in unemployment in context? First, 20 years ago people would hardly have believed that we could have such a level of unemployment without it provoking a bloody revolution. Secondly, three quarters of new employees since 1984 are accounted for by part-time work. A high proportion of those people are doing part-time work only because they cannot get a full-time job.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman does not look at the figures that are available to him. The labour force survey shows that most people working part-time want to do so because it is an option available to them. He also avoids the point that, since 1983, some 1,362,000 new jobs have been created. What I find extraordinary about the Opposition's attitude today is that they take no pleasure in the fact that unemployment is undoubtedly coming down in this country.

Self-employment

11. **Mr. Robert B. Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the increase of self-employment since 1983.

Mr. Cope: Self-employment has a very important role to play in the regeneration of the economy and in the reduction of unemployment. Since 1983 the estimated number of self-employed people in the United Kingdom has risen from 2.2 million to 2.7 million—an increase of about 23 per cent.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those encouraging figures. Can he confirm that they represent a substantial reversal of the post-war trend in self-employment? Can he also confirm that the enterprise allowance scheme is one of the main contributory factors in achieving such a substantial increase?

Mr. Cope: The numbers in self-employment fell in the 1970s and have risen from 1·9 million in 1979. Since the enterprise allowance scheme started, almost 290,000 unemployed people have been helped by it to start their own businesses.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not clear that part of the increase in self-employment has been in the construction industry, which has led to a position in which there is little training for craftsmen in the industry, safety regulations are being ignored, the cowboys are increasingly taking over and people are not getting a good deal? Is it not time that the Government faced the fact that lump labour in the construction industry is serious for its future, and is it not about time that it was stopped?

Mr. Cope: Lump labour is not a novelty of the period of this Government. Self-employment has grown and it is right that it should have done so.

Mr. Barry Porter: Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the reasons for the welcome reduction in unemployment on Merseyside is the fact that 6,000 people are in receipt of the enterprise allowance? Is he also aware that that figure was given out at the recent conference called "Business Opportunities on Merseyside" and at the launch of the small enterprise scheme, which my hon. Friend attended last Friday? Is it not a pity that no hon. Members from the city of Liverpool were present at either of those occasions?

Mr. Heffer: Not true. I was there, and the hon. Gentlman knows it.

Mr. Porter *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cope: I did not have the pleasure of seeing the hon. Gentleman at the function that I attended and to which my hon. Friend referred. If the hon. Gentleman was there, I am glad. The EAS is certainly playing its part in improving the employment figures on Merseyside — as it is elsewhere.

Mr. Sheerman: The Government must know that self-employment must be seen in the light of high unemployment. We all know that self-employment rises at times such as this, as it did in the 1930s, and as it has done over the past eight years. Despite the mood of self-congratulation in which the Government appear to be this afternoon, unemployment has come down by only a fifth of the amount by which it has risen by since 1979—so that is a marginal decline. The enterprise allowance scheme will be seen to have succeeded only if it moves on to more employment and success. The evidence shows that it does not do that. It is about time the Government learnt that we need training and investment in small business.

Mr. Cope: The enterprise allowance scheme provides that. Counting both the EAS participants and the people whom they employ, for every 100 entrants to the EAS, 122 people are working three years afterwards.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: In the context of unemployment, does my hon. Friend agree that the increasing number of young people starting out in self-employment at an early stage of their careers is a welcome sign? Is it not a measure of the success of the Government's policy, and one of the reasons why increasing numbers of young people voted Conservative at the last general election?

Mr. Cope: It is a most helpful sign, and it shows that the enterprise culture is working.

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary constituencies have had a higher rate of increase in unemployment than Southwark and Bermondsey over *(a)* the past three years, *(b)* the past two years and *(c)* the past year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. John Lee): On 8 October 1987 unemployment in Southwark and Bermondsey was lower than in October 1986 or October 1985, and at a similar level to that of October 1984. The numbers of parliamentary constituencies in Great Britain in which the unemployment figures show either an increase or a smaller percentage decrease in unemployment than the Southwark and Bermondsey constituency over the past three years, two years and one year were: 42; 102; and 107 respectively.

Mr. Hughes: How does the Minister explain that within a mile of the City of London and the area on which the Government concentrate—the docklands—we have had a rate of increase in unemployment during the past two years that is greater than that in any other constituency in the south of England bar one? Is he aware that over the past four years we have had unemployment that has consistently been double the national average? When can my constituents expect less than 10 per cent. unemployment in the heart of the capital?

Mr. Lee: In the London travel-to-work area unemployment over the last year has fallen from 10·7 to 9 per cent. In the local jobcentres that cover the Southwark and Bermondsey constituency there are presently 746 vacancies. If the Southwark local authority had not tried to block at an early stage projects such as the Globe theatre trust, which will, we hope, create 160 direct jobs, or had been less reluctant to become involved in the community programme, local employment would be a lot better.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does my hon. Friend agree that too often it is councils such as Southwark, with profligate and absurd policies, that drive out businesses? Such policies, let alone the outright hostility to, or obstruction of, Government schemes to help the unemployed, serve the unemployed worst.

Mr. Lee: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Southwark is a classic example.

Ms. Richardson: Is not unemployment in Southwark and Bermondsey and elsewhere far worse than the Minister suggests because most married women cannot register, on the unemployment register because of their stamp position, and suffer the double disadvantage of not being able to take a community programme place because the husband is unemployed?

Mr. Lee: The national rules stand and, of course, they apply to Southwark just as they apply to every other area. All our employment measures and programmes are available in Southwark and throughout London. In addition, a tremendous amount of Government money has gone into inner city areas, especially into docklands and Southwark.

National Dock Labour Scheme

13. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to abolish the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: No. As I have made clear in recent answers to hon. Members, there is no change in the Government's position on this scheme.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that 40 years' experience of the national dock labour scheme shows that employment controls of this kind are positive obstacles—*[Interruption.]*—to jobs, enterprise and success in our ports and docks and are totally discredited? Will he now count the cost of this scheme and convince himself that its repeal is long overdue?

Mr. Nicholls: I could hardly fail to hear what my hon. Friend said. The points that he makes have been put forcefully to us on a number of occasions, and I am sure that they will be put to us in future. In fairness, I should say to my hon. Friend that a number of major ports in the dock labour scheme are in profit. I repeat that the Government have no present plans to change the position.

Mr. Harry Ewing: If the Minister could not hear his hon. Friend I can assure him that he did not miss anything. Does the Minister understand that any hon. Member who talks about the abolition of the national dock labour scheme simply cannot remember what it was like under the old casual dock labour scheme, when many families who worked in the docks hardly got a day's work each month? The damage that has been done to our dock industry is a result of the decline in our manufacturing industry and the amount of exports going out through our ports.

Mr. Nicholls: If the Government took account of views such as those of the hon. Gentleman, we would still be in the age of the cart horse.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Has my hon. Friend noticed the difference in opportunities for employment between the ports that are shackled, by this scheme and the ports that are not so shackled such as Felixstowe, Dover and Rotterdam?

Mr. Nicholls: I am well aware of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter and of the facts of the situation.

Mr. Loyden: The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) fails to understand that the strategy of the Government is not to take direct action on the question of the National Dock Labour Board, but, by legislation and by other means, to allow the National Dock Labour Board to wither on the vine. Examples of that are the development of non-scheme ports — that is happening now — and the Felixstowe Bill, which is intended to undermine, and at the end of the day to wreck, the dock labour scheme, which was introduced to protect workers. That is abhorrent to the Tory party.

Mr. Nicholls: There is a certain irony in the fact that I suspect that the hon. Gentleman's assessment of the position will have come as better news to my hon. Friends than my reply.

Mr. Miller: Does my hon. Friend accept that if we are to protect and increase the number of jobs in the ports and in our exporting industries in face of the great and growing discrepancy between our port costs and those abroad, we have a choice? The Opposition will have to persuade their constituents of the need to end the dock labour scheme, or we shall need more Felixstowe Bills, or my hon. Friend will have to act. Will he please act?

Mr. Nicholls: I do not think that I can add anything to the last remark made by my hon. Friend, except to say that his assessment of the situation is more in keeping with reality than that of Opposition Members.

Mr. Strang: Is the Minister aware that the lack of alternative job opportunities and the growing tendency for employers to use casual labour mean that the case for the scheme is stronger than it was a few years ago, and that that is why we welcome the hon. Gentleman's answer today?

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the scheme has any popularity, he should talk to his hon. Friends and see how popular registered dockers are among them.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Barbados.

Mr. Maxton: Has the Prime Minister had an opportunity to read the Scotland Bill proposing devolution in Scotland, which was published today by Scottish Labour Members? In view of the overwhelming support for devolution, which is increasing among Conservative Members, led by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), and in view of her repeated commitment to democracy, the right of people to choose and self-determination, will the Prime Minister give her wholehearted support to that Bill and ease its passage through the House?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir, and in view of what the present Leader of the Opposition said about devolution in a previous debate, he must have done a U-turn if he proposes to give it his support.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend ponder on the anomaly that, having complained about a lack of funding for housing, Camden borough council has lost £6 million in paying for accommodation that was never occupied?

The Prime Minister: That demonstrates just what a big, overspending council Camden is. The sooner the community charge is introduced, the better.

Mr. Kinnock: Last Friday the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science said that if the Government's plans for choice in schooling end up with a segregated system, so be it. Does the Prime Minister also say so be it to segregation?

The Prime Minister: I am interested in the best possible education for parents and for their children. I do not think that the present system is giving the best possible education to all children, so we are giving them that opportunity. The right hon. Gentleman is talking about segregation, I am talking about good education.

Mr. Kinnock: Any Prime Minister who cannot give a yes or no answer to a question about segregation condemns herself from her own mouth. Does the Prime Minister not realise that a segregated system would not provide a good education either for those put into the segregated part or those excluded from it? Does she not realise the difference between choice and segregation? Does she not realise that choice will lead to segregation, and that segregation will be the destruction of choice and much else in our community?

The Prime Minister: I am interested in good education for all children. There have always been different kinds of schools. Indeed, that was the fundamental basis of the settlement with the churches in the Education Act 1944 and the reason why we still have church schools as well as county schools.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister disgraces the church schools if she puts them into any category that refers to segregation. We know that the Prime Minister is prepared to tolerate apartheid abroad. Now she is to encourage it at home.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should define segregation before he talks about it. I am interested in good education for all children. From the questions that he has asked today, I understand that he is not.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Ashton memorial, which dominates the skyline of Lancaster, has been most beautifully restored? Can she find time to visit it?

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to visit it, but I will bear it in mind. I am delighted that such a lovely memorial has been fully restored.

Mr. Steel: In her speech last night the Prime Minister referred optimistically to a 50 per cent. reduction in strategic nuclear weapons by this time next year. Does she intend that this country should make any negotiated contribution to that process?

The Prime Minister: No. If the right hon. Gentleman heard the speech, he will have noted that the 50 per cent. reduction applied to American and Soviet Union intercontinental ballistic missiles, and he will know that there is no question — *[Interruption.]* If he heard the speech, he will have heard that. There is no question of putting Britain's independent nuclear deterrent into that equation.

Mr. Couchman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the reported comments of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) will have given great offence to many hon. Members —

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question must relate to the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Mr. Couchman: Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there will never be any negotiations of any sort with the IRA or its apologists in Sinn Fein?

The Prime Minister: I give the assurance that my hon. Friend seeks. I would have thought it important that no one has any dealings with parties that support violence as a solution to the Irish problem.

Q2. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Powell: Will the Prime Minister consider the action of a Minister regarding the cut in overtime and special payments for senior staff in the nursing profession? Does she not realise that the cut could mean the end of some of these nurses in the National Health Service, the understaffing of major hospitals and the closing of wards? Does she realise that nurses are queueing up to leave the National Health Service? If, as she predicted at the general election, the National Health Service is safe in her hands, why has one of her Ministers had to go to the private sector at £195 a night to have medical attention?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the Government implemented the last nurses' review body recommendations in full from 1 April and nurses' pay has increased by around 30 per cent. in real terms since 1979. Various proposals are being made which may go before the pay review body. They are not yet before that review body, and it will be for it to consider them. With regard to what the hon. Gentleman says about people choosing to go to a private service rather than the Health Service, may I point out that many people do it, including some trade unions? Of course, the trade union hospital, Manor house, is still open and available to trade unions.

Q3. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Leaving the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) to the Leader of the Opposition, has the Prime Minister reflected today that after every big terrorist atrocity in Northern Ireland hopes of effective cross-border action have been raised and dashed? Will she now urge the Taoiseach to back sympathy and denunciation with full police, Army and air co-ordination on both sides of the border?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is anxious at every meeting with Ministers from the Republic to ensure that security is stepped up to the very limit of the capability and capacity of the Republic. I agree with my hon. Friend that people look to us for the best security that we can possibly provide jointly. We greatly hope now that the Government of the Republic will add to their efforts by implementing the European convention.

Mr. Molyneaux: While fully supporting the Prime Minister's declaration that she will not give in to terrorists, may I ask her to assure the House that she will resist Republican demands for interference in the judicial system in any part of the United Kingdom?

The Prime Minister: I answer that question as I have answered questions on this subject on many occasions. The future of the courts of Northern Ireland is a matter for this Government. The decisions taken are a matter for this Government, and will continue to be so.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my right hon. Friend, during her busy day, find time to read early-day motion 275, which calls for the abolition of the dock labour scheme? Will she contemplate the fact that in 1970, when that scheme was brought in to preserve jobs, there were 45,500 dockers and that today there are only 10,000 registered dockers? This may be considered withering on the vine. In my constituency we had 92, and now we have 18. We would like to see the scheme repealed and the jobs come back to those docks.

The Prime Minister: I understand my hon. Friend's point that we need to keep low costs in our docks to get the maximum number of jobs in this country. I have nothing further to add to what my hon. Friends on the Front Bench said about this earlier during Employment Question Time.

Q4. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duffy: Why was the Prime Minister so conveniently forgetful in her City speech last night? When commending Britain's economic example to the other G7 countries if they are to avoid recession and citing the threats to international economic stability she did not mention interest rates. Is this because Britain has the highest level of real interest rates of any major country apart from Italy?

The Prime Minister: But I did commend Britain's example to the other countries, as the hon. Gentleman will see if he does me the honour of reading the speech in full. I continue to commend the example of Britain to many other countries in Europe, because it has the highest growth rate and the fastest fall in unemployment. Of course, I indicated that, when the United States has decided precisely what action to take to reduce its deficit and we know what proposals are on the table, the G7 countries will meet and take what action is appropriate to their own particular circumstances.

Mr. Tim Smith: Will my right hon. Friend have another look at the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1987, which was approved by the House in July? In the light of the complete lack of discipline in the Labour party today, does she think that a salary of £40,798 payable to the Opposition Chief Whip can really be justified?

The Prime Minister: I appreciate the way in which my hon. Friend got his question most beautifully in order. I confess that that order is not at the top of my priorities for the time being.

Q5. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fields: After lecturing other nations and holding up the absolute crisis in this country as a shining example at the bash in the City last night, may I ask the Prime Minister to take time on Thursday to meet a delegation of youths who are lobbying Parliament and listen to their criticisms of her Government's policies, which give the youth of this country no future and no hope?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is talking absolute nonsense about the youth of this country. There is a great future and great hope. My speech must have been a good one, because Opposition Members are taking the chance to attack it so vigorously.

Q6. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanley: Many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will be gratified to have heard the announcement in another place by my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, that Pembroke lodge in Richmond park—both the gardens and the main part of the house—is to remain in public hands. Is my right hon. Friend aware of this news, and does she share the joy and relief of the thousands of people who visit Richmond park every year?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend will certainly be consulting both the local authority and interested local groups on the future use of the lodge.

Q7. **Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 17 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Redmond: Will the Prime Minister put her money where her mouth is and ensure adequate funding for the NHS for cervical cancer testing?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has made provision for cervical cancer testing in the NHS, as the hon. Gentleman in aware, and we are doing as much as we can to increase that form of testing, because we are very much aware of its importance.

Mr. Jack: Will my right hon. Friend find time during her busy day to send a message of congratulations to the British delegation at the United Nations on its recent and robust contribution to the debate on Afghanistan, which resulted in a record number of countries condemning the Soviet invasion of that country?

The Prime Minister: It was important to try to achieve that result because, whatever the attempts at internal changes in the Soviet Union, there has as yet been no change whatever in its external policy — that is, on foreign affairs — including no change towards the occupation of Afghanistan, and we are anxious that the occupation of Afghanistan by Soviet troops should never be forgotten.

Q8. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November 1987.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Prime Minister also give some time today to consider the future of the Scottish steel industry? Is she aware of the growing concern expressed by Scottish steelworkers about the future of Ravenscraig, following reports that the Department of Trade and Industry is determined to privatise the industry before the next election? Will she also comment on the future of Ravenscraig against a background of EEC proposals to reduce capacity?

The Prime Minister: I have given previously in the House the undertaking that Ravenscraig would stay open for the duration of this period of the British Steel Corporation's plans. As the hon. Lady knows, it will soon be presenting its future plans and we shall consider them then.

BALLOT OF NOTICES FOR MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Clive Soley
Mr. Graham Riddick
Sir Giles Shaw

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the two Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Motor Vehicles (Compulsory Insurance) Regulations 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Road Traffic (Random Breath Testing)

3.31 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): I beg to move—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leave the Chamber quietly, please—or remain for the ten-minute Bill?

Mr. Boyes: I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Road Traffic Act 1972 to provide for additional powers for the police to carry out random breath tests at the road side.

The Bill is a response to the great public concern about the effects of drinking and driving, the widespread confusion about the current law and the fact that it is no longer serving as a deterrent. The Bill provides the Home Secretary with enabling powers to introduce a random breath-testing procedure, a proven road accident counter measure, to supplement the current powers. Random breath tests are defined as breath tests which are administered by a constable in uniform to a randomly selected sample of drivers at a roadside checkpoint.

Can the House accept that today three people will die on the road as a result of drinking and driving—and tomorrow and the next day? Can we continue to accept the frequency of alcohol-related collisions which comprise 10 per cent. of all personal injury accidents? Are we going to allow a repetition of last year, where such accidents produced nearly 20,000 casualties, 50 per cent. of whom had not been drinking or driving themselves? We hear much about civil liberties, but should we not be protecting the civil liberties of those innocent victims?

The social cost is enormous. In purely financial terms it is estimated at £400 million a year. In human terms, the pain and grief to families who have suffered a loss is incalculable. A newsletter from the Campaign Against Drink Driving brings home the true cost of those tragedies when it says:

"Just when we begin to think the future is bearable, a voice, someone in the street, a garment or an anniversary will suddenly reopen the wounds and we bleed inwardly again as we did in those first months."

In Britain, deaths arising from drinking and driving are three times as frequent as deaths arising from other kinds of violence, such as homicide or acts of terrorism. Traffic regulation enforcement is given very low priority, comprising only 8 per cent. of police effort nationally. Mr. Ted Griffiths, assistant chief constable of Nottinghamshire police, provided a recent conference with some illuminating comparisons. He estimated that, in 1985, the average number of breath tests given per police officer nationally was two, compared with 70 for Nottinghamshire and 123 for New South Wales, Australia, which takes its drink-driving policy very seriously.

Since 1967, when the breathalyser was introduced, the number of excess alcohol offences has quadrupled. In 1986, there were 100,000 positive breath tests, comprising one third of all those tested. The majority of police time, however, is engaged in the apprehension of offenders rather than in deterrence. A large discrepancy has been found in regard to the actual chances of being detected, ranging from one in 250 in some areas to one in 4,000 in others.

The Bill aims to redress the balance, and to resurrect "deterrent policing", in the interests of road safety. Publicity campaigns have formed a major component of the Government's attack on drink-driving. However, it has been shown in other countries that publicity itself does not effectively change the public attitude. Publicity must be used as a reinforcement of the highly visible random breath testing to achieve its maximum impact.

Similarly, overseas practice, particularly in Scandinavian countries, has shown that severe penalties on their own also fail to deter the drinking driver. A recent review by Dr. Dunbar concluded that, while those countries had reached the ceiling of severity in their penalties for excess alcohol offences, they still had not controlled the drinking driver. All the evidence is that a highly visible police presence at the roadside is essential if drivers' perception of the chance of being detected is to increase significantly.

I believe that progress is being inhibited not merely by resources and priorities, but by the nature of our current legislation and the public's perception of it. As Dr. Murray Mackay, head of the accident research unit and vice-chairman of PACTS, wrote in a letter to *The Times* on 5 August:

"The present position in Britain is both absurd and invidious for the police. The number of tests administered annually is extremely low; this year 1 driver out of 80 will be tested. So everyone has the correct perception that to drive with an elevated alcohol level carries little risk of being caught. Yet the British police, to test for alcohol, must go through the charade of picking on a driver for some technical offence. This immediately creates an adversarial relationship between police and public."

There are a number of problems associated with the current legislation. First, the understandable caution exercised by police officers in needing reasonable cause for suspicion before administering a breath test means that many offenders will be undetected. That was recognised by the Blennerhassett committee in 1976, when it recommended unfettered police discretion. Secondly, surveys show that drivers do not expect to be detected for excess alcohol offences, because they do not expect to be involved in an accident. They think that they can drive well enough to avoid committing a moving traffic offence, thus avoiding suspicion by the police.

Another problem with the present law is that the passing motorist is not able to determine the reason for which any fellow driver has been stopped, which fails to provide a sufficiently high-profile deterrent.

The Bill will not allow the police to single out any one individual and give him a breath test. It will not give them the unfettered powers recommended by Blennerhassett. It will allow them to set up roadside checkpoints and select samples of drivers for testing, say 10 at a time.

The point about random breath testing is that it creates a high-visibility roadside deterrent. As Friends of the Earth have said, it

"affects all drivers equally and means that the business man in his suit is as likely to be tested as the young man in a Ford Cortina."

The type of random breath testing that I have described has been introduced in many countries, including the United States, Australia and Finland. In all cases, it has provided an effective dererrent to the drinking driver by virtue of its high visibility, and, in practice, it meets with a high degree of public acceptability. In Finland, random breath testing contributed to a 50 per cent. reduction in road accidents. Introduced in New South Wales, Australia, in December 1982, two years after the legal blood alcohol limit was reduced from 80 to 50 mg per ml, it produced a decrease of more than 20 per cent. in all road accident deaths. Michael Knight, Member of Parliament, the former chairman of the New South Wales Parliament's joint standing committee on road safety, has stated that random breath testing is the single most effective tool in the struggle to reduce the road toll in the history of New South Wales.

With one hour per traffic patrol shift spend on random breath testing, the New South Wales driver is screened on average about once a year. The Transport and Road Research Laboratory has estimated that it would cost £20 million to achieve police and publicity levels similar to those in New South Wales. With savings of £400 million —20 times the cost of the implementation—this measure is entirely cost-effective. It is a sound investment.

Surveys conducted over the past 10 years have shown a hardening of public attitudes to the drinking driver. Despite police fears that random breath-testing might lead to poor police-public relations, public opinion surveys carried out this year all show more than 70 per cent. support for the measure. In addition, there is all-party support for the Bill.

A wide range of organisations support the introduction of random breath testing. They include the Association of Police Surgeons, the British Medical Association, the Guild of Experienced Motorists and many other organisations too numerous to mention.

There is also growing support within the media. Scottish Television and the *Today* newspaper have both joined the campaign against the drinking driver. It would appear that the time for random breath testing has come.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Roland Boyes, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Ray Powell, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, Mr. David Knox, Mrs. Rosie Barnes, Mr. Barry Sheerman, Mr. John Cartwright, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. A. J. Beith, and Mr. Brian Sedgemore.

ROAD TRAFFIC (RANDOM BREATH TESTING)

Mr. Roland Boyes accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Road Traffic Act 1972 to provide for additional powers for the police to carry out random breath tests at the road side. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 December and to be printed. [Bill 55]

Opposition Day

[3RD ALLOTTED DAY]

Transport

Mr. Speaker: I should announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.42 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I beg to move,

> That this House condemns the harmful effects on the Government's policies on transport; deplores the consequent reduction in the quality of service across all public transport, the increase in fares, the increased damage to the environment, inadequate level of investment, the reductions in safety standards, the complete failure to give necessary backing to British transport manufacturing industry, and the increasing priority given to profit rather than service to the customer; and calls on the Government to co-ordinate services across all modes of transport, putting the user first.

I am glad that we are having this debate today, even if it is not exactly on schedule. Having said that, I have to remind the House that this is the first debate on transport we have had since the present Secretary of State took office. I suppose it is my duty yet again to formally welcome him to the Dispatch Box. He is the sixth Secretary of State since 1979. The length of service of the previous Secretaries of State varied enormously. One lasted only 137 days. I do not know whether the present Secretary of State is getting worried, but I calculate that he is probably about one third of the way through his time at Marsham street. Each Secretary of State has left the Department with services worse and at a lower ebb than when he started. Therefore, this Secretary of State has a chance to redeem that record and make a name for himself. Sadly, on current form, he is not living up to expectations.

I want to deal with British Rail; with its service to the customer, and British Rail Engineering Ltd. When the Secretary of State comes to the Dispatch Box, I hope that we will not hear any alibis or excuses from him. When we question him and the Ministers at the Dispatch Box, they proclaim ad nauseam that it is up to British Rail to propose and for Ministers to dispose. That is the convenient and similar theme we hear when we try to question them about the day-to-day British Rail services. However, that is not the case. The Secretary of State and his Ministers frequently forget the three-year letter of intent of aims and objectives for British Rail, which is a sort of contract between the Government and British Rail. That was started by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) and continued by the previous Secretary of State.

I assume that the current Secretary of State stands by the letter issued in October 1986, which makes it clear beyond a peradventure that the Government are the paymaster and that the British Rail board is expected to dance to the Government's tune. What is that tune? It is a simple refrain, which says that the state does best when it does least. From that ideology comes the belief in privatisation and competition. Perhaps I should put that latter point more accurately — the belief that Government should not intervene in the market unless

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that is absolutely essential. That ideology distorts transport services, and experience shows that it does not work.

Investment in British Rail is inadequate and based on the wrong criteria. I concede to the Secretary of State that, at present, investment in British Rail is high, averaging £600 million per annum over the next five years. However, according to British Rail's plan in 1982, that investment should have been £800 million per annum. The present rate of investment is part of the 25-year cycle of the renewal of the rolling stock. Therefore, the fact that investment is now 8 per cent. above the 1979 level is nothing to boast about.

The investment picture is clouded and shown not to be so good when we realise that much of British Rail's investment has been financed by reductions in staff, which has decreased by 23 per cent. or by more than 40,000 jobs since 1983. We know that over that period asset sales have produced £370 million and that fares have increased. In addition, the Governments's cuts in the public service obligation have again distorted the type of investment. During the past three years, the PSO has been cut by 25 per cent. and in the next three years it will be cut by a further 25 per cent., to £555 million at today's prices by April 1989.

The Government may not be willing to accept our criticisms of British Rail. I do not like having to criticise British Rail, but, unfortunately, my criticisms are valid. If the Government are not willing to accept our criticisms, they should consider two reports on British Rail that have been published recently. The first was by the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport and was published just before the recent election. The second and more recent report was from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and was about Network SouthEast. I remind the House that Network SouthEast serves 18 million people and has 930 stations. That is a considerable size of business. Both reports reached a similar conclusion— that British Rail is still not getting there—and illustrate the point that investment is wrongly targeted and is distorted.

Indeed, the rules and restrictions that the Government place on British Rail inhibit its work. Hon. Members will know that British Rail's finances are covered by its external financing limit and that it is not allowed to carry forward any underspending of the EFL from year to year. In 1982-83, British Rail was £75 million underspent on its EFL; in 1983-84 it was £142 million underspent and in 1984-85 it was £115 million underspent. That money is lost, but it is money that could and should have been used and put to good use. The conclusion from such underspending is that British Rail is discouraged from investment which does not show a return within 12 months. Winning back passengers and trade takes a lot longer than 12 months to mature. If one really wants to invest to get back traffic, the investment must be made over a longer period.

The truth is that the Government encourage cost-cutting investment but not revenue-generating investment. British Rail has simply gone along with that policy. British Rail and the Government sometimes remind me of someone who has started a business course, learned the part about cost cutting but then dropped out of the course and missed the point about expanding the business through investment to generate new wealth.

British Rail should learn from its own experience when it has, quite exceptionally, followed the course of action that we advise. The St. Pancras-Bedford line received multiple investment on trains, track and signals. The effect was a 40 per cent. increase in usage, whereas if new trains only had been provided perhaps only an 8 per cent. increase in traffic would have been achieved.

Those conclusions are validated by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which identified a number of respects in which quality was not up to standard. The southern region has witnessed a 16 per cent. increase in breakdowns since 1983 and a 15 per cent. increase in overcrowding since 1980. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission stated specifically that "performance has deteriorated significantly". Cleanliness has suffered, largely because of the staff freeze.

British Rail has investment and performance targets. It is interesting to note that, while investment targets are sometimes met, performance targets on quality are very seldom met. When challenged, British Rail simply changes its criteria.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): The hon. Gentleman runs down British Rail. At one time I was a critic of British Rail's service to the West Country. However, for the past three years trains to the West Country have been remarkable. They are on time, they are clean, and one can reach Exeter in one hour and 55 minutes. I wholeheartedly recommend the hon. Gentleman to use British Rail's service to the West Country.

Mr. Hughes: That is an interesting proposition. It reminds me of the country yokel who, when asked how to get to Newcastle, replied, "I would not start from here." It is not much good to those who suffer from bad services to be told, "Don't bother, brothers; it is all right in some other part of the country." I concede that there are good things about British Rail, but it does not provide quality over the country at large.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not the Opposition but the Government who are running down British Rail? For example, on the midland line from Sheffield to London, trains now run every two hours whereas they used to run hourly. Furthermore, the 125 trains stop at three stations within five minutes of each other and nine times in all on the way to London.

Mr. Hughes: I accept my hon. Friend's argument. There are advantages in having point-to-point trains— for example, from Manchester to London. However, there is also a case for having trains that stop and pick up passengers at other stations. *[Laughter.]* My hon. Friend was making a serious point. We need to get the balance right. We need a mix of through trains and stopping trains to provide choice for the customer.

Let me get back to my point, if I have not forgotten what it was. British Rail changes its performance criteria when it is challenged. The target used to be that 87 per cent. of inter-city trains should arrive within five minutes of the correct time. In fact, 77 per cent. arrived within five minutes of the correct time. British Rail now operates on a performance criterion which says that 90 per cent. of trains should arrive within 10 minutes of the correct time. That should have led to a better service, but it has not.

The story of bad service and overcrowding is repeated throughout the country. What is British Rail's answer to overcrowding? It increases the fares. When asked last summer and the summer before, "Why are you putting your prices up during the summer, when you expect a lot of traffic?", British Rail spokesmen replied, "We have to put prices up because otherwise people will use the trains and we do not have the stock to carry them." That is no way to run a railway.

We expect fares to increase next year — some in January and some later in the year—and the letter of October 1986 from the Secretary of State made it clear that the increase would be higher than the rate of inflation.

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley) *rose*——

Mr. Hughes: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman on this occasion but I have a lot to say and many of my hon. Friends want to speak.

Mr. Bevan: Would the hon. Gentleman agree that the correct statistics on timing — I cite British Rail's own statistics — show that last year 90 per cent. of all passenger trains arrived on time or within five minutes of the correct time, compared with 84 per cent. in 1979?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman must use his source of statistics, and I must use mine. Mine come from published reports and independent advice. The hon. Gentleman must judge the quality of his brief, just as I must judge the quality of mine.

The Government have a direct responsibility for fares. A time bomb is ticking away in the EEC, and it will have a widespread effect on all public transport fares. Earlier this year, Lord Cockfield embarked on an exercise of harmonising VAT within the Community. His report was due to be announced in May. To no one's real surprise, it was not published at that time. Perhaps I am a little over-suspicious, but it is no coincidence that the report was not published when an election was due the following month. During the election, the Government refused to deal with VAT.

Several of my hon. Friends have sought to find out the Secretary of State's view on VAT on fares. They have put down parliamentary questions. I have to admit that I have a little admiration for the Secretary of State's ability to stonewall and sidestep. He transferred as many questions as he could to the Treasury. Those that he could not transfer, he chose to interpret totally differently and discussed air passenger fares and liberalisation in the EEC.

There is the prospect of VAT being applied to passenger fares. Passenger fares are extremely inflationary. They hurt the poorest the hardest. We do not know what VAT rate will be applied, but it will certainly not be less than 15 per cent. Indeed, if harmonisation takes place, average VAT will go up to 17·5 per cent. But let us stick with the possible 15 per cent. It will have a serious effect on the travelling public.

On 16 July, the Prime Minister told the House:

> "Not only would this Government vote against Lord Cockfield's proposal, but a number of our European partners would do so as well."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1987; Vol. 1422, c 1271.]

She said that the Government would veto VAT on fuel, food and children's clothing, but she has been totally silent about VAT on fares. I want the Secretary of State to make it absolutely clear that he will veto any imposition of VAT on bus fares, train fares, or, indeed, air fares. Unless he does that, we cannot clearly see where we are going.

The work force of British Rail Engineering Ltd. have been most cynically betrayed. Promise after promise has been disgracefully broken. At the end of 1979, BREL employed 36,000 people. The British Rail plan envisaged that the company would expand to a work force of 43,000 by the end of 1984. In 1980, a new rail plan was instigated by the Government. In 1982, 5,500 employees had gone from BREL. In 1984, 1985, 1986, and twice this year, there have been further reductions in the work force. They will bring the current work force of only 10,000 down to 7,500 by April 1988. Further job losses are projected. The BREL plan for 1991, shows that there will be nothing left.

On each and every occasion that we have been told of reductions in the work force, we were told that job losses were necessary to protect the future. The same tired old excuse has been trotted out every time — that modern rolling stock requires less maintenance. As an engineer, I can see that there is some truth in that. If there is less maintenance, there is less work. But that is not the whole story. British Rail's procurement policy has an even greater significance for the future of BREL.

Before I deal with a general point, I shall refer to a more specific one. Hon. Members will recall that there was a contract for bogies for coach stock to be manufactured by Metro-Cammell. It was withheld from BREL on the ground that it was not ready to meet British Rail specification. BREL maintained that it could develop the bogies and meet the specification, but it was told by British Rail, "We cannot wait. We must place the order." Instead, the order was placed with a Swiss company. It is widely believed that that Swiss company cannot meet the specifications. Unattributable sources within BREL confirm that speculation. Let us say that it is only speculation at the moment. I ask the Minister to give a firm guarantee that he will immediately conduct a full inquiry into this lamentable state of affairs and have the contract re-examined. He can do no more and no less for the people who work in BREL.

It seems to me that British Rail's procurement policy is governed by the Serpell report, which advocated buying abroad in the interests of economy. It must be the only report that has been apparently officially pigeonholed that still exerts a malevolent influence over such a wide-ranging part of British Rail's policies. There is a grave danger that Britain's manufacturing capacity and export potential will be severely damaged. British Rail makes a virtue of the fact that it is undertaking the most extensive traction and rolling stock renewal programme for 30 years. No one would dispute that that is long overdue. The programme in total is worth £1,100 million. That is big money; many jobs in Britain could be provided if those orders were placed in the United Kingdom.

Tenders for the class 60 locomotives were invited from a number of overseas manufacturers as well as from manufacturers within the United Kingdom. The closing date for the tenders was last week and I inquired this morning of British Rail about them. I am glad to tell the House that only three tenders were submitted for that work which will cost about £100 million. The three companies that have submitted tenders are GEC, Metro-Cammell and Brush. They are all British companies, and I welcome that. I believe that foreign companies did not

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submit tenders because our legitimate outrage that that work might go abroad frightened them off. I hope that the company that receives the tender will be successful in delivering the product.

I have no doubt that British Rail and the Government will defend the decision to invite overseas bids on the ground of economy. Despite the outcome of that tendering, the point still needs to be made that no other state-owned railway system in Europe would contemplate orders of that magnitude and importance going outside its national boundaries. If SNCF were even to think of allowing companies outside France to tender for any of its rolling stock or traction units, the French Government would rapidly step in and ensure that the work stayed in France. We have defended British manufacturing industry, but it remains the Government's responsibility to protect it in the future because other orders will arise in the next few years.

British Rail investment targets set by the Government lead to some startling conclusions. One conclusion is that the electrification of the east coast main line will stop at Edinburgh. British Rail steadfastly refuses to consider the electrification of the Edinburgh-to-Aberdeen line because it will not be "commercially viable". I remind the Government and British Rail that it is a national network and that the east coast main line is part of a network from Aberdeen to London and return or, as some hon. Members prefer, from London to Aberdeen and return. I doubt whether, if the Edinburgh-London part of the network were costed sectorally between the different stopping stations referred to earlier, it would be viable at intermediate points.

The total distance was considered. The whole matter must be looked at again. Similarly, I urge the Government seriously to reconsider their attitude to the Dornoch-Firth rail bridge because I believe it is essential to the socio-economic future of the north of Scotland.

There are many topics to be discussed, and many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. I am sure that some of them will take up issues such as London Regional Transport, bus deregulation and safety on our roads, in our sea lanes and in our air space. I do not believe that we should discuss the Zeebrugge incident, because the Director of Public Prosecutions is considering a report. However, I must say that the Government have not acted with sufficient urgency on safety. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) will discuss that.

I apologise to the Under-Secretary of State for not giving advance warning, but on Sunday evening, on the "Watchdog" television programme, an allegation was made that the Volkswagen LD31 minibus, which is often used as a vehicle for carrying the disabled, has a dangerously weak fuel return pipe which spills petrol on to the top of the engine. This has lead to a number of fires, some involving loss of life. The Under-Secretary apparently accepts that the allegations are correct, because he said that he expected Volkswagen to take immediate remedial action. I trust that he has not left the matter there. He should order an inquiry by the Department of Transport into the safety of that vehicle. I hope that he is not relying on a homily in a television programme on such a serious matter. I hope that he has the power to compel the refitting of a safe fuel connection on every LD31 minibus. If he does not have sufficient power, I can promise him that the Opposition will facilitate either primary or secondary legislation to provide him with those essential powers.

I would have liked to spend some time on the issues that I hope my hon. Friends will take up, but time does not permit. I also would have preferred not to discuss the British Airways-British Caledonian merger, not because I have any inhibitions about discussing it, but because I believe that it is a proper subject for debate in Government time. Last week we had the unfortunate difficulties when the Government refused to make a statement on that issue. Government spokesmen hinted to me that there was no need for a statement because it could be discussed during the transport debate. I hope that such a debate will not hijack our Opposition day on the transport issues that we regard as important.

I had hoped that the merger issue would quieten down, but over the weekend the plot thinkened. Therefore, I think it is necessary to say a few words about that. BCal experienced its difficulties because the Government's policies on privatisation and competition are incompatible. The Government could not afford to carry out the propositions put to it by the Civil Aviation Authority because they had to keep British Airways fat and juicy, and ripe for privatisation. In doing that, they provided the death knell for British Caledonian.

I am not happy about the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Initially I had thought that the report was fairly clear, but a number of issues have since arisen. I read in the press that the first that British Caledonian knew that British Airways had concluded a deal to surrender British Caledonian's domestic licences and its three European routes, with the right to reapply for them, was two days before the report was published. That does not provide much of a basis for trust or for hon. Members to accept what Lord King says. When he was pressed about British Airways' ordering of the Airbus A320, he said that that depended on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. If he is playing ducks and drakes with British industry and with British Caledonian, he must not be surprised if we scrutinise what he says. I have confirmed with British Caledonian that those weekend press reports are true. It confirmed that it is not simply speculation. That is quite disgraceful and intolerable.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I support the view that my hon. Friend is expressing. I hope that there will be a debate on the proposed merger. Does my hon. Friend know that the wings of the Airbus are manufactured in my constituency, that many hundreds of jobs are involved and that my constituents are concerned about the consequence of the merger on the ordering of Airbus?

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for confirming my point about the type of merger and the important effect that that might have on jobs.

The merger was announced at 1.30 am — I heard about it at 9 am on the radio — and I believe that the Government had no choice but to refer the matter to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. However, they had to do that once the announcement was made. The Government should have acted without sending the case to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. There have been three and a half months of uncertainty and we do not know how many weeks of uncertainty still remain. The

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who speaks for the Department of Trade and Industry in this House, confirmed in response to a private notice question on the day of the announcement that the Department of Transport was told that merger negotiations were taking place a week before the conclusion of the exercise.

In the light of the MMC report, my criticism of the Government is well founded. To paraphrase paragraph 8.70 of the report, before reference was made, British Airways offered conditional undertakings to the Office of Fair Trading—first to give up 5,000 slots at Gatwick; secondly, not to oppose applications to the CAA by any other airline seeking to compete with it; and thirdly, to submit to any examination of routes currently operated by BCal, where further British competition would be desirable.

Those three specific offers were made to the Office of Fair Trading before referral. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is a Member of the other place, knew about the offer. As a result of that offer paragraph 8.71 of the MMC report refers to the giving up of BCal's domestic routes and three of the European routes, the right to reapply and the examination of international routes by the CAA. The Government should have taken that responsibility on themselves and not simply farmed it out to another agency.

Have the Government a view on aviation policy? Do they have a view on airports policy? Clearly they have not. Do they have any influence at all over what is going to happen? Clearly not. The present position is that we understand that Sir Adam Thompson is engaged in discussions with a number of European airlines. One airline, KLM, has withdrawn and is no longer interested. However, we know that opinions are being actively pursued.

I do not know whether Sir Adam Thompson is serious. He might simply be trying to jack up the value of the British Airways offer which apparently is down to £100 million compared with the original £267 million. He may be engaged in a bargaining game. On the other hand, given the fact that he has been so badly treated by British Airways, perhaps he is serious about accepting a foreign competitor or a foreign partner. If that is the case, what is the Government's attitude? What will they do? Will they veto any partnership with a foreign airline if that airline takes a given percentage of 25 per cent., 30 per cent. of 40 per cent. of British Caledonian? What will the Government do about that?

The Government cannot allow Sir Adam Thomson and the board of British Caledonian to negotiate with a foreign partner and then say that they are not very sure whether that is in the national interest. Will they then refer that to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission again, or send it to someone else to deal with it? That is no way to run an airline policy. The truth is that the Government do not have an airline policy. That collapsed because of the Government's interest in privatising British Airways, and they have no influence on or ideas about future airline policy.

I have another point to make about the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report. On page 44, paragraph 5.38 of the report rehearses what was offered and the consequences. With regard to the revocation of licences, a little footnote states:

> "The procedure used would be to apply to the CAA for revocation of the licences. This would enable BA to continue the services during the consideration by the CAA of application for the routes."

I welcome that to the extent that services must continue until such time as a new licence operator comes in. However, it would appear that some airlines which currently hold licences to which British Caledonian has made objection might have to apply afresh for licences if British Caledonian withdraws these objections. Some operators have told me that there is some doubt, even if they get the go-ahead, that capacity and slots would be made available to them. I hope that the Secretary of State will answer those points and try to clear up the confusion.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): In the interests of fairness and debate, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman forgot to remind his hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), who has now left the Chamber, that the jobs in the factory at Hawarden in his constituency would have disappeared altogether were it not for the fact that an incoming Conservative Government reversed the previous Labour Government's decision to cancel the Airbus project. Before the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) jumps to defend the British Caledonian position, he should also remind the House that the Labour party policy on the Edwards report was against the establishment of a second airline in this country. We should have an honest admission on those matters.

Mr. Hughes: I will look into those points.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am sure that my hon. Friend would like to refute the idea that the Labour party was against a second airline. In the interests of customers, Labour Ministers supported the idea of the creation of British Caledonian. I was a Minister in the Department at the time and was involved in all the talks. It was obvious that, if we did not have that kind of extension, there would be very large private monopolies.

Mr. Hughes: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. I was going to say more or less what she has said. I will look into the point about the Tory Government re-establishing the Airbus project, which the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) claimed had been cancelled by a Labour Government. I do not remember that, but I was not a Member of Parliament at the time. However, I will check it up.

I have no doubt that, if there is a choice between British Caledonian going into partnership with a foreign airline or going with British Airways, I would rather it went with British Airways. At the end of the day, the best result for the people working for the airline and for the customers would be for the merger to proceed, and I will seek to defend the interests of the employees of the two airlines to ensure that they get the best deal and give the best service.

I want to make it quite clear that the Government are in a muddle over a whole range of transport responsibilities. They proclaim their advocacy of the free market, but they know that the market does not work, has not worked and cannot work. The market cannot meet the needs of the individual or the corporate consumer. The Government are in a state of paralysis. They are unable to offer any strategy for transport. They are simply drifting. The sad truth is that the Department of Transport is

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ignored by the other Departments of State. The Department has failed and will continue to fail the nation. I invite the House to approve the Opposition motion.

4.17 pm.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

> 'congratulates the Government on the success of transport policies which have led to an improved transport infrastructure through increased investment whilst reducing the proportion of gross domestic product taken up by public expenditure, which have provided better value for money for taxpayers, ratepayers and industry, and which have increased choice of service to the customer; and furthermore notes with approval the Government's policies to safeguard the environment and to maintain and improve transport safety standards.'

I am exceedingly grateful for the opportunity that the Opposition have given me today to publicise the achievements of the Government over the past eight years. I am particularly grateful for the opportunity to stress the improved service to the customer that we have created. We intend to continue with that. However, first I must thank the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) for his kind personal references to me. I note that he said that I will last only 137 days, a little longer than Napoleon, but not much. I shall do my best to hang on for a little longer than that.

The theme that runs through all of our transport policies is to provide the best transport service for the customer at the least cost to the taxpayer and ratepayer. I intend to consider Network SouthEast in some detail later. However, transport by road, rail, sea and air is a vital part of Britain's economic success. We all know that we are in the seventh successive year of steady growth. Industrial production is at its highest ever level and this country's transport system has played a great part in that success.

I shall highlight four sectors of solid achievement in which we propose to go further during this Parliament. These are, a massive investment in transport infrastructure; obtaining value for public money; the unprecedented increase in competition in transport; and improving safety, which was a point that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North made.

I am sure that hon. Members will find it extraordinary, when they analyse the speech of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, which lasted about 37 minutes, that he did not once mention roads, except in relation to road safety. Over 80 per cent. of freight by volume in the United Kingdom travels by road. Some 90 per cent. of passengers are carried by car, taxi, bus or coach. Some two-thirds of households in the United Kingdom have regular access to a car, yet in its motion the Labour party does not mention roads.

An effective road system, by cutting transport costs, makes a vital contribution to national economic prosperity. That is not a new discovery; the only difference is that the Government have delivered a road programme that is almost one-third larger, in real terms, than it was in 1979.

Mr. Flannery: Half of it has been coned off.

Mr. Channon: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has raised the subject of cones. The only reason why there are so many cones on the motorways is that the Labour Government neglected maintenance; I have had to spend money to catch up. By 1992 I shall have caught up on the years of neglect of motorway and trunk road maintenance, which was initiated largely by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) after the IMF crisis.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose*——

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe) *rose*——

Mr. Channon: We have completed no fewer than 216 schemes and they have added 733 miles to the national network. Some 76 bypasses have been opened to take through traffic away from towns and villages. Since April 1987 we have opened 19 new road schemes, nine of which were bypasses.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Channon: I shall finish this point and give way.

In the 1985 review of the road programme 51 schemes were added. Earlier this year a further 82 schemes were added.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): Will the Secretary of State tell us on what evidence his statement that since 1979 far more money has been spent per mile of motorway on maintenance is based? Will he tell us to what extent this problem has been caused by heavy lorries? For example, in south Wales, during the miners' strike, on the motorway between Port Talbot and Newport, one could see the ruts that were being caused by these heavy vehicles, which were clearly breaking the law.

Mr. Channon: I shall deal with that point a little later.

This year we plan to start schemes to add over 150 miles of road to the national network. The forward programme embraces some 360 schemes, with a total value of about £5 billion. Does that sound like neglect of the nation's transport needs?

Within the next few years we shall extend the M40 from Oxford to Birmingham, the M20 between Maidstone and Ashford, build the M66 from Denton to Middleton, open the A1-M1 link and the A69 Newcastle western by-pass, improve the A1 in north Yorkshire and upgrade the north circular in London.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I welcome the introduction of these schemes, but will the Minister say when they were first projected?

Mr. Channon: Each scheme has a different date. I have announced the schemes that my predecessors added earlier this year. The point that I am coming to, about which the hon. Gentleman will be sensitive, is how the Labour party neglected our roads and how we are picking up the pieces.

Mr. Martin: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Channon: I must get on because I must deal with rail, air and sea.

As to local roads, we are providing £180 million in transport supplementary grant to help local authorities. That will assist over 300 schemes, including the £39 million Birmingham middle ring road, the Bradford city ring road, the Manchester-Salford inner relief road, the £17 million Liverpool inner ring road and the £40 million black country route through Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Those schemes, which are at the heart of inner-city areas, will be an essential part of their regeneration.

Mr. Martin: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I have a lot to deal with, but when I return to roads I shall give way to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin).

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North dealt at length with British Rail and painted a tale of woe and neglect. However, we should consider the figures. We have approved 20 major investment schemes, including nearly 2,000 new passenger vehicles, 96 new locomotives, and new cross-city links in London and Manchester. We have agreed, in principle, to sizeable investment on the international high-speed Channel services.

Overall, BR plans to invest £3 billion over the next five years. Its planned investment for each of the next five years is higher, in real terms, than its investment expenditure in any single year since the 1960s. Since June 1979 my predecessors and I have not turned down a single railway investment project that BR has submitted. We have approved investment of £3 billion, at today's prices, and we shall continue to support worthwhile investment proposals, including those needed——

Mrs. Dunwoody: The Government have sold off BR.

Mr. Channon: The hon. Lady knows perfectly well that we have not sold off BR.

We shall continue to support worthwhile investment proposals, including those needed for BR to meet quality of service standards for the grant-aided railway.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Channon: Several hon. Members want me to give way, but I shall give way to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) as she is an old friend.

Mrs. Dunwoody: We do not dispute the fact that there has been investment, but does not the Secretary of State remember that this is exactly what happened with the Royal Ordnance factories, when initially there was much investment, then a loss of jobs and then the selling of units?

Mr. Channon: The parallel with the Royal Ordnance factories is a little far fetched. I shall later deal with some points that the hon. Lady may find interesting in relation to her constituency.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): My right hon. Friend made a cogent point about investment in British Rail. Will he confirm that British Rail has not reached its limit of external financing and that, therefore, the Government have been most generous, in real terms, to BR?

Mr. Channon: That must be right, and investment expenditure, in real terms, for the next few years is enormous. If my hon. Friend is patient, he may hear some information that will interest him with regard to York.

We have authorised 1,333 track miles of electrified railway: London to Cambridge, London to Norwich, Tonbridge to Hastings, Bournemouth to Weymouth, and east coast electrification to Leeds, York and Edinburgh, which is the largest single rail investment for 25 years and the biggest ever electrification scheme. It is well ahead of schedule.

The average level of spending on electrification each year since 1979, in real terms, is £72 million. Between 1974-79, in real terms, it was only £41 million. Who has neglected the railways? Labour Members have made a completely bogus case about our level of BR investment.

Mrs. Ewing: I am deeply concerned that the Secretary of State has not referred to investment programmes in Scotland or Wales. As to the specific point about the east coast electrification, is he aware of the deep concern of people in the Grampian region that the rail electrification will stop at Edinburgh, thus leaving the oil capital of Europe stranded in that there will be no electrified line running from Edinburgh up the east coast? Is that not ludicrous? Will he therefore persuade BR that investment must continue north of the central belt of Scotland to ensure that we can link into the network system?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North made a similar point when he opened the debate and I understand his concern for constituency interests. Of course, we would not turn down any worthwhile investment scheme that British Rail put to us, nor have we ever done so. Any scheme put forward must be cost-effective. The same answer applies to the high-speed trains. We will consider any worthwhile investment scheme that is put forward.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside) *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I am glad to welcome the hon. Gentleman back—we missed him for a few moments.

The Crewe-Holyhead——

Mr. Barry Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Channon: I must press on. I am sorry, but I have two other areas of interest to deal with.

Let us consider BR's rail fares and quality of service. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North mentioned this. Over the past three years average fares on the railways, taking account of discounts, have increased by under 4 per cent. in real terms. In fact, average fares paid on Network SouthEast, including Capitalcard and off-peak fares, have fallen by 2 per cent. in the same period. That is against the background of the highest level of passenger mileage for a decade—indeed, it has increased by 5 per cent. in the past year.

I recognise, as some season ticket holders recognise, that some fares have risen more than average, but that must be seen in perspective. I believe that fares must be set at levels that enable BR to invest in the quality of service that customers want and are willing to pay for. What really concerns people is when they pay higher fares without the corresponding improvement in quality. The chairman of BR and I are determined to ensure that fares increases are matched by increases in quality. I shall expect BR to report to me on the progress towards meeting those objectives.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Channon: No. I am coming on to Network SouthEast and the challenge that was made by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North.

Investment in Network SouthEast and elsewhere has helped to improve BR's quality of service. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North mentioned the new Bedford-St. Pancras line and I am glad I have his support for that. The Great Eastern multiple units will alleviate overcrowding on those lines. Since I have taken office the electrification of the East Grinstead line has been completed. New rolling stock will be made available in Essex and Cambridgeshire, along with major station

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refurbishments and signal improvements. I accept that there is a great deal further to go, but steps are being taken to improve services.

I am delighted to tell the House that I have, today, approved BR investment in Super Sprinters. My approval will give BR authorisation to build 204 new vehicles at a cost of nearly £69 million. They will operate on main lines in Scotland, on the north trans-Pennine route, on some express routes in the midlands and between Cardiff and the south coast. So much for the neglect of rail.

I now wish to deal with British Rail Engineering Ltd. I regret the redundancies that have occurred over the past few years at BREL. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North was generous enough to accept that those redundancies were caused by the modernisation——

Mr. Robert Hughes: Partly caused.

Mr. Channon: Partly caused in the hon. Gentleman's opinion, but I believe that the main cause was the modernisation of BR's locomotive and rolling stock. We all want to see a modern and up-to-date railway — modern rolling stock needs less repair. The Opposition must recognise that. The growing investment programme in new rolling stock undertaken by BR presents opportunities for BREL, but it must compete for the orders. Since BR began placing new build orders competitively BREL has done very well. It has obtained around 70 per cent. of the orders, but it has lost others. If it is to succeed it must improve and go on improving its productivity and methods of production. Great strides are already being made in this direction by the management and work force. Great prizes are to be won. British Rail plans to spend £1 billion on new locomotives and rolling stock over the next five years and there are prospects of large orders for the Channel tunnel and the Underground. Earlier I announced the order worth nearly £69 million for Super Sprinters and I can now say that that order will go to BREL. There are bright prospects for the BR supply industry and for BREL's future within it.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement about the Super Sprinters will be warmly welcomed by BREL employees? However, is there not also a need to secure the long-term future of that company? In that regard, and with a view to increasing further investment, is my right hon. Friend considering the question of privatisation?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I am considering the long-term future of BREL with the chairman of BR. I want to see a secure future for that company and I hope to be able to come to the House before long to announce what I believe to be the best way forward. I certainly note what my hon. Friend says. There are great prizes to be won and BREL could win them.

Let us consider investment in public transport in London. It is true that we plan to spend £1 billion on London's roads. However, over the next five years planned investment in Network SouthEast alone totals almost £1 billion. To that must be added investment by London Regional Transport—a record of £300 million this year. I propose to authorise spending at £1 million a day next year for LRT. That will provide for projects such as relief for congested stations — a large scheme for The Angel costing £20 million has just been approved — 16 new trains for the tubes worth £45 million, including the northern line; a £135 million automatic ticketing programme and £150 million for the City extension, to be the Dockland light railway. Plans are in hand for the major re-equipment of the central line, which will start soon.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): I wish to return briefly to the question of BREL. My right hon. Friend has said that, at the moment, he is having discussions regarding the long-term future of that company. Can he give us a suggestion as to when he would hope to come to the House with his decision? Is it likely to be before the House rises for the Christmas recess?

Mr. Channon: I shall be very disappointed if it is not.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman now give me a specific answer regarding the imposition of VAT on fares?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that VAT and the application of taxation policies are entirely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend has said on numerous occasions. The hon. Gentleman's questions have been answered by my right hon. Friend and I must refer the hon. Gentleman to them.

Regional airports are extremely important. Since 1979 we have authorised £240 million worth of capital expenditure specifically for regional airports. That sum should be compared with the £16 million spent in the five years of the previous Labour Government — it is 10 times higher. There is a brand new terminal at Birmingham and substantial terminal extensions have taken place at Luton, Newcastle and Manchester. There have been runway extensions at Leeds-Bradford and Manchester. Once again, vital national assets have been significantly improved and extended. If we asked anyone in 1979 whether it was possible to increase investment as we have done and yet reduce the total burden on taxpayers no one would have believed it. In real terms total transport spending has been reduced by 8 per cent. at a time when capital spending has gone up, across the board, by 5 per cent. We are also spending considerably more on roads.

Now let us consider contraflows.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Channon: I would like to give way, but I have been going 20 minutes and I have a lot more to say.

Everyone in the House is infuriated by cones and the resulting delays. Many contraflows are precisely the result of the neglect of central maintenance in the late 1970s. The cones are a monument to the mistakes of previous Administrations, who, by putting off essential maintenance, cost the nation more in the long run. In 1979 there was a substantial backlog in motorway maintenance. I intend to spend on maintenance more than double the 1979 level in real terms. We intend to renew the greatest ever length of motorway in one year and to eliminate the backlog by 1992. We shall also get value for money with our lane rental scheme, rewards for speedy work and penalties for contractors who block major routes for too long. Already the lane rental scheme has saved the taxpayer £8 million and road users 500 days of delay.

Those hon. Members who complain should remember that it is their fault that maintenance has been neglected in the past.

Mr. Michael J. Martin *rose*——

Mr. Flannery *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) because I promised to do so earlier.

Mr. Flannery: The right hon. Gentleman has not mentioned the fact that it is the increasing size of heavy lorries that is destroying the roadways. The right hon. Gentleman has said that money is being invested, but he has not mentioned the fundamental cause of the breakdown and destruction of our roads. Surely that is worth talking about.

Mr. Channon: Of course, I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. My point—it is a valid one—is that whatever criticisms the hon. Gentleman has of me, at least I and my predecessors are and have been providing a service for the country by increasing capital investment in almost every section of transport to an extent that is unparalleled in the history of transport here. Yet the motion criticises us.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South) *rose*——

Mr. Channon: I am sorry, but I must press on.

It is interesting that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North did not examine bus deregulation. The industry has been liberated from 50 years of control, which led to a vicious circle of rising costs, fares and subsidies. Opposition Members said that bus services would collapse after deregulation; in fact, mileage has increased by 12 per cent. in the past year, and by 17 per cent. in the shire counties. Mini-buses are now operating in 250 areas. Our critics said that no subsidies would mean no buses. In fact, since D-day, more than 400 new operators have entered the market, there are reports of competition in more than 100 areas and the mileage run by the private sector has increased by three quarters. The prospect of competition has ensured that 85 per cent. of bus miles are run commercially without subsidy. The dog did not bark in the night. It is interesting that no one criticises the position now.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Channon: If the House will allow me, I must press on; otherwise, I shall be here until 10 pm.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Secretary of State promised that he would give way to me when he mentioned roads. When motorways are built in inner cities, they split up and divide communities and cause a great deal of planning blight. Glasgow has many positive points, but many of its communities have disappeared off the face of the earth.

Can the Secretary of State assure the House that those officials who are known to be suffering from motorway madness will not be allowed to put motorways through cities and communities in which they are not necessary, and will he scrutinise all proposals to prevent such measures from being taken?

Mr. Channon: Of course, I shall scrutinise any proposals, and I entirely agree that motorways must be planned sensitively—as must large trunk roads, too. I shall examine what the hon. Gentleman has told me about the position in Glasgow.

The House will expect me to say a word about the British Airways—British Caledonian merger. The House knows that, following the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and the announcement made by my right hon. and noble Friend last Wednesday, the ball is now firmly in the court of those companies. They must now decide what to do. The objectives of the Government's airline competition policy are set out in the 1984 White Paper on airline competition policy and they remain today as they were then. The objectives were, first, to encourage a competitive multi-airline industry with a variety of airlines serving travellers' needs and strong enough to compete aggressively against foreign airlines. The second objective was to promote competition in all markets—international and domestic—by working to reduce restrictions on services and making it easier for new airlines to enter the market. The third objective was to ensure adequate safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour by airlines.

The proposed merger offers a number of benefits. It would strengthen the international competitive position of the British industry in a world that is moving towards larger carriers. It would remove the present uncertainty about British Caledonian's future and provide opportunities for improved efficiency. However, we must also continue to promote competition within the United Kingdom industry and provide suitable safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour.

The proposals that British Airways put to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will, if the merger proceeds, open up new opportunities for other British airlines. Such airlines will be free to apply for licences to serve five major domestic routes from Gatwick and they will be able to compete for 10 major destinations in Europe. It would be wrong of me, in view of my appellate position, to comment on the likely outcome of any applications by other airlines for licences returned by the merged airline, but I should be surprised, in view of their record, if none of them could make a good case.

As important as licences are airport slots. BA proposes to surrender the slots associated with any services for which the licences are returned and which are not re-issued to British Airways. As a minimum, British Airways will surrender 5,000 slots at Gatwick, spread throughout the year. Those will provide opportunities for other airlines to develop services at Gatwick. Before the merger proposal was announced, the CAA was engaged in public consultations about the licensing policies that it should adopt on market entry and anti-competitive behaviour. I have discussed the scope and timing of these consultations with the chairman of the CAA, and the subject of whether any other issues should be covered. The chairman has said that he intends to relaunch these consultations as soon as possible after it is known whether the proposed merger is to go ahead. He also intends to extend them to include substitution policy, tariff deregulation and alternative licensing procedures. I shall keep the House in touch about that.

I am sure that most hon. Members would have preferred British Caledonian to prosper as an independent airline. However, British Caledonian may conclude that a merger on the basis set out in the commission's report would be preferable to trying to continue alone. I am

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satisfied that the continued existence of an independent BCal is not essential to the development of a sound and competitive multi-airline industry. However, it is imperative that if the merger proceeds, it should do so on the basis of the revised proposals put forward by British Airways to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I have asked the chairman of the CAA to report to me a year after the merger about its implementation. He and I have powers for the regulation of civil aviation. My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has separate powers under the competition legislation to deal with any future concerns about competition in the airline industry.

Mr. Morgan: Is the Secretary of State telling the House that if, in a year's time, he is not happy with the merger's impact on airlines, consumers and competition, he will insist that British Airways disgorge British Caledonian on to the market again?

Mr. Channon: I am not saying that, and it would not be wise for me to answer the question in the terms in which the hon. Gentleman framed it. What I am saying is that, if the merger takes place, the chairman will report to me after its implementation. I have powers for the regulation of civil aviation, and I have already outlined the policies that I believe should be followed in the aviation industry in this country. Let us hope that the situation that the hon. Gentleman described does not arise. With a merger that is as yet hypothetical, I am not prepared now to say what I might or might not do a year ahead. If the hon. Gentleman were in my position, he would go no further than I, because he would have appellate powers, too. The House will appreciate that no responsible Secretary of State could go further than that this afternoon.

The success of our policies for investment, value for money and competition has depended on sweeping away many unnecessary regulations. However, we have reinforced one area and we shall continue to do so. I refer to safety, and I was sorry that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North said what he did about marine safety. It was wholly contradictory of what his hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) said during last Wednesday's debate, which was extremely gratifying to me.

The horrific Zeebrugge disaster was a shocking reminder of the need for vigilance in reviewing safety standards. I am determined that no effort should be spared in ensuring that such a disaster never happens again. The lessons learned must be used to set new safety standards for passenger ships, and, particularly, for roll-on/roll-off ferries. Many steps have been taken since the inquiry report was published in July. Many of them will come before the House in due course, and it would be wrong for me to go into detail now. Nevertheless, I want to reassure the House of our commitment to ensuring standards of safety for passengers and crew.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I want to add my unequivocal congratulations to my right hon. Friend for what he has done. When his new Bill goes to a Standing Committee, will he accept, without too strenuous resistance, amendments adding one or two noughts to the penalties?

Mr. Channon: I shall not resist them too strenuously because most serious offences have an unlimited fine. So an unlimited fine multiplied by 100 would be otiose. However, I would be out of order if I went too far into the details of the new Bill.

This is not the time to deal in detail with road safety, but I shall say a little about it. Our roads must be safe. Despite the large increase in the number of vehicles on our roads, there has been a significant reduction in the number of people killed. The figure is down by almost one third since 1965 to 5,000 people a year. The House will take pleasure in hearing about that reduction. However, this is still far too many and our aim is to reduce road casualties by a third by the year 2000. No doubt there will be other occasions on which we can debate this at greater length.

Overall the picture on transport safety is one of long-term improvement. However, as Zeebrugge shows, major tragedies can and do still occur. This is not a party issue. To achieve our targets we need the support of all hon. Members and the whole community. An exciting development in transport is the new co-operation between Government and private enterprise in providing transport infrastructure. The private sector finances new investment for a reasonable return on capital, and the taxpayer receives—often at no cost—a valuable addition to the transport system.

In this debate I shall not deal with the Channel tunnel, although it is obviously in the minds of hon. Members. The new London City airport was built by the private sector and opened only last month. Roughly half the cost of work now under way to extend the Docklands light railway to Bank station will be met by the private sector. The whole of the cost of the eastward extension of the DLR will be met by private sector developers from increased land values. That is a massive stimulus to the regeneration of docklands. Further east there will be the Dartford-Thurrock crossing, also to be built by private enterprise. This collaboration of private enterprise and public initiative benefits the investor, the taxpayer and, above all, the transport user. We shall continue to look for suitable projects.

Not surprisingly, the Labour party was critical of us today and has been critical of us in the past. What about the Opposition's policies? I had a good look at their manifesto but it did not tell me a great deal. There is a much more enjoyable document called, somewhat inappropriately, "Fresh Directions". The directions are about as fresh as a wilting red rose, and reading it is like experiencing time travel. I felt like Dr. Who in one of those early serials, going back in my Tardis to about the time of the Romans. In that document one sees all the failed notions and policies of the 1960s and even that hoary old chestnut the integrated transport policy that the Opposition have been hammering away at in this debate—*[Interruption.]* Here we go again. There is one wonderful section about more power to local bureaucrats and less choice to the ordinary member of the travelling public. The document says:

> "The Local Authority will design its transport policies through an overall transport plan".

Alas, that is not the end because "Fresh Directions" goes on to say:

> "The Local Transport Plan will be a five-year strategic plan, supplemented by Annual Rolling Plans and will include a Public Transport Plan and a Road Traffic Plan".

I suspect that the annual transport plan will be the only thing that rolls — transport certainly will not. I look forward with interest to seeing what the Opposition's review of party policy will produce. We have not learned much more today about Labour party policy.

Everybody knows that there is always scope for improvement in transport. If the House is honest with itself, it will recognise that over the last eight years a great deal has been done to improve our transport system and there are realistic and cost-effective plans for further improving transport for everyone. I urge the House to support our amendment to this ridiculous motion.

Royal Assent

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Consolidated Fund (No.2) Act 1987.
2. Dyfed Act 1987.

Transport

4.54 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I have often wondered about the basic difference between state education and education in the private sector. After listening to the Secretary of State I think that it must be the ability to smile bravely and sweetly while skating very fast on thin ice.

Mr. Adley: No one will accuse the hon. Lady of doing that.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The reality of the present performance, if the Secretary of State really believes that he has such a good story to tell, is, why did he find it necessary to wait for the Opposition on one of their days to bring it before the House? It is a long time since we had a debate on transport and that is why so many subjects have had to be pushed into one day. I should like to return to the hard and unpleasant world of real transport policies in 1987.

We are celebrating 150 years of railways in my constituency and I trust that it will not prove to be one of the saddest and unhappiest years in that long and proud industrial history. Crewe was created very specifically by a private railway company in order not only to service its existing rail lines, but to build a large rail junction and to create railway workshops. At its height, Crewe employed over 12,000 people. What is happening now? Even though that workshop has kept up with the times and is very well equipped, with high-quality modern technology and staff with a high level of skill, it has very real problems, created entirely by the lack of clear policy by the Conservative Government.

When we talk about transport, it is important to realise that the problems in relation to British Rail and very specifically in relation to British Rail Engineering Ltd. have been created by political decisions taken by successive Conservative Ministers. They are not the result of an accident or a one-off relationship, in which somehow or other a very efficient organisation is allowed to decide its own future and its own investment plan. The problems are caused by specific political decisions taken by the Government.

An example is the change that took place in 1979-80, when there was a new political approach. Although the railway workshops were perfectly capable of competing with any company in any field, nevertheless we were to have a report, the Serpell report, that gave a very different view of how the railway workshops should progress. At this stage it is useful to look at what Serpell said because it is extremely revealing. Under the heading, "Mechanical and Electrical Engineering", Serpell said:

> "There should be a full appraisal of the cost advantages of buying foreign components and locomotives, either purchased direct or assembled in the UK under licence."

The report said that this would produce a number of clear and large savings. It went on to detail many of those savings, although it said that they were not totalled because there were all sorts of variables that might change in the next two or three years.

Almost without exception, everything that Serpell predicted has been pushed through by the present British Rail management. Serpell said that there would be staff reductions as a result of reorganisation, and that they

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would save £30 million. We are talking here about 1982 prices. Under competitive tendering, including foreign purchase, Serpell said that there would be a saving of £20 million to £25 million. With the rationalisation of the maintenance depots, it said there would be a saving of £25 million, and that by eliminating over-capacity and increasing efficiency there would be a saving of £20 million.

In the next chapter, on BREL's role in the railway, Serpell said:

> "Because BRB has not sought competitive tenders, few firm conclusions can be drawn . . . with the exception of locomotives, there is no prima facie evidence indicating that . . . the cost of new build is excessive. Comparison with prices of US and Japanese manufacturers show that BREL coach and EMU prices are competitive. This is consistent with BREL's relatively high production of these units."

Mr. Gregory: In again producing this historical document to the House, will the hon. Lady confirm that Serpell said, as a criticism of British Rail, that it consistently over-specified? That is a crucial element and has been accepted by the rail industry and by those building for British Rail.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Serpell laid out the plot of the new Conservative approach to building. It said, in very simple political terms, "If we do not retain much locomotive new build or repair in Britain, if we open everything to competitive tender, no matter whether it comes from foreign countries or private industry, we shall automatically make a saving." It did not state the effect that that would have either on the overall planning and efficiency of British Rail or on the number of jobs created in the engineering industry in Britain.

Yesterday, in another place, Lord Young of Graffham said, in an interesting response, that the United Kingdom trade in engineering products, which includes section 7 machinery and transport equipment, shows a deficit of £3,370·4 million. Britain, which was the first country to create a rail transport system and has been in the forefront of modern design and technology, now has a deficit in its trade in engineering products. Serpell may be historic to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) but it is a very important document to his constituents who work in the workshops. It clearly shows them how they got into their present situation.

The lack of clear management designs is obvious to those of us who have to deal with the day-to-day contract work. We have split contracts, outside tendering and the saga of the tender for bogies by a Swiss company. There are considerable worries about the way in which that process was handled — the specifications, the source of the information, and what is happening now. The fact that a Swiss company was given a major contract based on what looks like a computer assessment of its ability to do a massive engineering job raises considerable doubt about the management expertise which allowed that to happen.

It happened because British Rail Engineering Ltd. followed the pattern laid down for it in Serpell. It has done that while saying to an extremely loyal work force, "Do not worry. If you will agree to accept new work patterns and new engineering processes, and if you will agree to a number of voluntary redundancies, not only will some manufacturing units be stable but their future will be assured and they will be able to compete with anyone else anywhere in the world."

It is true that they can compete with any other engineering workshop, but they are not allowed to do so. British Rail told BREL, "We will not allow you to tender for certain contracts because you are a wholly owned subsidiary and we will not be able to sue you if anything goes wrong." When it was pointed out that that argument could not be sustained, it said that that had not been the reason and that there were other difficulties. For example, we were told that BREL did not manufacture power units. BREL has never manufactured power units and has frequently bought them in, so that argument can hardly stand up.

The four workshops that now exist in three locations — one in Crewe, two in Derby, and one in York — are faced with a continuing and constant squeeze on their work and on their work forces. There is uncertainty in investment patterns and 7,000 staff have been made redundant — 5,500 of them in BREL and 1,500 in the regions. That has been a result of the pattern of concentration and special development units. For example, we have a signal and telegraph unit in Crewe at present. The closures have been consistent and continuing. They read like a roll of honour and of unhappiness for the communities in Shildon, Temple Mills, and part of Horwich. We are not told about the constant and increasing redundancies elsewhere. Swindon has lost 2,263 jobs and Glasgow 1,206, and still the redundancies continue.

Men and women who for not one but many generations have given a loyal commitment to a firm that was always regarded as being among the best of the engineering facilities now feel betrayed and bewildered. They have no faith in management decisions. First they are told that if they agree to a number of voluntary redundancies, as happened in my constituency, their jobs will be safe. When they are told rapidly on top of that that there must be 1,000 more redundancies over the numbers already accepted, they can only assume that once again they have been lied to. They were told by those in management, who should know better, that their future depended on changing patterns of work; yet when they complied with the very things that they were being asked to do, they were told that their units were still at risk.

We have not had from the Secretary of State today any guarantee that BREL will continue as a viable and strong engineering unit.

When we asked where the units would be built, it was noticeable that he was proud that he was able to announce a new programme. We welcome that very much, but he must note that the amount of repair work, maintenance and new build that has already gone out of BREL into other units means that soon four or five major units will be competing among themselves for a constantly dropping amount of work. That can only lead us to the conclusion that BREL will be faced with real difficulties in future.

I was so concerned that I put down a series of questions not only to the Secretary of State for Transport but to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office asking what had happened to Government overseas investment, which is so closely tied to trade rather that to aid. It was most revealing to discover that, although there have been many overseas programmes directly connected with the railway industries, involving the rebuilding of locomotives and the improvement of rolling stock, BREL is not listed among the contracts in the answers given to me by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Therefore, it is clear that there is to be an extension of the present policy.

If we dare to suggest that there is not a great advantage for British Rail Engineering workshops in always working through a private manufacturer, we are told that this is an unreasonable attitude and that, as long as BREL is doing subcontracting work, it still has work in the workshops and must be benefiting. Even the worst economists among us can work out that, if a company is always subcontracting work which it could do itself efficiently without a third party being involved, the profit from that deal inevitably goes not to the people doing the subcontracted work but to those holding the basic and important contract. That seems to be the pattern time and time again. British Rail workshops are expected to go for split contracts or they are told that there are problems about their contractual obligations — or, even worse, that there are difficulties for them in the way that development is foreseen.

The Secretary of State said that I was unreasonable when I suggested that there was a pattern. He is a charming and talented man but I hope he will forgive me if I say that I do not always believe him. That is not to suggest that he is necessarily telling an untruth but perhaps it is not the whole truth, which is rather more important. The sale proceeds of a number of major industries are included in the amount that the Government use to calculate their own income and loss account. The amount that comes from the sale of state assets is very important to the Government. It is not just a question of dogma. They actually care about the cash.

When we say to the Government, "Could it be that you are doing to British Rail Engineering exactly what you have done to other basic industries?", the answer is, "No, perish the thought. How could it possibly be so?" But the pattern is clear. First, considerable sums of investment are pumped in. We have had it in Crewe, where high-quality, expensive equipment has been put in at the expense of the taxpayer. Then the order book is starved, so that there is less and less work. Then there comes the constant pattern of redundancies in the work force. Finally, when the unit is much smaller and better equipped, capable of going anywhere and competing on any terms, it is privatised.

The Secretary of State said, "There cannot be a pattern; that may have happened elsewhere but it is not a parallel". We believe that it is precisely a parallel. We should send a simple message from the House to anyone who is even thinking of getting involved in that situation. The Government have made it clear that, if there is any investment in new rolling stock or new locomotives, that investment will not necessarily go to British companies, privatised or non-privatised. So selling off the workshops will protect neither the jobs nor the incomes of the engineering units.

I shall not go on much longer because I know that many hon. Members want to speak. This is an indescribably gloomy day. I am proud to represent a constituency where the workshops are a major employer and where the quality and the commitment of the men and women are very great. They are deeply proud of what they do. They have abilities which in the past have always been highly valued. They are bitterly angry and deeply worried. They have lost their faith in those very people with whom they have so often co-operated in the past. If those people in my constituency are betrayed and if they lose their livelihood, their jobs and their future, the Government will never be forgiven.

Several Hon. Members *rose* —

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): As the hon. Lady said, many hon. Members want to speak. Brief speeches will cut down the number of disappointments.

5.12 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I hope the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) will not mind if I say that she made a commendable constituency speech which will perhaps strengthen her position at the next election. All of us are sorry when skilled workers in BREL are made redundant, but when the Select Committee on Transport went to Glasgow to see what was happening there, I was horrified to discover that although there were jobs elsewhere in British Rail, many young engineers were refusing to move from Glasgow and were prepared to remain unemployed. Therefore, that is a difficulty that the hon. Lady should remember. I do not wish to direct my remarks to that subject.

In a year which has seen the opening of the Docklands light railway, the most exciting innovation in public transport for many years, the new Docklands City airport, the confirmation of the Channel tunnel, which we hope will provide British Rail with the opportunity for which it has waited for years, the successful privatisation of British Airways and the British Airports Authority, and an actual bonus payment to British Rail this year in a higher than forecast public service obligation payment, I find it difficult to accept the Opposition's motion suggesting Government failure in transport. Even if the developments that I have just described are supposed to be harmful, let us have more of them.

I wish to restrict my remarks to one sector — the road network. Despite the increased programme that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has proclaimed since 1979 — I am not ungrateful or churlish about that — there is a need for still further action if our problems are not to be compounded in the future. As a member of the Select Committee on Transport since its inception, I am aware of the difficulties that have arisen over the years. Traffic forecasts have proved woefully inaccurate, planning inquiries have been disrupted, resulting in long delays, and there has been a demand for heavier goods vehicles.

I am aware of the slowness in preparing new schemes to fit into the programme, the negligence of previous Governments in performing the necessary maintenance and rebuilding of our road system, and I am also aware that some local authorities have diverted funds intended for the road system to other projects closer to their hearts. I hope, therefore, that my right hon. Friend realises that I appreciate many of the problems facing his Department.

The present position gives me cause for concern and the prospect for the future is perhaps even more worrying unless there is an unexpected and dramatic drop in vehicle movements. Traffic in this country is growing steadily and, in 1984, 1985 and 1986, outstripped the high growth forecasts used for road planning by the Department of Transport. The latest survey shows that, from the second quarter of 1986 to the second quarter of 1987, traffic increased by some 8 per cent. overall, and motorway traffic by 17 per cent. Anyone who has recently driven on

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the M1, the M6 or the M25 will not be surprised by this. However, the Government should not be shamefaced about this. Their success in regenerating the British economy has led to an increased demand for goods and to the necessary swift and sophisticated distribution system that only roads can provide. The ability and desire of the public to buy more cars has also contributed to the increase in traffic.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): In the light of those statistics and despite last week's welcome announcement by the Department of Transport about some improvements on the A1 in north-east England, does my hon. Friend agree that it would have been much better if the Government had bitten the bullet and built a motorway all the way from Doncaster to Newcastle?

Mr. Fry: My hon. Friend is anticipating my speech. The Government's successes create some of their own problems.

I would like to describe the present position. The figures that I shall give show that forecasts are too low. Very often traffic on new roads is much greater than was anticipated before their opening.

Let us take, for example, the M6 between junctions 20 and 21 and the M4 between junctions 4 and 5. Those roads were built with a design flow of 79,000 vehicles per day and now carry over 88,000. The M1 between junctions 9 and 10 also has a design flow of 79,000 vehicles per day and now carries 102,000. I have not mentioned the M25 which was built to solve the problems of the 1970s, is not coping with the congestion of the 1980s and will be impossible by the 1990s. Between junctions 18 and 19, the M25 has a design flow of 79,000 vehicles per day. The 1986 figures show a vehicle flow of 117,000 which has risen in recent months to 130,000, almost twice the design flow for that particular section of the motorway. North-south traffic will be intensified by the Channel tunnel. The Department admits that, even when the M40 is completed, the M1 will still carry up to 140,000 vehicles per day on roads designed to carry approximately half that number.

Therefore, the new roads that are being planned should at least be seen in a more generous context than they have been in the past. They should be built to a sufficient standard to carry the expected increase in traffic. I urgently ask my right hon. Friend to build the M40 as a two-lane motorway or before long he will be coming to the House to tell us how it is to be widened.

Quite apart from the major motorway schemes, many strategic routes, such as the A11 or the A47, are being improved in a piecemeal fashion because present traffic forecasts do not justify the upgrading of the whole route. However, forecasts have proved to be too low in the past and the policy of piecemeal improvement is shortsighted. I well remember the battle that many of us had in trying to turn the projected A1-M1 link into even a dual carriageway. It was to have been a single carriageway, which would have been a disaster rather than the improvement that it will obviously be under the new specification.

The result of all the low estimates of traffic growth can be shown clearly in the amount of money allocated to the Department of Transport for national road expenditure.

Mr. Adley: I do not know whether my hon. Friend uses the M25 as much as I do, but does he agree that undoubtedly the worst congestion, as on most motorways within 40 miles of London, comes within rush hours? The evidence of one's own eyes on the M25 appears to be that many commuters from the stockbroker belt use it for short journeys. Is there not a danger in ploughing huge sums of money into certain roads purely to ease journeys for commuters, often travelling in cars for which they enjoy tax concessions?

Mr. Fry: I take my hon. Friend's point. Obviously, that is a problem, but those who drive on the M25 at many hours of the day will say that it is heavily congested.

As I understand my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, there was a 2 per cent. nominal increase for 1988-89 over the forecast outturn for 1987-88. However, if one puts that into real terms — constant value of money — rather than being an increase, there will be a 2·4 per cent. reduction next year. In the two years after that, there will be a reduction in real terms of 2·2 per cent. and 2 per cent. respectively.

At a time when congestion is increasing, and will go on increasing as our economy is growing, it is a pity that the road budget is being cut in that way. I do not understand how my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State can be expected to reduce the backlog of maintenance, to renovate the many roads and bridges that need repair over the years, having been neglected by previous Governments, and to start work on all the major new projects in his programme on a slightly lower budget.

The problem has been compounded because the honeymoon with the construction industry seems to be over. For some years now contractors have been willing to build new roads at considerably less than the estimated cost. Unless the figures for the Newark bypass are maverick, the days of cheap road building seem to be over. The estimates for that bypass were well above the original ones put forward by the Department.

Having said all that, even if, by herculean efforts, my right hon. Friend manages to maintain the present progress in his road policy, I hope that I have illustrated that there will be little alleviation of congestion on our main roads simply because our roads are busy and will increasingly be so.

We often compare ourselves with other countries and think we are doing rather well, but if we compare the number of vehicles per kilometre on our motorways with those of our continental neighbours, we see a striking contrast. For example, in West Germany there are some 3,300 vehicles per kilometre on motorways. In France it is 3,940 and in Italy 4,000. In Britain it is 6,763. Those figures show the real need for an expanding road programme.

To make the matter even worse, it is also clear from the Autumn Statement that in the area for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not have direct responsibility — local government expenditure — there is likely to be a disappointing underspend. The figures show a 16 per cent. underspend and a 25 per cent. underspend on capital projects. Sometimes that money has been spent on other priorities. Moreover, the planning process is so long and complicated that planning delays often mean that road programmes slip rather badly.

The picture that I have outlined this afternoon is seen by many other observers of the traffic scene, many of them exceedingly responsible. The average road traveller who uses the roads daily can also see it for himself. Congestion is getting worse. I sympathise with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's difficulties, but I hope that he will consider some suggestions.

First, there should be a more realistic assessment of future traffic flow. Previous assumptions must be updated. They have proved to be wrong too often in the past. Secondly, road building must be accelerated. We must consider the problems of the 1990s and the next century. We must tackle the problem of what to do about an M1 that is overloaded even when the M40 is complete. For example, we should consider whether to widen the A1 or extend the M11. We should at least be considering a positive policy for the future. Thirdly, the underspending of local authorities should be thoroughly investigated and eradicated.

I shall not weary the House with figures about how much money is extracted from the road user, but the increased use of the road by many more vehicles must increase the amount of money going to the Exchequer in licence fees and petrol and diesel duties.

At a time when the Government's borrowing requirement is being reduced — all Conservative Members would congratulate my right hon. Friend on that — here is an opportunity for the Government to consider some innovation in finance for our infrastructure. We should look at what other countries are doing. The United States has long had a highway trust fund. In addition, for many years, it has provided for its essential construction purposes by a system of bonds which has enabled it to build many public utility works. The ideas of other countries can be imported successfully here. Indeed, construction bonds have greater application than to roads alone. They could well be used for the regeneration of our inner cities. It is time that the Government reconsidered the successful ideas of other countries.

I appreciate that money alone is not the answer. It now takes about 15 years for a new major road project to be completed. Much of that is taken up with the planning inquiry and rather more inside the Department by officials preparing for and anticipating the reply to such inquiries. Often delays are caused by the minority making the same point over and over again—"we do not want any new roads". The history of schemes such as that at Archway or the Winchester bypass is one of a series of public inquiries dragging on for months because of the objections of a vocal minority with national rather than local arguments being used against the scheme. Surely we can find a more effective way of allowing legitimate objections without disruption and interminable delay. After all, if we can go ahead with the biggest civil engineering project that we have had in this country—the Channel tunnel—while avoiding this kind of delay, why cannot we do it with the new road programme?

I suggest that my right hon. Friend should consider putting his annual road programme to a Committee of the House for approval, and that local inquiries should be restricted to truly local matters such as access, side roads and compensation. We should, perhaps, recall that our railway system was built through the parliamentary Committee procedure. If our present planning system had obtained at that time, I wonder whether the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich would be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the railways in Crewe. The railways might not have been built. The motor car might have arrived, and railways might not have been found necessary.

It is high time that the Government, who have talked about shortening delays in the planning procedure, did something about the problem. I urge my right hon. Friend to persuade his colleagues than change is urgently needed.

Let me sum up my remarks by saying that, while the Government have been very successful in developing our economy, their very success has caused new problems, particularly for road traffic. Because of the time scale involved in both building and planning roads, I believe that a reappraisal of their entire strategy is needed, and, in particular, an examination of new methods of financing. The Government have done much, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will not mind my saying that, because they have achieved so much already, some of us expect them to do even more in the future.

5.31 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): A transport policy must have a strategy. Complete laissez-faire, in my view and in that of my party, is not on. In any transport policy, there must surely be priorities. There must be a mix between public and private transport: both must be taken into account.

Obviously, the first priority in a transport policy must be the movement of people, which should be rapid, and also achieved at a sensible and reasonable price. Secondly, the movement of freight must be considered. Thirdly, the effect on the environment must be an important factor. Many transport policies are destructive of the environment. Fourthly, safety must be a major part of any transport system. The safety record for road transport is not good, although the record on public transport is very much better.

A transport policy must benefit every part of Britain, not just the south-east or the parts that we have been discussing for most of the debate. It is rather strange to hear a major announcement made today about Super Sprinters, only to realise that, by my calculations, only 16 miles of track in Wales will be used by them. The rest of Wales, apparently, is a desert. I hope that the Secretary of State is not going to finish off what rail system we have left after Dr. Beeching cut it almost to the bone in the 1960s.

A transport policy must also benefit the young, the old and the disabled.

Let us examine the different types of transport. First, there is land-based transport. The roads, and in particular the motorways, have already been mentioned. As Member of Parliament for Brecon and Radnor, I have to ask, "What is a motorway?", because we have to travel 40 miles to reach one, but we are paying for them. We do not know what an Inter-City train is either: we do not have such a thing. Some of us look rather quizzically at what is going on in other parts of the country, where massive investment is taking place.

The motorway system is vastly overcrowded. The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) made some relevant points about this. The overcrowding of the motorways is becoming serious. Car ownership is increasing, and the number of units sold is increasing as well. I believe that I am right in saying that the British motor industry forecasts that another 1·7 million units will be sold in 1987-88. That brings the problem almost to crisis point.

I have no option but to travel to south Wales by train in any period between about 3.30 pm and 8 pm. To get into

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a car at Westminster and drive to the nearer end of the M4 takes longer than to go to Paddington, get on to a train and arrive in Newport. That is serious. I cannot contemplate using my car for an evening constituency engagement.

The amount of investment in roads has been considerable, despite what some hon. Members have said. In particular, the investment in the M25 seems to have created additional traffic problems. I hope that the Secretary of State does not take the counsel of others who advocate another M25 to duplicate the existing one. Surely that is not the answer to our immense problems. There are many delays, much coning and vast quantities of traffic on the motorways. Coning has had serious repercussions in the past nine months or so. There have been a number of very serious accidents as a result of the miscalculations of drivers coming on to coned-off motorways.

In passing, I back the second Severn crossing proposals for the motorway system, which is very important to us in Wales. I advocate — although this is not wholly within the Minister's responsibilities — the construction of a major road between north and south Wales, which, I believe, would transform communications within the Principality. Bypasses of some existing towns are also of major importance, and I feel that the Minister should pay more attention to building more bypasses around some of our more crowded towns.

In the public sector, bus transport after deregulation has been a very mixed story. There have been some benefits in urban areas, but bus services in rural areas have been quite severely hit. They have been more expensive. There has also been poor timetabling, and a lack of feeding into national bus routes.

I also counsel the Minister to resist the siren voices that are demanding an increase in lorry size from 38 tonnes to over 40 tonnes. This can only have a deleterious effect on our road system.

Much has already been said about our rail system. I believe that the financial targets set for the railways have been too tight, certainly in comparison with other west European countries, where railways are more heavily subsidised. A case can certainly be made for more Government support, particularly in the light of the crowding on the road system. We need rapid, hourly, city-to-city services, and an efficient feeder network in the regions and in Scotland and Wales, particularly to feed into the overall network. We also need modernisation, and more of our railway system should be electrified. That will require more investment than the British Railways Board appears to be allowed at present.

We need electrification on all our main routes. It is very serious that the south Wales and Bristol route is not to be electrified. Nor is the Aberdeen to Edinburgh route. That is because of the needs of the system to feed into the new Channel tunnel. Routes with no electrification will be at a disadvantage.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I am listening carefully to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Will he tell us in what way he finds the new diesel multiple-unit Sprinters inferior to electrification, and why he is so keen that there should be electrification? It would mean a substantial outlay in costs, and virtually no difference in what the customer receives. I should like to know what is behind the hon. Gentleman's comments.

Mr. Livsey: I welcome the new Sprinters. They are a move forward. However, they are not using the entire railway network but only what appears to be the central parts of England. I have already mentioned that they will use only about 16 miles of track in Wales. We would like to see that extended. Electrification will be essential to take the railways into the 21st century. Because of the Channel tunnel, electrification will be extremely important for through trains to the continent. We need to think about that and plan for it now. That is why I am propounding this argument.

The Channel tunnel is an epoch-making development which should not be under-rated. It is essential that the regions of England and that the countries of Wales and Scotland should be plugged into the Channel tunnel system. I cannot see why all the trains have to go through London to get to the Channel tunnel. I have no doubt that when Brunel constructed large parts of the Great Western railway he was anxious to get to Paddington, but if he were living now I am sure that he would be anxious to take the quickest possible route to the south coast.

Mr. Adley: It was not Brunel who built the South Eastern railway with a line from Tonbridge to Redhill and Reading. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the line from Redhill to Reading was built by the South Eastern railway in the 1870s for the Channel tunnel? Even Dr. Beeching said that it did not justify being kept open on local grounds but that some day the Channel tunnel would be built. Because of the criteria that the Government have laid on British Rail, that line will not be fully utilised. Will the hon. Gentleman join me in hoping that soon my hon. Friend the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box and give us some good news that the line will be electrified as part of the Channel tunnel project?

Mr. Livsey: I agree with the hon. Gentleman and I recognise his expertise on railway matters. In fact, he is covering a point I was about to make. I regard the development of Reading station as more important than some of the developments taking place in London. I hope that we can make the Minister realise that. It is a well-known fact that during the first world war troops were taken from Dover to central England and beyond via the route through Redhill and Reading. If one looks at the overall rail transport system in this country, particularly as it affects the west midlands, Wales and the west country, one can see that there is a great need for a through route from Reading to the south coast and that the route that exists now must be developed. Taking that transport away from London would be beneficial for the environment and for all concerned.

There is great feeling about the loss of sleeper services in north-east England. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has made a powerful case for retaining the service to the north-east.

I enter a plea to the Minister about the central Wales line and remind him that it travels through five marginal seats. Therefore, it must be of significance in the House. Will he acknowledge that that line is important for strategic reasons as well as for the people who live in the area?

I am sure that the Minister will join me in regretting the tragedy that took place on that line at the Glanrhyd bridge near Carmarthen. I would like to send my condolences to the families involved and remember those who lost their lives. It is important that that bridge is replaced as soon as possible, I hope before the 1988 tourist season. I should like the Minister to give us an assurance that that will be the case. I know that British Rail is actively pursuing new designs for the bridge and I hope that they will be completed as soon as possible.

I understand that there is a new road bridge in Scotland at the Dornoch firth but that no permission has been given for a rail line to run alongside that road. That could be done cost-effectively and it would assist people in that part of the world.

My right hon. and hon. Friends reject the conclusion of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the British Airways-British Caledonian merger. We believe that it made the wrong decision and that it is against the public interest. In the first place, the Government did not give British Caledonian enough routes to make it a viable airline. At the end of the day, it is the customer who counts. The withdrawal of a second major airline, which will be the case if the merger takes place, will cause severe problems, particularly for people in the north and in Scotland.

There is no doubt that flights could be a great deal cheaper within the United Kingdom and to Europe. I know that the Government have been looking at that subject and I hope that they will continue to do so in order to benefit the customers, to ease the movement of people by air and to make travel by air a much more common method of transport.

The use of regional airports is extremely important because of the crowding at Heathrow and Gatwick. I urge the Minister to look again at allowing more usage of regional airports, especially Manchester and Birmingham. I would also like to see Cardiff airport used a great deal more.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I noted the hon. Gentleman's comments about the British Airways-British Caledonian merger and his opposition to it. If the hon. Gentleman's party opposes that merger in principle, will he tell the House what his party would seek as a future for British Caledonian? It is important as a matter of airlines policy in this country.

Mr. Livsey: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to answer in two sentences something that needs a great deal of consideration. British Caledonian does not appear to have had enough routes to make it viable and a reallocation of routes could make it more viable. That has been within the power of the Government. However, I am sure that there are many other things that could be done.

Obviously the Zeebrugge disaster was a serious matter. I am the son of a master mariner and it seems that all the blame is being put on the master and the crew of the ferry. There is no doubt that the company has some responsibility in the matter. I know that that is a subject for the Director of Public Prosecutions and perhaps it is not right to comment on it too much. None the less, the role of the company in matters of safety should be of interest to us all. Certainly in the future companies should become more accountable. There are many important lessons to be learned from this terrible disaster.

Ferry routes other than those across the Channel, such as those in Scotland and across the Irish sea, are extremely important. The downturn in merchant shipping in Britain is serious. It is perhaps outside the remit of this debate but unquestionably it is becoming necessary for there to be greater investment in shipping and shipbuilding and the Government should provide greater incentive for that to occur.

I urge the Minister to look at an overall strategy for transport in Britain. There should be a mix of public and private transport which will benefit all the citizens of our island.

5.49 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful to have an opportunity to participate in this debate. As the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) has shown, one would like to cover so many topics that one will either have to leave half of them out or gabble. I should like to express my thanks to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who have been here throughout the debate, for their courtesy.

I take up the point made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor about ferries. Nobody could have acted with greater speed or determination than my right hon. Friend. I have already had an opportunity to congratulate him, but I should say that I have been in the House some little time and rarely remember a Minister being so resolute and fast in coming to conclusions about what he reckoned needed to be done in the public interest.

Ferries are a classic example of totally deregulated transport. If we are to try to look dispassionately at regulation versus deregulation, the safety versus profits position of Townsend Thoresen, or P and O as the company now is, and Sealink looks rather like the Manchester City versus Huddersfield game of the week before last. As for Mr. Sherwood, with his obsession about the Channel tunnel, I suggest that he and his shareholders would have been far better spending £500,000 extra on safety than on a spiteful, nasty and objectionable publicity campaign against the project for which he himself once tried to obtain the contract to build. I wonder why we must tolerate the over-weight, over-mouthed and over-here Mr. Sherwood. Perhaps the Home Secretary will look at his work permit and consider withdrawing it. We should all be a great deal better off and life would be much quieter.

We must consider deregulation in this debate. Bus deregulation has been touched on and the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor clearly felt that it had both good and bad points. It is a little early fully to assess the effects of bus deregulation on the passenger. At the moment we are enjoying certain benefits. However, only time will tell how long they will continue or whether they will continue indefinitely. Whether the proliferation of small companies resulting in some places in traffic chaos is in the public interest, whether they will all survive and whether, at the end, we shall be left with a better or worse bus service than we had before are vital questions, but we cannot yet answer them. London Regional Transport is doing an extremely good job, but we must remember that in London we have not deregulated but nationalised. Before we draw too many conclusions from the policies that the Government have carried out—in many instances most

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skilfully and successfully—we must try to tone down the dogma of deregulation. I say that to hon. Members of all parties.

On one aspect of deregulation there have been some serious and damaging side effects that I do not believe were envisaged at the time of the legislation. I refer to the deregulation of coaches. Many more people are travelling on cheap, low-fare coaches, but in my view the effects on the community have not been anywhere near fully examined. The competition that British Rail faces from deregulated coaches is grotesquely unfair. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), when she was the Minister, referred to the intimidatory driving of coach drivers on many motorways. We all know that to be true, and some timetables call for quite impossible average speeds to be attained. Those timetables are used to compete with British Rail on commuter and other coach services.

I should like to ask my right hon. Friend one or two fundamental questions, not only about coach deregulation but on the whole business of road versus rail. Why do we tolerate the situation where we demand that British Rail produces annual accounts and pays £600 million for its own track costs when competition from the coaches is a form of transport in which all the track costs are borne by the taxpayer? I am not talking about private transport and the private motorist; I am drawing a direct comparison between the public transport costs that are borne by coaches versus those of British Rail. It is scandalous that no account is taken of the fact that British Rail must bear track, signalling, police and a whole range of other costs that its competitors do not have to bear.

What about the parking of coaches in London and in many of our big cities? As Sir Robert Reid said to me a few months ago, if he were to park his trains at Piccadilly circus, the community would have something to say about it. However, quite regardless of the public interest, commuter coaches are scattered and parked all over London and many of our other cities.

I must refer also to pollution caused by coaches. Stationary coaches often have their engines left running for hours on end. In the summer that is done to keep the air conditioning going and in the winter to maintain the heating. That causes unacceptable levels of pollution in many of our towns and cities. The Government should look at that problem.

Has my right hon. Friend seriously discussed the coach situation in London with the Metropolitan police? I shall not weary him or the House with lengthy quotations from letters that I have received from Kensington and Chelsea council and Westminster city council. However, I shall quote just one sentence from a letter that I have received from Mr. Innes, the deputy assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan police. In a letter dated 15 January 1987, he wrote:

> "You will be aware that in the Central Area problems with coaches are quite horrendous."

That is one side effect of coach deregulation. I am bound to say to my right hon. Friend: if we are the party of law and order, what are we doing to try to ameliorate the problems that some of our legislation appears to have caused and the problems that we are causing the police?

I wonder how many people realise the actual costs that are paid by the coach companies. If I were to ask those right hon. and hon. Members who are now in the Chamber to give me a figure for the annual licence fee that is paid for a 53-seater coach, I doubt that many would realise that it is less than we, as individuals, pay for the motor cars that we drive. The annual licence fee for a 53-seater coach for the pleasure and privilege of taking up all the road space, polluting our streets, parking illegally and providing unfair competition for British Rail is £87.15. It is well and truly about time that my right hon. Friend's Department took a long, hard look at the way in which coach companies are getting away with licensing their vehicles on the cheap, in comparison with the costs borne by their competitors and British Rail.

I referred a moment ago to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey. In my view, she was one of the best Ministers that we have had in the Department of Transport. I am sorry for those of us who are interested in transport that she went on to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. As long ago as 15 November 1985 she announced that she would introduce speed governors for coaches. The coach industry has conducted a clever and concerted campaign of procrastination with the Department of Transport. It is now nearly two years later —almost to the day—since my right hon. Friend made that announcement, but legislation has still not been introduced. We face a powerful and well-financed road lobby. I hope that in due course my right hon. Friend will be able to tell us about some progress.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) has said, we do not spend a great deal of time talking about roads policy. However, knowing his well-known enthusiasm for roads, I was somewhat amused when he talked about the possibility of the railways being closed. I wonder whether he or any other hon. Member could answer a simple question: why do we tolerate a situation where the safety requirements that have been laid down by Parliament on the railways for 150 years—and properly so—are totally different when it comes to road transport?

Each year there are more than 5,000 deaths and 250,000 serious maimings on our roads. For the life of me I cannot understand how anyone trying fairly to assess the virtues and values of one form of transport against another can fail to take into account the double standards that we apply in matters of transport safety. For example, why has there been no discussion of the extraordinary new decision to introduce in London traffic lights that cannot be seen from the other side of the road? When I asked the Minister about that a few weeks ago, he implied that the invisibilty of traffic lights from the other side of the road was likely to increase safety. That doctrine is new to me. The new traffic lights add to our stock of rotten street furniture.

The age of the road vehicle and the internal combustion engine has been synonymous with the age of ugliness. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor talked about Brunel. In the days of Brunel and the Stephensons we travelled in style. We had good design and good manners. On our roads today we push and shove, and that results in injuries and unhappiness. Motorway madness is not restricted to foggy conditions. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough talked about the M25. It is crazy to devote scarce resources to the building of more and more motorways to cater for rush-hour traffic, especially in and around London where we have a good rail network. Taxation policy and environmental considerations are simply not given the priority that they deserve.

I welcome with half a cheer today's press statement issued by British Rail and the British Airports Authority about the proposed London to Heathrow express rail link. It is proposed to build a railway line to Heathrow off the Great Western main line to the west of Hayes and Harlington station. That deals with only half the problem. We should be dealing with it properly and building a loop line from that point to and through Heathrow out to Feltham on the London and South Western line and providing a proper rail service from Heathrow to Paddington and to Waterloo. That should be seen not only as a rail transport investment but as an environmental investment to cut down the problem of excessive traffic on the M4 and other motorways.

I welcome wholeheartedly the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about rail investment. He mentioned the east coast main line, the Windsor link, East Anglia and Weymouth. That is first class, and the Government are fully entitled to take the credit for it. However, I want to pose a question about the relationship between public sector investment and the use of resources from public transport. I think that I am right in saying that about 60 per cent. of London Regional Transport's costs are financed from the fare box. In Paris, Munich, Amsterdam, or any other European city, the figure generally falls in the 20 per cent. to 40 per cent. range. While I welcome savings that relieve the pressure on the public purse, I believe that there has to be a marriage between savings and investment. We desperately need new tube lines in London, and many of our major provincial cities need much better rail services. We are not doing our job properly and in the national interest if we concentrate solely on increasing the percentage of costs that come from the fare box without taking into account the other side of the equation and increasing investment in the public transport infrastructure.

I have talked about the road versus rail question in relation to investment. We hear that the Government are to spend more millions of pounds on the M25. When will they spend millions of pounds on improving matters on, for example, the Victoria line at Victoria station? I fear that eventually the crush here will make the 1923 cup final look like a tea party.

I am worried by the overcrowding on London Regional Transport. I welcome the Docklands light railway, but it is a great pity that, because of our determination to do the job half properly, we are building a railway which, in operational terms, is incompatible with the rest of the railways of London Regional Transport. We cannot run London Regional Transport trains on the docklands light railway, so this good little system will remain physically unconnected with the rest of London's rail transport. Frankly, were it not for the fact that the Docklands light railway acquired viaducts and track bed from British Rail for nothing, the line would probably never have been built.

I had an exchange with the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor about the Channel tunnel, in which I declare an interest. I intend to buy 300 shares in the Channel tunnel—an excellent investment that I commend to hon. Members. I have no financial interest as I have not bought the shares yet, but I intend to buy them as a way of saying "Yah boo sucks" to Mr. Sherwood who has done a very good job of persuading me to invest in the Channel tunnel. I hope that millions of my fellow citizens will do likewise.

Is my hon. friend the Minister aware of the strong feeling in the House about the future of the Settle-Carlisle railway line? Is he aware that many of us will take the Government's position on that as a test case in deciding whether they are prepared to recognise the enormous efforts made by British Rail and others to improve the finances of that line? Is he aware that part of our nation's infrastructure is literally priceless, and I shall march unhesitatingly into the first lobby that defends it?

Mr. Robert Hughes: Oh!

Mr. Adley: I see that the hon. Gentleman is somewhat terrified at the prospect. Many of us will be appalled if the Government do not keep the line open by one means or another.

We expect an awful lot of British Rail. It is expected to provide figures for us to pore over and criticise when its competitors' track costs are all borne out of taxation. I have a quotation from *Railway World* for December 1987, which shows how up-to-date I am:

> "is it fair that BR, forced on one hand to operate on a commercial basis, should be required on the other to act as a curator of a huge stock of historic structures that it does not need? As the problem escalates we could become faced with the absurd position of BR's commercial operations being sucked dry by a vampire load of conservation."

It is a forlorn hope to suppose that the entrenched road lobby at the Ministry of Transport will do anything other than get its way but it is right to put those thoughts on the record.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the next speaker, I remind the House that many hon. Members wish to speak. If each hon. Member speaks for 15 minutes—I have no means of controlling that—all of them will be called.

6.9 pm

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): It is to be deeply regretted that when voting in a general election the British electorate does not take sufficient account of the respective transport policies of the various political parties. I feel certain that had they done so we would have had a very different result and a different Government elected.

This Tory Government have failed miserably on all fronts to provide our nation with anything remotely like an adequate transportation policy or with the necessary infrastructure for such a policy. The Government's policy, if they have one, is that anything goes. As a result, proper planning and integration have done just that—they have gone. The situation on our roads is chaotic. We have traffic jams, continuous delays, road works, lack of maintenance and cones multiplying by the million.

We should consider too the chaos of our bus services —or more properly lack of bus services—in many areas. We should look at the chaos that regularly occurs in our airports and the frustration which will become more and more prevalent in air travel in future. We should also look at the staggering decline in our merchant fleet, and the difficult situation facing British Rail and BREL due to a lack of sufficient investment and the political will to make railways successful.

I declare an interest as a sponsored member of the Transport and General Workers Union and as chairman, for the current year, of its group of 33 sponsored Members of Parliament. As a former transport worker, I take this opportunity to pay tribute to all the workers in every aspect of the transport industry in this country for the splendid work that they do for the nation, often in most

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difficult circumstances, especially in winter, despite the various Acts and regulations that are made by the Government.

I commend to the Secretary of State and to the House a report published earlier this year by the Scottish Trades Union Congress entitled "Scotland—A Land Fit for People". Its section on transport is particularly good. I urge the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider it carefully, with a view to implementing a large part of it for the greater needs of Scotland's future. Two excellent examples are its call for a road equivalent tariff to be introduced to benefit the islands of Scotland and for a study to be made into the possibility of a roll-on/roll-off direct ferry service between Scotland and Europe. It is a disgrace that none exists at present.

During the last transport debate on 22 April 1986, I forecast:

> "as a result of the Act, there will be utter chaos in Glasgow city centre . . . The city centre will come to a standstill . . .
>
> The sad thing is that there will be no overall benefit to the bus operators, because there just are not enough passengers to fill those buses, or even to half-fill them."

In this winding-up speech, the Minister pooh-poohed my remarks and stated:

> "Those services are registered because operators believe that they can fill the buses, and that will mean fewer cars and less congestion."—[*Official Report*, 22 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 248, 266.]

We all know what happened. Glasgow made national headlines—almost 350 empty buses, bringing the city to a halt. The worst sufferers were the travelling public, who were unable to travel anywhere. The situation in the city centre is now much improved, due to the withdrawal of many of the same services, but the city as a whole has a much worse bus service than it had before the Transport Act 1985.

Although, nationwide, the position is somewhat unclear, and will be so for another year at least, it is obvious that the 1985 Act has been a huge failure. In many parts of the country, early morning, off-peak, late evening and Sunday services have disappeared. Fares have not come down; they have gone up substantially in some areas. Co-ordination, integration, planning and timetabling have gone by the board. In some areas, crews have been forced to work much longer hours and have had to accept massive cuts in wages just to keep their jobs—in some instances, £40 a week. There have been thousands of redundancies in all grades, garage closures and the appearance on our streets of vehicles more fitted to a transport museum than the streets of Britain. Reliability has become a thing of the past, and the public have lost confidence in our bus services.

Another victim of the 1985 Act is the bus manufacturing industry. It is in such a sorry state that I forecast that, in the not-too-distant future, new bus grant will have to be reintroduced if we are to have any British bus manufacturing capability at all and are not to become totally dependent on imports.

Another total failure was the Government's much-vaunted policy of taxi sharing. As far as I am aware, it has just not happened, and it is not likely to do so. On the subject of taxis, the Minister is aware of the concern expressed by the Transport and General Workers Union about attacks on drivers, some of whom have been murdered. How can he justify refusing to change the law to allow taxis to be fitted with alarm sirens similar to those on buses? Will he reply to that point?

On aviation policy, unlike the Liberal party spokesman, the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), I repeat my welcome for the decision to allow the British Caledonian-British Airways merger to go ahead. It may not have been the ideal solution, but the situation was not ideal. There is not the capability for two British megacarriers. Even the merged airline only scrapes into the top 10 big boys in the airlines world. For example, Texas Air is five times the size of BA. Having seen at first hand how some of the megacarriers operate, I say that it is essential that the merger goes ahead in the best interests of the British public, British industry and employees in both companies.

What are the alternatives? They are the total collapse and break-up of BCal and an asset-stripping exercise by predators who are waiting in the wings, and substantial redundancies. However, British Airways and British Caledonian have a duty to support domestic services and jobs in Britain. They must neither neglect nor run down their operations, especially in Scotland. It is not asking too much of them to consider expanding in the north, in Scotland, and in other areas outwith London.

The new airline will not be a monopoly. There is already tremendous competition in the industry. It will be no great surprise if one or two megacarriers go under in the next year or two. There are also plenty of opportunities for smaller airlines to get in on the act if they are responsive to the public need.

However, I am worried about the long-term future development of our airports. Everyone in central Scotland now accepts that, if we were to start from scratch, we would have only one airport instead of three. It may be idealistic, but with the tremendous build-up of air travel and the massive investment that is needed by the turn of the century, an investigation could and should be made into the feasibility of one single international airport for central Scotland.

London may be in danger of getting into a similar situation with Gatwick, Heathrow and Stansted, with the result that many international flights will go to Europe, with the consequential loss to our tourist-related industries. Perhaps lower fares in real terms and more passengers will prevent or offset that.

I worry also about the continuation of Anglo-Scottish flights to Heathrow. Will the Minister assure us that at no time will flights be transferred to Stansted? Will he ask some of his ministerial colleagues to examine the fact that holiday operators rip off Scots, especially at peak holiday times such as the Glasgow fair, by extortionate add-on charges for holidaymakers and their families?

I take issue with the Scottish tourist board and its business plan of April 1987, which states:

> "Scotland must become more accessible to growing long-haul markets, whether by increased direct traffic through Prestwick and/or available and inexpensive add on fares from London and Manchester."

That is a disgraceful approach for the STB to take. It should argue for Scotland to develop its own international links in the market place and for Glasgow to be allowed to develop along normal commercial patterns similar to those in Manchester.

The city of Glasgow has made tremendous progress, from being almost an industrial slum five years ago to being the European city of culture in 1990. There were 700,000 visitors in 1982, and there are expected to be 4 million next year, when it stages the 1988 garden festival. Even the CBI has said that every city in the United Kingdom could learn from Glasgow. People now have a reason to visit the city. They need good access. Therefore, good air services are vital to the city, which is the commercial hub of Scotland, with spokes feeding out to all other parts of Scotland and to parts which other cities do not reach.

I now refer to roads and road safety. The RAC, in its observations on Government spending plans over the next three years, has said that, contrary to some inaccurate statements in media reports, the planned increases are not in real terms. Taking account of predicted inflation of more than 4 per cent. next year, the cash increase will be a reduction of expenditure in real terms. It went on to state that there is no promise of the urgently required immensely greater expenditure to cope with the anticipated serious problems ahead, not least the estimated traffic growth of 40 per cent. or more by the end of the century.

The British Road Federation expressed its concern about a 16 per cent. or £300 million underspend on capital and maintenance in the current year, the evidence that road construction costs have been rising and that insufficient funds will be available, as well as the fact that, according to "Policy for Roads in England 1987", published in April, just before the election campaign, 114 previously announced trunk road schemes will now have later starting dates than published.

In its brief, the Freight Transport Association states that it is unable to corroborate the claims in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that the budget for bridge maintenance on trunk roads was to be stepped up significantly. That is not in keeping with the Secretary of State's speech. Will the Minister tell us who is correct, the Secretary of State or the other people who have kindly sent briefs to hon. Members for the debate?

To its credit, the Freight Transport Association also mentioned the appalling lack of facilities for heavy goods vehicle drivers on our main routes. That is something about which the TGWU feels strongly, as the Minister knows. It is disgraceful that there are no facilities for lorry drivers on the M25, the M20, the M18, the M180, the M56 and the M40. Surely the Secretary of State has a duty in this respect and must make provision for the necessary facilities as soon as possible.

In Scotland, the entire length of the A74 between Carlisle and Glasgow, which is the main link between Scotland and England, must be upgraded to motorway standards in the immediate future. That was almost the only welcome election promise that the Tories made to Scotland, although I fear that they may be delaying its implementation. When will the M74 be completed?

We also need the A8 from Baillieston to Newhouse to become the M8 to complete the Glasgow-Edinburgh link. A motorway from Ayrshire to the M8 and the M74 is essential, as is completion of improvements to the A75 from Stranraer to Gretna. The A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen is totally inadequate. The Hamilton road route in my constituency is needed but I believe is somewhat delayed. [HON. MEMBERS: "Next question."] Conservative Members say, "Next question." I am just illustrating the total failure of the Government's transport policy in Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom.

The Government are attracted to seeking ways of involving private money for roads, which logically means toll roads. When one considers that taxation income from all road-related sources is some £14 billion per annum and that expenditure is only £3 billion, the Exchequer benefits from 75 per cent. of total revenue. As the number of vehicles increases, so does the revenue. Rather than use toll roads, most traffic would use the ordinary network. Has the Secretary of State considered that?

There is no case for introducing yet another American system into our British way of life. Toll roads are unfair, unjust, unnecessary and not wanted. When will an enlightened Secretary of State abolish tolls on bridges and estuarial crossings? The Select Committee on Transport suggested that it should be done by phasing them out over a period. They serve no useful purpose and they are a hindrance to local economies.

One of the biggest road safety problems is drink and driving. The Government must stop pussyfooting. Publicity schemes and the like do not work. I fully support the campaign of the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety for the introduction of random breath testing. I hope that the ten-minute Bill proposed today by my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) succeeds.

Scotland has been the guinea pig for unwanted and unpopular measures such as the poll tax. The Secretary of State missed a golden opportunity to introduce something useful in Scotland when, in answer to my parliamentary question on 2 November, he said that he had no plans to introduce random breath testing. That measure has been successful in other countries and I am positive that it would be successful here. I also favour the Royal Automobile Club proposal for a two-tier penalty system, which would impose much heavier sentences on those drivers who are well above the limit.

I want action against drinking and driving. However, I do not support Scottish Television televising the names of offenders. Some idiots might fancy getting their names on television and many offenders will plead not guilty and clog up the courts, adding to the expense. Others, or members of their families, may be victimised. Not every drunk driver is named in the newspapers but they will be on STV, which is a sort of double penalty—a penalty imposed by the courts and another by STV.

Today newspaper has jumped on the bandwagon and has published a four-page insert disclosing the names of convicted drivers. I appeal to my friends in STV to think again. If they really want to do something constructive, they should stop televising advertisements for alcohol, especially during the festive season. They could show pictures of some of the results of road accidents. I have seen some and they need a red warning triangle in the corner of the screen. Anyone who sees such horrific evidence will think and drive more carefully. That does not just apply to drunken drivers.

Another problem is the introduction in 1992 of cabotage for the heavy goods vehicle and the public service vehicle industries. The Government are dangerously complacent in ignoring representations made to them by the Transport and General Workers Union. In reply to a parliamentary question from myself on 6 November, it was admitted that approximately 3,000 overloaded lorries enter the United Kingdom from Europe each year. With variable driving standards, lower wages and lower

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taxation rates, foreign lorries and coaches will be able to drive around our roads at will, putting our drivers out of work and often posing real safety problems.

If we are to prevent many of the 5,000 deaths each year on our roads, we need tough enforceable laws, backed up by a highly visible police presence. In addition, we need a new motorway construction programme for the 1990s and the 21st century. Despite what the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) has said, people enjoy having a car and delight in using it. The Government should take more action against dud MOT testers, car-dealer sharks who sell death traps to people; they should stop insurance write-offs being rebuilt, and clamp down on unsafe vehicles. The Government should do something to improve our rapidly deteriorating driving standards and behaviour. Those are all positive suggestions.

The all-party Select Committee on Transport, in its report on financing rail services, said:

> "The railway network is a national asset. BR must be given sufficient funds to enable it to use this asset fully."

A list of 29 recommendations followed. It will be another illustration of the failure of the Government's transport policy if they choose to ignore those reasonable and sensible recommendations. There is an unanswerable case for massive investment in British Rail on environmental and energy conservation grounds. It would also create massive employment.

There is scope for expansion in Scotland. Direct rail links to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Prestwick airports are essential and would be well patronised. Electrification north of Glasgow and Edinburgh is desirable. The Dornoch firth crossing needs a rail bridge to be built at the same time as the road bridge. The Government's refusal to approve that is an absolute scandal. British Rail does not come out of that with much credit, as it accepted the Government's decision. I ask the Secretary of State to rethink and to do the decent thing for that part of the highlands.

My hon. Friends the Members for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) have been campaigning against the withdrawal of services, especially sleeper services in south-west Scotland. It is disgraceful that people will have to travel to Glasgow or, even worse, to Carlisle in England to get an Inter-City train. Does the BR board want passengers or not? Its policy of unmanned stations is also unpopular and stops many people travelling by train, especially elderly people who are afraid to use unmanned stations at night. Cannot BR have a change of mind about its policy?

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) referred to the Select Committee visit to Springburn, in which I participated, and suggested that people should move from Glasgow. Why should people and their families move 400 miles to Network SouthEast to get a job in British Rail? Even if they did, how could they afford accommodation? That part of the world is already overcrowded. If the Government had any idea, they would create work in the north and in Scotland, and would alter the north-south drift to a south-north drift.

I have always argued that the Channel tunnel is unnecessary for British transport needs. Nothing has happened to change my mind. Although Glasgow has received some of the early contracts for equipment, that is a short-term benefit. The project is a long-term Trojan horse, which will siphon off even more investment and jobs from the north to the already overcrowded, prosperous south, and make it easier for import penetration into our markets. Whatever happens about the tunnel, I hope that it will not result in British Rail putting all its resources into that one project at the expense of the regions. Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that British Rail investment for the tunnel will have no effect on any of its plans for the rest of the network?

We need the repeal of the Transport Act 1985 and an awareness that transport is a social necessity, by means of the creation of a national concessionary fare scheme for pensioners, disabled, handicapped and unemployed people, and transport policies that give priority to people. Some hon. Members may say that transport is not a political topic. I contend that it is, and that the Government have failed miserably. The electorate should take note and act accordingly.

6.27 pm

Mr. Patrick Ground (Feltham and Heston): I hope that, after listening to the many topics raised by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), the House will not mind concentrating for a few minutes on just one topic. In both the motion and the Government amendment there is a reference to the environment. The amendment refers to Government policies to safeguard the environment. Recently a review was completed by the Department of Transport on the restriction of night flights at Heathrow. The proposals that were announced by my right hon. Friend within the last fortnight affect the possible regime at Heathrow after 1 April next year. Those proposals have important implications for the air transport industry. They are also potentially important not simply for people living around Heathrow, but for people living near other major airports.

There are two points in the Government's proposals that I welcome. First, despite the pressure that has been brought to bear from some quarters to increase the quota of night flights, I welcome the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has decided to reduce the quota from 6,800 a year to 5,750. Therefore, in effect, the quota is reduced to the amount by which it is being taken up. Secondly, I welcome the recognition, despite all that has been said about quieter aircraft in recent years, that many of the so-called quieter aircraft, such as the Boeing 747, are still very noisy, especially at night. Indeed, the consultation document published by the Secretary of State makes it clear that planes that have been described as quieter for so many years have a very noisy footprint. In particular, I welcome that fact that only relatively quiet modern aircraft such as the BAE 146 and the Boeing 757 are to be allowed to take off between 12.30 am and 5 am. That is a very welcome and important development. I hope that that period will be extended progressively to cover at least the period from 11.30 pm to 6 am.

I was disappointed to see no reference to the Eyre report in the consultation document. I regard the Eyre report as the most thorough review of airport policy for many years. It was produced by an inspector who was very alive indeed to the needs of the air transport industry. I want to remind the House of what that inspector said:

> "Although aircraft are becoming less noisy I doubt whether they will ever be so quiet as not to disturb the sleep

> of those living near airports. I regard it as unacceptable in a caring society that even one or two aircraft should be permitted to disturb sleep at night."

The inspector went on to recommend that there should be a complete ban on night flights at Gatwick and Heathrow.

I believe that the Government have listened to some degree to the reasoning of the Eyre report, but it is regrettable that no specific reference has been made to the reasoning or recommendations that it contains. It is unsatisfactory that no clear explanation is given in the consultation document as to why it is necessary to have the comparatively small number of an average of 15 flights a night. Each one of those flights is capable of disturbing the sleep of a significant number of people. We understand that emergency flights are necessary and even the Eyre report made it clear that emergency flights were to be excluded from the recommended ban.

However, I fail to see any clear justification in the consultation document for the number of night flights that are still being allowed under the quota. The explanation given about freight flights is wholly unconvincing. It is very good that those noisy flights are to be excluded between 12.30 am and 5 am. However, there is no clear justification why freight flights are necessary at night. The paragraph in the consultation document that deals with night flights is extremely vague. The reasons for not allowing a complete night ban state:

> "To do so would deny airlines the ability to plan some scheduled flights in the night period, and to cope with disruptions and delays; and damage the airport's status as a 24-hour international airport (with implications for safety and maintenance and the needs of passengers) and its competitive position in relation to a number of European airports."

The air transport industry is of the greatest importance to my constituents and to the constituents of many hon. Members. I would be concerned if any measure damaged the ability of the airport to compete. However, I see no clear sign in the consultation document that a night ban would cause serious problems to the running of the airport.

When the balance is struck between the needs of the air transport industry and the people living around the airport, I hope that the Government will continue to bear in mind the reasoning in the Eyre report. People who live around airports have the same need of a night's sleep as people living elsewhere. Those who work at airports, their families and those who live near airports should be able to sleep without being disturbed by aircraft. The number of flights, whether 6,800 under existing quota or 5,750 in the Government's proposals, are insignificant in relation to the total capacity of the airport. Even if the total quota was doubled, that would only increase the airport capacity by 2 per cent. and that has been rightly rejected as a means of increasing airport capacity. People do not want to fly at night judging from the experience of the quota. People have not shown a great desire to fly at night. Judging from the experience of the existing quota, airlines are by no means keen to fly at night and there appears to be very little enthusiasm on the airlines' part for using up the quota.

I very much hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will look much more closely at the precise needs of the air transport industry with regard to night flights and look beyond the question of emergencies to define precisely the needs of the industry for flights within the quota. I hope also that he will consider whether the needs of the air transport industry for such flights justify waking up so many people for the sake of so few flights. I hope that he will consider how so many major foreign airports manage to survive and prosper with complete bans on night movements and in many cases with the airports shut down completely for a period. I hope that he will consider whether airport policy should be much more firmly and positively directed towards the achievement of a total night ban as has been recommended by the inspector in the Eyre report.

I hope that the reasoning implicit in the consultation document which appears to point towards the logic of a complete night ban will be increasingly spelt out so that it becomes a positive, express aim of Government policy without damage to the air transport industry to achieve a total ban on night movements at Heathrow and other major airports, so that people living around the airports —and that includes those who work at the airports— will have the same opportunity of a night's sleep as people living elsewhere.

6.39 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): The Secretary of State was bullish in his defence of the Government's investment programme for transport infrastructure. However impressive his performance was, it did not make up for the clear lack of an overall transport planning strategy.

We in Wales have suffered from a massive lack of investment in our road, rail, air and sea links. It is little wonder that we lose out so often in attracting inward investment when our transport communications are chronically and woefully inadequate. The Welsh and Scottish economies are not considered as entities in their own right, but unless we begin to look at them in that way we shall always lack the necessary investment to regenerate our economies.

My party welcomes the improvements to the A55 along the north Wales coast, but that creates its own problems because once the bottlenecks at Conwy and Penmaenmawr are resolved the bottleneck will shift further west to my constituency at Llanfairpwll and Gaerwen. Once one problem is settled another is created.

I could take hon. Members on a picturesque tour of my constituency. Many hon. Members have told me how they have spent a lot of time enjoying the scenery of the island. However, transport facilities on the island are extremely poor because, although there has been a steady and sustained growth in commercial traffic using the A5— particularly the Sealink ferries at Holyhead and the B and I ferries—there has been no investment to improve the infrastructure of our roads to ensure that we have good transport facilities and can solve some of the environmental and social problems that are created by increased commercial traffic.

We welcome the increased use of the resources at the port of Holyhead. However, unless we improve road facilities through the island the quality of life for those who live in the villages along the A5 will rapidly deteriorate.

We do not only envisage a growth in commercial traffic using the Sealink ferries. It is worth noting that the present throughput at Holyhead is about 1·6 million passengers a year, 36 per cent. of whom travel by car or commercial vehicle. Overnight from 1 January 1988 there will be a 30 per cent. increase in commercial traffic and a 30 per cent. increase in cars using that port. The B and I Ferries'

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operation that is currently situated in Liverpool will be transferred to Holyhead. Thus, not only will we face further increases in commercial traffic but in tourist traffic. With regard to the drive to attract new industry, it is a matter of urgent priority that the Government improve the A5 through Anglesey.

The Welsh Office has said that it is about to receive the consultant's report on the feasibility study on the A5. Will the Minister say whether that report has been received, when he will make an announcement to the House and whether the Government are committed to improving the A5? I am concerned not only with my constituency but with the lack of an alternative for traffic coming from Ireland to London and mainland Europe.

I am sure that the increased growth in commercial traffic through Holyhead will place a strain on the A55 when it is completed. Would it not make sense to have a new purpose-built A55 along the island through the constituencies of Caernarfon and Meirionnydd Nant Conwy as an alternative route to reach the motorway network in the midlands? In that regard the Government should consider making a joint approach with the Irish Government to the EEC for finance. I am sure that it would be successful.

As there will be an increase in commercial and tourist traffic into north Wales and my constituency, we should have an efficient modern railway link. The safety record of people travelling by train is much better than that for roads. Since 1980 there have been fewer than 50 deaths in railway accidents, compared with 40,000 deaths on our roads. That safety record should be commended. While we should improve road safety, we should also increase the use of the rail service.

As to the economic development of north Wales—I made this point in a question to the Secretary of State for Wales recently – the electrification of the north and south Wales line must be a priority. The Minister intervened when a similar comment was made by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). He said that we should accept Sprinter trains as an alternative to electrification. The Minister must be made aware of the fact that once the Channel tunnel is open, if it becomes operational, one will be able to travel from Dublin on an electrified line, except on the north Wales link. If we want a modern, efficient rail transport network into the next century we must consider the whole package and not bits of it. I urge the Minister and the Secretary of State to use their influence with British Rail to ensure that the north and south Wales lines are electrified as a matter of priority.

A modern, efficient integrated transport network is essential for the economic growth of Wales. I accept that the Channel tunnel will supply opportunities for us in that regard. However, I should like to ensure that we in Wales do not lose because of a lack of political will in Westminster to ensure that we receive a fair share of the cake. I foresee an important role for the port of Holyhead in that development. It is the gateway not only to but from Ireland. Some 80 per cent. of the people who travel to Ireland use the port of Holyhead. I should like to see that town, which has been ravaged by unemployment for so many years, given an opportunity to show what it can do. We must ensure that it is given an opportunity that is equal to any other part of the United Kingdom.

If we are to have sustained economic growth an integrated transport network is essential. I ask the Government to ensure that the investment that they have blandly said is available in so many other parts of the country is also made available in Wales and Scotland.

6.49 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): May I say how much I enjoyed listening to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) make his spontaneous speech about a special part of the country. I had the good fortune to have a house not far from his constituency and I used to visit that wonderful part of the country. I am sure that the Government will take to heart many of the things that he has said, especially about the rail links.

I also want to start with a constituency interest, the west country. The west country—rather like north Wales—tends to be thought of as an inaccessible and difficult place to get to. I must say that when I became the Member for South Hams I felt that it was a long way away and difficult to reach. However, in the four years that I have represented that constituency BR has done a remarkable job. The rail services take a lot of beating. One can get to Plymouth in under three hours by train and to Exeter in under two hours. Totnes, my constituency station, runs a fast and efficient service. If one wishes to travel to Totnes, one can buy a ticket at Paddington straight to Buckfastleigh. From there one can jump on the steam train and chug along up the River Dart in an old-fashioned steam locomotive. It is extremely popular. I pay tribute to the unions in helping BR to bring those steam trains straight to the British Rail platform at Totnes. That is a great achievement.

We also have an extremely good airport. My constituency just skirts round one of the runways at Plymouth airport and we have a first-rate service to Heathrow — five flights a day on Brymon. With the opening of the STOLport on 5 November by Her Majesty the Queen, it is possible to fly from Plymouth to the STOLport within an hour and then out to the continent. I pay tribute to the wonderful work done by Brymon.

The only trouble with Plymouth airport is that it is 1,000 ft up on the edge of Dartmoor. That means that one tends to be diverted to Cornwall when one flies to Plymouth because of the mists. However, that is being put right with new radar equipment and it will be possible to fly far more conveniently to Plymouth and not find oneself in Cornwall.

We have excellent plane and rail services, but I cannot say the same for the road services. It has taken me seven or eight hours to drive up from my constituency to the House because of endless roadworks and cones. I do not know how the Minister organises it, but it seems to me that there are always some roadworks going on, so it is never possible to have a clean run. At the moment there are three major roadworks on the M4. We are deceived, having passed the first one into thinking that there will not be any more. However, having passed the second, we meet the third set of roadworks. It would be good if the Secretary of State could ensure that, when there are roadworks, people are warned well in advance that there are three obstacles. As a result of that knowledge people might make a diversion, and that could save a lot of problems and traffic difficulties.

I believe that the Brymon operations out of Plymouth are a success because they go into the STOLport, one of the most imaginative air traffic developments that has ever been seen.

I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for his most exciting and stimulating speech. Although not all hon. Members would agree, I am sure that they appreciate that he gave us a tremendous race around the country and a lovely picture of developments and improvements. I am sure that most of us recognise that such improvements are the result of the Government's approach to transport needs for the 1990s. My right hon. Friend's speech was a tour de force, and I am sure that the House appreciated it.

I have mentioned Brymon and the STOLport. One of the attractions of the STOLport is that Brymon does not have a monopoly, because it faces competition from Eurocity Express. I do not believe that Brymon has come clean regarding the amount of interest that British Airways has in its future. Although British Airways states that it has only 40 per cent. voting rights, it has a 95 per cent. interest in Brymon. In fact, 1,250,000 preference shares have gone to British Airways, and Air France has linked up. I am advised that when Eurocity Express made its application, great fury emanated from Brymon and British Airways because they wanted a monopoly out of the STOLport. They were disturbed that Eurocity Express would compete with its short take off and landing planes, try to put Brymon to the test and not allow it to have a monopoly. However, British Airways has been extremely skilful.

I should like to talk about the success of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and what is at risk. At this point I should declare an interest. I have an interest in British Midland Airways, which does a fine job. I am not ashamed to say that I believe that it is one of the best independent airlines in the country. I also have an interest in British Island Airways, the charter airline that operates out of Gatwick. That airline does a remarkable job. In fact, it is fair to say that I am interested in the other airlines as well. I help all the independent airlines as much as I can, be they Brymon, Monarch or Britannia. I believe they do a tremendous job in bringing competition to our airline policies. I am a firm supporter of competition, private enterprise and independent airlines, whether retained by them or not.

If the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report goes ahead, one airline will have approximately 93 per cent. of the routes out of the country. I do not believe there is much point in the Civil Aviation Authority stating that there should be a review of licensing when 93 per cent. of those licences will be with one airline. It is an empty suggestion. I believe that the Government cannot have a credible aviation policy if 93 per cent. of routes are with one airline. The Government have lost credibility with regard to competition and their belief in helping the consumer. The Government have also lost credibility with the independent airlines. I do not believe it is the Government's fault.

Mrs. Dunwoody: It is the airlines' fault.

Mr. Steen: I shall explain whose fault it is.

Once the MMC recommends that the merger should go ahead I believe that the Secretary of State has no choice. He must accept its recommendation by law, provided that the MMC does not say it is against the public interest. That is the first problem faced by the Government.

Secondly, I believe the Government may have made a mistake — of course, before the present Secretary of State had responsibility — in not putting into practice Civil Aviation Paper 500. I believe that the Opposition recognise what an important breakthrough there would have been for the regional airports, for British Caledonian and for British Airways if CAP 500 had been put into effect.

The Government got it wrong. They carved up the routes and gave British Caledonian what turned out to be bad routes and gave the good routes to British Airways. The result is that British Caledonian is now to be taken over by British Airways. The die was cast once the Government failed to implement CAP 500. There is no point in having a Civil Aviation Authority if one does not follow its recommendations.

When things went wrong, the British Airways offer was made. I am advised that the MMC said to British Airways that it did not think much of the merger proposal and asked it to come up with some conditions so that the MC could tell the country that competition would still exist.

British Airways put forward proposals. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission did a good job on the report, but its members are not experts on aviation. When the commission got the list of conditions that British Airways suggested, it thanked the company and said that it would accept them. The Secretary of State could not then turn down those conditions and impose new ones. We all have a high regard for Lord King. British Airways' footwork was very neat indeed, and the Secretary of State was caught out.

The merger was announced on 11 November. On 10 November British Airways issued a press release about the merger and what it was going to do. I have a copy of that release here. How did British Airways know what was in the report the day before it was announced? The Secretary of State did not know; nor did the House; but British Airways issued this statement. It was not released until 11 November, but it was dated 10 November. I took the matter up with the Library, which checked with British Airways, which said that the problem was due to a typing error.

Mr. Morgan: The most likely explanation for that is that, as the House decided to run Tuesday into Wednesday, British Airways did the reverse and ran Wednesday into Tuesday.

Mr. Steen: That is a bit of "Alice in Wonderland" on the part of British Airways. The matter calls for an explanation. I cannot believe that the major PR company that represents British Airways, which always behaves in the most impeccable, responsible way, could produce a press release dated on the wrong day and then claim that it was due to a typing error.

Did British Airways have inside information? Once it had put its conditions forward, and the MMC had accepted them, the die was cast. The merger had to go ahead, and the Secretary of State had to approve it. I think that Lord King has bounced the House, the independent airlines, the Government, and the Civil Aviation Authority, too, into the merger.

The report said that 5,000 slots would be given up. However, there are no more than the four domestic routes

[Mr. Steen]

out of Gatwick to four destinations in this country, so nothing is being given up. If British Airways chooses to apply for the licence, it will get some of its slots back. When the report says that up to 20,000 slots could be given up, it refers to the Paris, Brussels and Nice routes. If those routes go to other airlines, British Airways will give out British Caledonian slots on those routes, so there will be no room for greater competition. The odd thing is that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission acknowledges that charter airlines have provided competition and brought down fares. But what will happen at Gatwick when the merger goes ahead? Before answering that, I shall digress a moment to describe what is happening at Heathrow.

British Airways is putting larger and larger planes on European routes on which there is a cartel. Seats that it does not sell as scheduled seats are being sold through the back door to bucket shops where one can pay one half or one quarter of the price. That means that the large wide-bodied jets that are not needed on some of the European routes are being put on those routes so that British Airways can break into the charter market. Charter airlines are not allowed at Heathrow, but British Airways is taking charter passengers out of Heathrow by putting them on the back of scheduled aircraft.

At Gatwick, it is the other way round: one is not allowed to put scheduled passengers on charter airlines. If there are 20 seats in an empty charter aircraft, one cannot put scheduled passengers on them, even though they are going to the same destination.

If the merger goes ahead, British Airways will put wide-bodied planes on scheduled services out of Gatwick to destinations that are presently British Caledonian services, and thus start eating into the charter market by putting charter passengers on the backs of the wide-bodied planes out of Gatwick. That is what the charter airlines—not only British Island Airways, but Monarch, Orion, Britannia and Dan Air—fear most. Those airlines have done a tremendous service to this country, serving consumer interests and prices by providing competition. My concern is that British Airways will do the same thing out of Gatwick as it is now doing out of Heathrow.

A few weekends ago I had the experience of flying to Frankfurt by British Airways. I said that I wanted the excursion fare. British Airways was sorry, but there were only a few excursion fares to Frankfurt and, when full, one had to travel club class. On the plane I discovered that three quarters of the seats were club and fairly deserted, and, right at the back, all those poor people on excursion were squashed in. British Airways is squeezing out excursion fares, so that there are fewer and fewer rows available, and insisting that one flies club class, which costs more. That is another anti-competition, restrictive practice.

The MMC report says that British Airways would welcome competition out of Heathrow, and that British Airways would not object to licences; and Lord King welcomes competition. But he knows that he will not get any. How can there be parity out of Heathrow to the European capitals when a cartel of British Airways and Lufthansa pulls in the profits? British Airways and Air France pull in the profits, too. No one else can fly on those routes because the Government, despite valiant efforts, are unable to get foreign Governments to agree that independent airlines can compete with British Airways and Lufthansa.

Let us examine what competition does. Flying from Glasgow to Heathrow on a British Midland diamond service covers 340 miles and works out at 21·17p a mile. I am sure that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has used that splendid service. From Heathrow to Paris, which is 216 miles, the economy fare is 39·35p and the club fare 48·61p a mile. So flying from Glasgow to Heathrow on British Midland costs less than half the economy fare on British Airways from Heathrow to Paris per passenger mile. That is the effect of the cartel. Until that is broken, there is no way in which the Government can ensure that independent carriers provide consumer benefits.

If the merger goes ahead, the Government should suggest to British Airways that it should give up half of its flights a day to, say, Paris and Brussels, and that idependent carriers should compete with British Airways on these routes. That is the only way in which competition can take place. If British Airways and British Caledonian combine to hold 93 per cent. of routes, there can be no competition.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does not Air Europe already have a licence to fly on the London to Paris route that is being blocked because of British Caledonian's objections? If those objections are withdrawn, why is it necessary to cut anyone's routes, provided that Air Europe receives the capacity and slots to fly in competition?

Mr. Steen: The hon. Gentleman is right. If Air Europe flies out of Gatwick there will be competition. However, I am talking about Heathrow, which has the cartel and restricted space. I suspect that British Airways will move more and more British Caledonian flights out of Gatwick into Heathrow and leave fewer and fewer peak time slots for independent airlines. It is one thing to say that British Midland can fly from Heathrow to Paris, but it must fly the same number of flights out of Heathrow to Paris in order to compete. If not, there is no competition and there will not be enough slots. That is the problem. British Airways has it all ways. It can put charter seats on the back of scheduled flights; it can take up all the slots in peak time; and with the cartel, it can prevent anyone from competing on the principal revenue routes in Europe.

Why, in April last year, did British Airways increase its fares to most European capitals by 3 per cent., and again in November by 5 per cent.? In Amsterdam there is independent competition and in Gibraltar there is competition from Air Europe. Those are the only two routes on which there has not been a price increase by British Airways. That is the effect of competition. I am sure that the Secretary of State must appreciate the fear not just of the airlines with which I am closely involved, but of all the independent airlines.

We have seen an enormous growth in air traffic and the great success of our aviation industry. Those things are at risk, and we are on the horns of a dilemma. If the merger goes ahead without the Secretary of State doing something in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Authority, consumer protection and competition will go out of the window. There is a sense of injustice and the feeling that the independent airlines cannot compete and cannot get the slots. They cannot raise the capital and operate at the same frequencies. The CAP 500 saw the beginning of a monopoly creeping into aviation. I fear that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report merely completes that work.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I repeat Mr. Speaker's appeal for brevity. The winding-up speeches are expected to begin at 9.20. Therefore, there is a little over two hours left and many hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye.

7.10 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I should like to speak about the effect that the Government's transport policies have had, especially in my constituency. I want to draw to the attention of hon. Members some of the comments made by the Minister of State about how the Government's policies have improved the quality of service for our people and to demonstrate that in my constituency that claim is very hollow. Far from improving, the quality of public transport has dramatically declined and a shadow of uncertainty has been cast over the bus services. Government policies have also undermined other services, especially the taxi service.

I want to declare an interest in public transport. For some years I was chairman of one of our biggest municipal transport operators, and I was an executive member of the Federation of Public Passenger Transport Employers. I watched the deregulation Bill taking shape line by line and clause by clause. I remind the House that the background to that Bill came not from the Government but from the Adam Smith Institute, an organisation of Right-wing extremists who were laughed at years ago by most intelligent people. Its proposals were not taken seriously by anybody in the transport industry, but it appears that the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) believed that it had the key to what he thought was the way forward in public transport. That is a joke.

In my area there are four main operators. They are Kingston-upon-Hull City Transport, East Yorkshire, Grimsby-Cleethorpes Transport and, in my constituency, the Lincolnshire Road Car Company. Since deregulation the Lincolnshire Road Car Company has cut its route mileage by nearly a half. The Secretary of State said that route mileage in Britain had increased, but that is a false claim because he is talking about areas in which there may be more than one operator running on the same route at the same time. Certainly that increases route mileage, but it does not improve the quality of the service.

No significant new operators have come in since deregulation. The new services that have been brought in have simply been introduced by existing operators running on works contracts, works journeys, and they provide the service at a peak time when there is already an adequate service. On the evening, Sunday and early morning works journeys that have been lost, no new operator has come in to fill the gap left by the Lincolnshire Road Car Company. The operations that have been introduced are funded by the county council and the district councils.

The end of cross-subsidy in the town of Scunthorpe has meant route reorganisations. Not only has that ended many services at 6 o'clock, thereby stranding many people, but it has recently stranded elderly people who want to go to their doctors' surgeries. They have lost their routes, especially the town circular service, and people who want to go to draw their pensions can no longer catch a bus on that route. Some of those people are at the bottom of a large hill and the walk is beyond the frail and elderly. The Government's proposals have made those people prisoners in their own homes, simply because the company can no longer operate uncommercial services that are cross-subsidised from the profitable ones.

A study was commissioned by Glanford borough council to look into the leisure provision in its area. One thing that came out very strongly in the consultants' study was that the lack of public transport and the expense meant that many young people from the rural areas were not able to come in to use the leisure facilities in the urban centres. That is a quite dramatic effect.

Some companies in my constituency have complained bitterly that early morning works journeys are causing enormous problems to their staff in getting to work for the early morning shifts. The people who are affected are the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society. They are the elderly, women at home, young mothers with children and young people—all of whom rely on public transport. They may not be among the two thirds of people who are car owners that the Secretary of State talked about. However, they have rights, and at the moment their rights and needs are not being recognised by the Government.

At the Scunthorpe depot, 50 per cent. of the local bus company employees have lost their jobs. As part of their struggle to survive, many of the staff have accepted wage cuts of between £20 and £30 a week in order to stay on with the company. There are no longer any premium payments and there is no shift pay. The people who work for the Lincolnshire Road Car Company are simply paid on a flat rate. The Government's so-called improvement is not only at the expense of consumers, because the Government are taking money from the people who work in the industry — the staff who are losing wages as a result of Government policies.

The effect locally has not just been limited to the bus service, although that has been bad enough. It has also affected taxis. As a result of deregulation more taxi plates can be given out. Many taxi operators buy their original plates, sometimes for as much as £1,000 per plate. I realise that that was not the intention of the law as it stood, but it is a long-standing tradition in the industry. The people who buy their plates sell them when they retire. Therefore, the price that they pay for their plates is recovered and that is an accepted part of their retirement benefit.

When deregulation came in, plates were increased in the town by nearly 50 per cent. A further batch of plates will now be given out because of a ruling by Reading council that it cannot pick and choose who gets the plates; the plates must be given out in a batch. That is assuming that there is sufficient demand. That will completely undermine the viability of some of the town's taxi owners. I would not want to see anybody who wants to get a taxi job being in any way restricted, but it is not doing people any favours to allow them to enter an industry in which there is over-demand and over-capacity, because they will be doomed to work long hours for low pay in order to make a living. It is in no way desirable that there should be so many taxis that many of them are restricted to circling the town, going round and round waiting for an empty taxi rank. That is not a step forward.

[Mr. Elliot Morley]

The county and district councils are all that are holding together the public transport system in the area. They are doing that by the use of their concessionary fare scheme that was introduced by a Labour-controlled county council and also by being sympathetic and using subsidies where they are needed. There is a strong case for subsidies for public transport. Not only does public transport supply the needs of the weakest members in our society, but is a sensible use of resources.

I draw the attention of the House to a study carried out by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory. It developed a computer model of a cost-benefit analysis in order to investigate the value of putting money into public transport subsidies compared with the cost of roads, accidents, pollution and providing service car parks in congested areas. That study showed that the former GLC's fares fair policy was the correct way to induce people to leave their cars at home and use public transport. The south Yorkshire policy of low fares was justified and correct, and the west Yorkshire policy was moving in the right direction, but it had not cut the fares enough. That was an independent study by a Government Department.

That study was suppressed. It was never made widely available. It demonstrates that what the Labour party is arguing for is correct in principle and in terms of scientific fact.

In regard to roads, I shall also briefly mention the Humber bridge, which has caused some concern. Glanford borough council had the foresight to be involved in setting up the Humber bridge and it has an interest in it. As the Secretary of State is probably aware, the debts on the Humber bridge are so crippling that the interest is not covered by the income from it. For many years I was a commuter across the Humber bridge. I mentioned to the chairman of the Humber bridge board, Councillor Alex Clarke, that in all the years that I commuted across the Humber bridge I must have paid off a substantial chunk of it. He told me that, because of the rate of interest, all those hundreds of pounds I had spent on tolls had just about paid for one rivet in the bridge, let alone a substantial part of it. It is important that the bridge is recognised as part of the infrastructure and the economy of the whole region. It therefore deserves support by having its debts wiped off and all crossing tolls abolished. It does not make sense, when one goes through the Dartford tunnel, to be held up by long queues in both directions. What does that cost the economy in terms of the people who are held up when they should be on their way?

Public transport is so important that it cannot be left to the free economy to decide its direction. That is not done in any other European country. I am amazed that the Government find it amusing that the Labour party is arguing for an integrated transport policy. Is there something amusing about having trains timed to meet buses, and buses operating in areas of need, and taxis operating where buses do not operate? Is there something amusing or illogical about that? I do not think so. We need a policy which meets people's needs, is given the necessary resources and is subject to democratic local accountability. I find nothing amusing about that.

In my constituency people are stranded in their own homes. Young people cannot afford to go out and use the leisure services provided by the public authorities. We have a limited bus service which means that young women have to walk home late at night because there is no service for them. Young people are isolated in their villages because there is no service. The free market has failed those young people. The only thing that can provide a proper and coherent service is an integrated transport policy and commitment and support of a kind that is not given by the Government.

7.23 pm

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am delighted that the House is devoting a major part of its time today to transport policy. The Conservative party has a proud record of supporting the user of transport, whether it be bus or coach, train, boat, car or plane. It contrasts with the Labour Government's shameful record, during the period which so many people cannot remember, when they were in office in the 1970s. Since then, Labour authorities have continued to put the operator before the user. Why should the state know best when ever increasing subsidies are thrown away regardless of need? The Labour party's proposed national transport authority would be a bureaucratic dinosaur. Traffic would come under the stranglehold of politically motivated local authorities.

I should like to discuss bus and rail traffic. Just over a year ago bus travellers outside London found themselves at the centre of a revolution in public transport. For the first time in half a century the bus industry was opened up to anyone who wished to run a service, provided he could comply with the safety regulations. The Opposition bitterly opposed the deregulation of long-distance coaches and local bus services. Labour prefers municipalisation and state stranglehold to service as the watchdog for the bus and coach user. Labour has defined its policy in the document "Failed Directions" but mistitled "Fresh Directions". It said it would repeal the Transport Act 1985 and thereby reverse all the benefits passed on to bus travellers.

Let us remember the situation prior to the passing of the Transport Act. Rising costs—which the Opposition would rather forget—stagnant passenger numbers and increasing subsidies were the order of the day. Since then bus mileage has risen by almost 12 per cent. and by 17 per cent. in the shire counties. That gives the lie to the Socialists who said that services would be cut. We have seen over 440 new operators entering the bus market, contrary to the words of the Opposition during the passage of the legislation. At the same time local authorities have made substantial savings, benefiting ratepayers by £40 million per annum.

In the York area we have seen new routes, new vehicles with a fleet of hoppers, a new courtesy on the part of drivers and new operators. The West Yorkshire Road Car Company, denationalised, has set its aim as providing a better service with a more local image. Almost 40 million passenger miles have been achieved with its 470 vehicles. I welcome the new management and wish it well in serving the York community.

I have spent a most useful couple of years fulfilling an industry and parliamentary trust fellowship with British Rail as my chosen company. It has allowed me to see all aspects of its work and I have grown to have a high regard for its senior management. Of course, as the Member for York I am also closely in contact with this major employer in my constituency. I have been pleased to see the

Government's consistent support by approving investment projects in British Rail worth over £1·3 billion since 1983. Tory support for British Rail gives the lie to Labour's claims.

Let me remind the House of the words of Labour's transport spokesman, the former right hon. Member for Barrow, Mr. Albert Booth, at the time of the 1983 election:

> "Make no mistake: if Mrs. Thatcher is re-elected it will be the end of the line for British Rail. The Conservative manifesto gives the green light to the biggest series of closures since Beeching."

How wrong he was. A massive investment programme without any major route closures and with over 50 rail stations opened or re-opened since 1983 has been the reality. No wonder Labour was rejected. The transport policy of the Conservative party was another reason for its third successive term in office.

If new rolling stock is to replace old equipment, inevitably there will be a shift from regular maintenance, just as we run our motor cars for longer periods between major services.

Mr. Morgan: The hon. Member has just said that 50 new stations have been opened by British Rail. He also said that Labour's policy would have been disastrous because it would have resulted in a municipal stranglehold. Is he aware that the normal process by which new stations are opened for use by British Rail is by investment by those very municipal authorities whose efforts he is denigrating? They pay for them.

Mr. Gregory: I should like to go down that road, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I will not. I hope that the hon. Member will catch your eye later. What he has said shows severe lack of knowledge on the Opposition's part about purchasing policy. Investment in stations is undertaken substantially by British Rail, with the approval of those stations by the appropriate Minister, be it the Secretary of State in Scotland or the Minister south of the border.

To deny the point that I was making about investment in new rolling stock would be ostrichlike and sticking one's head in the sand. Those who want an efficient modern railway system are pleased about the investment in new construction. In this connection I have been pleased to see faster and more efficient passenger rail traffic, particularly on inter-city, for example, with the electrification of the north-east main line, and modern ways to attract freight from the roads. On conservation grounds, it makes sense to move more heavy traffic by rail. Too much is causing devastation to our historic centres, including my own constituency of York.

I have referred to new rolling stock. I would like to commend the speed and decisiveness with which my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for railways has approved applications by British Rail. The Opposition have never been able to give an example—and I hope they never will—of tardiness by my hon. Friend. For too long British Rail Engineering Ltd. has taken orders from British Rail without using fully its engineering expertise. Now British Rail Engineering Ltd. is winning orders openly against competition.

I know the pride with which the BREL work force in York tackles its work. It has an order book worth £140 million, which includes class 321 and 319 electrical multiple units for Network SouthEast. I am delighted, therefore, to hear today of the announcement of the Super Sprinters, worth £69 million.

There is a serious misunderstanding by the Socialists on York city council about British Rail's purchasing procedure. Quite rightly, British Rail makes application for the approval of funds which are evaluated by the Department of Transport. It would not be right for my hon. Friend the Minister to dictate specifically where those funds should be applied. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity for BREL to compete and to win an order book against strong competition——

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): Would the hon. Gentleman care to tell the House by how much BREL's operations in the city of York have been run down over the last couple of years?

Mr. Gregory: I would expect the Opposition to be better briefed on such a factual point. I commend to the hon. Gentleman that he should do that. The Opposition have been slumbering for some time. The hon. Gentleman has not taken note of the fact that we are moving from heavy maintenance to less regular maintenance so that the skills inherent in York, which I recognise but which the Opposition do not, can be put into new build in the United Kingdom and for export. It would be a marvellous fillip to the city of York and to British Rail Engineering Ltd. in particular if it were to win the order for Super Sprinters to which my right hon. Friend has referred. However, the export potential and the ability of a major engineering company to win non-rail orders should not be underestimated.

British Rail has some catching up to do in passenger services. Too many trains are still not providing catering facilities. Why cannot British Rail extend to all passenger trains a trolley service, such as the excellent one which operates on the trains from Victoria to Gatwick? Why does not British Rail provide on trains newspapers, periodicals and train-related memorabilia? That would certainly meet passenger demands. Great strides are being taken in on-station catering, but still not with the imagination that I have seen on Dutch railways, for example, where Utrecht has a thriving range of shops, restaurants and other support services around its rail station. A few stations here, particularly Victoria and Waterloo, are moving in that direction but development is slow, particularly at provincial stations.

Mr. Steen: On the catering point, does my hon. Friend agree that there has been some improvement on British Rail? It has got rid of its foreign sparkling waters and it now stocks English waters. Does he agree that British Rail should extend its catering to include English wine, not just foreign varieties?

Mr. Gregory: My hon. Friend makes some excellent points. The tourism aspects of British Rail would thereby be enhanced. Clearly there is demand not only for those but for the reintroduction of Rowntree Mackintosh's excellent confectionery, Kit Kat, which has recently been removed from inter-city services.

If subsidiaries of British Rail are to be denationalised, will the consumer be placed first? That cannot be so if one considers, for example, the lacklustre material of British Transport Advertising Ltd. It is incredible that one can travel on an inter-city train and see no form of advertising —unless, perchance, one picks up the magazine—and that there are no opportunities to advertise in connection with the ticket. Support services are meant to support British Rail users.

[Mr. Gregory]

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State holds discussions later this year with British Rail about its plans to denationalise non-key activities, will he give an assurance that any changes will benefit the user and widen choice? That will ensure that the Conservative party is the true friend of the traveller and that we put the user, not the operator, first. I urge the House to support the amendment.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): No parliamentary debate about transport would be complete without representation from Tyne and Wear, which has a transport system rivalling even that of the Docklands light railway. Tyne and Wear has one of the most advanced passenger transport systems in the world, incorporating a metro light railway system and full integration with accompanying bus services.

I shall explain to the House how the system has been affected by the Government's deregulation policies. The system was devised, provided and run by local government and has now been undermined by national Government policies. Twelve months after deregulation, it is possible to look around Tyne and Wear and conclude, superficially, that nothing in public transport has changed. If I count the number of buses in the centre of Newcastle on any weekday, I can almost trick myself into thinking that things have improved. The metro is still running and still appears to be integrated with the buses. The British Rail Sunderland line still operates when the new Pacer trains are working correctly. We still have Traveltickets and single journey through ticketing. Passengers have all the travel information that they require. Bus stops are well signed and bus stations are being brought under control. A dial a ride scheme is being introduced into Sunderland and south Tyneside.

Public agencies, the passenger transport authority and the passenger transport executive have done an excellent and professional job in protecting the interests of the passenger during the transition to deregulation. The Government have been well served and assisted in achieving the present position by the PTA and the PTE, neither of which actively supported or promoted deregulation. On the contrary, they sought the specific exemption of Tyne and Wear from the Transport Act 1985, only to be thwarted by the full weight of the Government on the basis of some very lightweight arguments—light in substance, but heavy in dogma.

Counting buses in Newcastle can be a superficial exercise. One must go further to establish a true picture and to get some idea of what has really happened and what is really emerging. Let us start with money, always an important consideration in these matters. The expenditure limit in Tyne and Wear for 1986-87 was about £64 million and the Secretary of State has mentioned a figure of £53·5 million for 1988-89. That is a cash reduction of some 11 per cent., but, in real terms, it is a massive cut of 25 per cent. Last year, the Secretary of State said that the funds available would be sufficient for existing concessionary travel schemes to continue, yet he proposes a 25 per cent. cut. I must support the PTA, not as a matter of dogma, but as a matter of fairness and social justice, in its bid to make the Secretary of State increase expenditure to a more realistic level in view of all that has been achieved in Tyne and Wear.

In order to meet the Government's new financial regime of lower expenditure levels each year for public transport, and to achieve the transition to deregulation in Tyne and Wear, nearly £20 million has been paid out for redundancies and nearly 1,500 people have been thrown out of work, and that is in the worst jobs black spot in the country.

Against that background of financial cuts by the Government we have been promised lower fares and improved services, so we have minibuses. Well, for the present we have minibuses — the cure for all public transport ills, innovation in motion, initiatives on wheels. Well, we shall see in a couple of years.

What else do we have? I know what we had. We had a comprehensive through-ticketing system known as Transfare, which now operates at only 14 of the 44 metro stations. Bus-to-bus Transfare no longer exists at all. As a result, many passengers have suffered a hidden fares increase and families with children going to school suffered a fares increase of 100 per cent. or 200 per cent. on deregulation day.

The countrywide ticketing scheme was a boon for the area. Now operators are messing passengers about, accepting some tickets and not others, playing around with the passengers' interests and welfare. Multi-journey tickets were just dismissed by the bus operators. Integration is now breaking up as bus routes are diverted past metro interchanges which were designed to take buses. Passengers are denied access to the system or are penalised through their pockets by the bus operators who have opted out of the long-established and much praised ticketing arrangements. Pensioners are also being forced to join in and are diverted away from the metro system.

Where is the value for money or passenger choice? We face the prospect of a £300 million investment being under-used because of Government policy and the commercial rulings of bus operators. Public waste and inefficiency are the direct result of Government interference in our local affairs. That Government promised improved services, but what has happened? Where are the benefits to which the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) refers?

We now have old 1971, 1972 and 1973 single deckers back in the area, newly painted but belching smoke all over the place. Services run from 8 am to 6 pm — exactly what was predicted. They run on the best used routes, but not at lower fares, sapping the resources of the opposition so that soon there will no commercial services after 6 pm or on Sundays. It is not the Government, but the fare-paying passengers who pay for that wasteful and needless competition, either through higher fares, or by having reduced services or no services at all.

The future is now becoming clear; all that was prophesised for the Transport Act 1985 will become fact. We already have bunching of buses in the centre of Newcastle and Sunderland, buses chasing one another in and out of bus stops and bus stations, and all those other lovely practices which are part of free competition. There is little doubt that fares will continue to increase at a higher rate than inflation. Single fares increased by nearly 10 per cent. last April and Travelticket prices have nearly doubled since last October.

Operators are now talking about deregistering evening and Sunday services, thinning out their frequencies, and the talk of redundancies is once again in the air in Newcastle. Bus staff have made major sacrifices by working longer hours and taking reduced pay. Yet nothing more than higher fares and severely reduced services will be achieved, and even those will have to be provided by the PTA and the PTE through the tendering process.

The Government's financial policies will aggravate the matter and create an inevitable conflict between the concessionary travel scheme and bus services for the public. In another 12 months, all that will have arrived. The signs are there for all to see—the results of deregulation and dangerous dogma.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) referred to British Rail's proposal to withdraw the sleeper service on the east coast line. There have been numerous objections to that proposal from business men and others—not least from Members of the House. I am sure that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor did not wish to mislead the House into thinking that only the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was worried about this matter. The northern group of Labour Members of Parliament has been most industrious in trying to get British Rail to change its mind on that. Unfortunately, their efforts have had little effect.

The alternative that has been offered by British Rail is to travel overnight from Euston to Edinburgh via Glasgow on the west coast line and then to travel from Edinburgh to Newcastle the following morning. That is completely unacceptable. The withdrawal of that service will damage the northern region, which is working hard to overcome the considerable economic difficulties that it faces; it needs every assistance to attract business and industry to the area. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will be able to tell the House that he will use his good offices to put pressure on British Rail to see that the east coast line sleeper service is retained for the benefit of the northern region.

7.45 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): Let me first declare an interest on behalf of my constituency which contains the end of the runway of Birmingham International Airport. Without our co-operation we could wreak havoc on British Airways, and all the independent airlines who use that greatly enhanced airway under a development plan that I am proud to say was initiated during my chairmanship of the transport committee in the west midlands.

In that context I must congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on doing an excellent job in reaching a decision on the merger between British Airways and British Caledonian. He had to deal with an airline that is ranked only ninth in the world. The other eight airlines above it carry about 400 million passengers a year compared with under 20 million passengers a year which British Airways and British Caledonian together will carry. Therefore, internationally, it is still a small concern.

At the same time, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission paid great regard to clauses that had to be inserted to protect the private operators. However, with respect, we have heard the fear that predatory action could be taken by British Airways before. It was only four years ago that the airline that was to take over British Caledonian this time, if British Airways did not, expressed those fears. If my memory serves me right, some four years ago that airline sold off five of its nine planes overnight and availed itself of the bucket shop seats which British Airways was said at that time to have released upon the market as part of its charter business.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on making wise decisions and on the fact that excellent clauses which protected the independent operator and allowed the private charter airlines to continue carrying passengers in an extraordinarily competitive way were inserted in the agreement.

The concept of good travel is not owned solely by the Government or the Opposition. There is no monopoly of rectitude on either side. Travel should be concerned with substantially increasing the provision of comfortable, safe and cheap travel, whether local, international, European or internal. We are still competitively miles from the fares level established by the United States of America on internal flights where fares are about one third of those priced here. We have a long way to go, but the Government have made great strides in that direction.

The fear of the historical write-off of planes between British Airways and British Airtours has not materialised. Nor has the fear of predatory action. Part-plane charter—the use of the rear parts of planes for charter, which is sensible—has not done permanent damage to private companies, as was feared. The then Minister for Consumer Affairs gave an undertaking in Committee—I was there when he gave it; indeed, I had asked for it—that his Ministry would keep an eagle eye on British Airways in case that ever happened, but it has not. We must continue, as we have done, to maintain the British flag in the air.

As for road transport, there is still room for transfer from one mode of transport to another. I was particularly impressed this week by the 8,000 lorry trips a day that were saved by the transfer of 250,000 lorry journeys between the west country and London. One lorry a minute was taken off the roads of Somerset, Wiltshire, Hampshire and West London, through the simple expedient of giving a Government grant of some £3,700,000 towards a £8 million terminal to the Amey Roadstone Corporation for automatic limestone loading on to the railways. What a sensible use that is of our ground transportation infrastructure, and what a marked effect it will have.

When I last looked at the figures, the amount of freight carried by British Rail was only about 5 per cent. of the total transportation ingredient. British Rail has made marvellous progress with the development of InterCity, with a price differential that is extraordinary when we take into account the low fares that inter-city coaches are able to charge. There is only the movement of mass quantities of raw chemicals to be developed in freight services. Despite the encouragement of deregulation, integration has continued to take place, even on the buses.

One thing stands out a mile to anyone who studies the area, or who travels—as I do, along with many other hon. Members—as often as twice a week or more on the motorways, particularly the M1. Owing to such impediments as motorway repairs, which prevent rapid transit, a second M1 will have to be built, perhaps along the lines of the A5. If that infrastructure cannot be provided from public funds—as it probably cannot, although it is undoubtedly demanded—we must think of other methods. One, the two roads could carry freight only. Another possibility is the toll method, which has been so successful in America and on the continent for many years. The Italian autostrade were mostly provided

[Mr. David Gilroy Bevan]

over a 30-year period, the first 20 years being used as a pay-back period and the final 10 as a profit period, when the motorway reverted into public ownership. That method must not be discarded. All possible mechanisms must be used to take account of ever-increasing demand.

Mr. Morgan *rose*—

Mr. Bevan: The hon. Gentleman has already had a very good time with his interventions, but I shall allow him to intervene yet again.

Mr. Morgan: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I want to raise a point about the autostrade and other motorways in continential countries. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the main benefits to Italy of putting a toll on the Autostrada del Sole to the south is that a high proportion of users are foreign tourists? The same applies to the autoroute that goes down towards Nice and Marseille, which is also tolled. A high proportion of its users will be German, Dutch, Belgian and British, rather than French.

Mr. Bevan: The same argument could be deployed—and has been, on occasion—about joining up north and south Wales to introduce tourists to the other part of the country. But the hon. Gentleman has hit the nail on the head. This country is now experiencing the most massive upturn in tourism of all time. People and vehicles are flooding over, and that will be expedited by the successful advance of the Channel tunnel project which is about to take place. The same demand exists here as in Italy.

We need a long-term, well-thought-out series of plans for road transport. It is our main line of communication. Of the £59 billion spent last year on transport, 96 per cent. was spent on the roads. No less than 84 per cent. of freight tonnage goes by road, as does 99 per cent. of freight transported in the building trade. There is a great demand for us to think ahead and produce a comprehensive and effective scheme for local road maintenance. It must include a combination of the statutory reinstatements that are perpetually making such a mess of our city roads, one after the other.

We must also concentrate on improving safety standards. This week's *Sunday Times* pointed out, in a frightening article, that there have been 49 deaths in the past two years on the stretch of road between Lancaster and the junction of the M6 and the M61. Good though the Government's present funding for safety improvements is, we need a radical emergency programme in such situations.

I commend the plans issued today by the British Road Federation, entitled "The Way Ahead", which I have only just been able to skip through. However, let us not deny the opportunity, highlighted by the introduction of the Dartford river crossing, to use private funding to create road infrastructure.

The demands of freight transportation, which have risen by some 40 per cent. in the past two years, have been elephantine. We must include new trunk roads in our plans. I am the first to compliment my hon. Friend the Minister on his plans to invest £1 billion in the next five years in British Rail rolling stock, and on the £69 million contract awarded today to British Rail Engineering Ltd. That is excellent, and I know that the spin-off will benefit those excellent train manufacturers, Metro-Cammell Weyman, near my constituency. However, local railway stock will need vast improvement.

When I had the privilege of being the chairman of the passenger transport authority in my area I was able to come up with some of the plans. One of those plans was for a cross-city railway line. That line is now at breakdown point. When it first opened it added to travel along the line by 1,500 per cent. and had positive passenger-carrying advantage. It is breaking down because of the lack of investment in local railways. We must get British Rail to address itself to the vast investment needed in the rolling-stock programme, even before we proceed with the many metro rail schemes that are needed.

My authority and the west midlands area will shortly bring forward a private Bill asking for a metro scheme. I will fully support that Bill because such a scheme is necessary, as are light electric railway schemes. However, in looking at such schemes we must also remedy the lack of investment in local railway stock.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall), who co-chairs with me the road passenger transport group in the House, is waiting to see whether I will mention buses. Of course, I will. The result of the Transport Act 1985 has been patchy throughout Britain. We are receiving different reports, which will be carefully monitored. However, this is not the time to bring them up as a point of discussion. My town, Birmingham, where West Midlands Travel has been formed, has covered around 100 per cent. of its services. I was staggered because I did not believe that that was possible. I concede that in that area and in other areas it has been a success. It is a success that should be universal but, regrettably, it is not. We shall continue to monitor the Transport Act 1985 to ensure that the integration—I was one of those able to plan that in the west midlands—continues to be a component part of the overall service. We shall aim for cheap prices and good quality service.

8.2 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The motion standing in the name of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues speaks of the transport needs of the nation and is a scathing indictment of the Government's policy. It cannot be said too often that good communications and an efficient transport system are important levers to bring about a prosperous economy and to provide jobs for our people. Heavens knows, with 3 million unemployed — that is the official figure, but there are many more—something needs to be done.

The Government are now in their ninth year of office and the criticism of transport is wholly justified. In fairness to the Secretary of State, in his opening remarks he spoke about his plans and the roads programme. For some reason best known to himself, my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) failed to mention the roads programme. Had he done so, he would have been on firm ground. The forecast outturn for spending on national roads in 1987-88 is £980 million. The provision for spending in the following year, 1988-89, is £1,000 million. That is an increase of only 2 per cent., which is hardly sensational. If we also consider the Chancellor of the Exchequer's forecast that inflation next year will be in the region of 4·5 per cent., in real terms expenditure on roads will fall rather than rise. That message was rubbed in well by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry).

What the Secretary of State has been saying has an element of duplicity in it. He is pretending that more is being spent when it is not borne out by the facts.

The amount of traffic has been rising steadily. The latest figures from the Department of Transport show that, from the second quarter of 1986 to the second quarter of 1987, traffic increased by 8 per cent. overall and by 17 per cent. on motorways. Those figures are provisional, but a reassessment is certainly needed.

A further criticism is that the new roads are being built to an inadequate standard. For example, there is the absurd proposal for a new 12-mile stretch of the M40 to be a two-lane carriageway. Already major sections of our trunk roads are having to carry traffic way above their design flow. For example, at junctions 4 and 5 on the M4, which is essentially the Welsh motorway, the 1986 traffic flow was 88,000 vehicles per day, whereas the design flow is 79,000 vehicles per day. Similar examples could be given in respect of the M1, M6 and M25. Surely the Government should have learned those simple lessons by now. With current and projected expenditure, there can be little prospect of relieving the congestion on our trunk roads and motorways.

Traffic density on the roads is already the highest in Europe. It is well above the figures for Italy, France, West Germany and Belgium. There has been considerable underspending on local authority roads. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the situation, road users and residents are suffering as congestion increases and maintenance standards fall.

There is a need for the Government to accelerate the completion of the trunk road programme. They should review the assumptions in the national road traffic forecast and eliminate the underspend on local authority road construction and maintenance. It is vital that those measures are taken because today transport by road in Britain—I want to emphasise this—is predominant, for people and goods, whether for good or ill.

The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) seems to dwell in some sort of pre-Beeching era. He forgets about the importance of the motor industry for the British economy. He forgets that people like to have personal transport, which was once the prerogative of the rich. However, that is not to say that rail does not have a part to play. The Labour party believes in the hackneyed concept of an integrated transport system. We believe that that is vital to the future of this country. However, it needs investment to ensure an easier transfer of loads from one form of transport to another. The grants for sidings and rail freight facilities should be increased. There is also the need for the electrification programme to go ahead, especially from London to south Wales, especially since the go-ahead for the Channel tunnel has been given. We need electrification also on the Crewe-to-Holyhead line.

I should like to see more development of local rail services. There has been some spectacular progress in the Cardiff area, where several local stations have recently been opened. I welcome those new facilities. In my own constituency, in the large village of Magor near the Severn tunnel, only 10 days ago a meeting was attended by more than 150 people who demanded, without dissent, a railway station there. I believe that their demand is justified. As a point of information, that matter rests at present with Gwent county council because it is the county council which, in conjunction with British Rail, decides such matters. I am sure that Gwent county council will see the wisdom of the demand for a station at Magor. It is a valuable facility that could be provided at a small cost. The residents confidently hope that that facility will be made available by 1 May 1988.

I should like to make a point of criticism about the Central Electricity Generating Board, which moves about 100,000 tonnes of coal by road to the Uskmouth power station. In addition, large quantities of coal are blended at Newport dock and forwarded to that power station by road. Those road journeys are unnecessary and pose considerable environmental problems. People do not like them. That freight could go by rail.

Our transport needs in Wales are obvious, especially when one considers the dreadful unemployment figures. On the present method of compiling the statistics, in 1979 the unemployment figure would have been 73,100 or 7·3 per cent. Today, after eight and a half years of this Government, that figure is 148,800 or 17 per cent.—more than double the 1979 figure.

There is a contrast between the prosperous south-east of England and impoverished south Wales. That prosperity comes down the M4 motorway to Reading, Swindon and Bristol but it stops at the Severn bridge, where there is a psychological barrier. People are met there by bollards and lane restrictions and the ultimate insult of a toll charge. That is the gateway to Wales, our lifeline. Those toll gates should be set aside. Much needs to be done to remove the despair in south Wales. The Chancellor has the resources to help, but he is obsessed with tax cuts. I remind him yet again of the Government's own submission to the European Economic Community just one year ago, when they pointed out that Wales had the lowest economic activity rate in Britain. How long is that neglect to continue? It is time that something was done.

8.13 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) and especially to what he said at the beginning of his speech about the growth in road traffic, which he said was 8 per cent. last year, and in motorway traffic, which he said was 17 per cent. However, the more I listened the more difficult I found it to discern whether he was in favour of that increase in road traffic. I make no bones about the fact that I am very much in favour of it. It is socially good. More car ownership means that more people are able to derive enjoyment from their use, to travel about, and to satisfy their wish to make certain journeys more easily and conveniently.

A large proportion of car owners are people who 10 or 15 years ago would not have been able to own a car. Car ownership among old age pensioners has doubled in the past 15 years. It is pleasant to think of retired people being able to drive around the country to visit their families. In an age when families are largely split up because they have to move about to take jobs far from the areas where they grew up, people lose touch even with brothers and sisters, let alone with more distant relatives such as uncles, aunts and cousins.

It is pleasing to think of people being able to drive about to visit their relations at weekends. The increasing ownership of cars and the growth in the number of motorways which the present Government have been

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

building help to meet people's wishes to do such things—or at least, the wishes of most people; some may not want to see their relatives.

I am in favour of the growth of car ownership and of the construction of motorways to meet the demand for their use, because it is socially beneficial. However, what worries me about motorways, especially the M25, is how close together some cars are driven. I do not know whether any studies have been made to measure whether driving behaviour on the M25 is worse than on other motorways, but if there are no such studies, there should be. Many people use the M25 and, although the behaviour of drivers on that motorway is normally orderly and drivers concentrate, they drive too close together at habitual speeds of 70, 80 or 85 miles an hour and often seem to be only 10 or 12 or 20 yards apart. That is dangerous if people have to stop suddenly or their attention is distracted. I am surprised that there are not more pile-ups. I hope that my right hon. Friend will ask that a study is carried out to ascertain whether that is a serious and dangerous problem and what could be done about it.

I turn from cars and motorways to the environment and especially to the environment around airports, such as Heathrow. The Government's amendment refers to

"the Government's policies to safeguard the environment"

and the Opposition's motion to

"the increased damage to the environment".

There are different views about what is happening. Certainly the environment around Heathrow is of great concern to my constituents in Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and Hampton, who number about 90,000 including children, but who comprise only a small proportion of the more than 2 million who live within earshot of Heathrow.

I am pleased that, 11 days ago, in reply to my question, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that he proposed not to increase the number of night flights allowed at Heathrow. I should like to go further than that and propose a total ban on all night flights, except in emergencies. On that, I am glad to have the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), whom I see in his place. I should like to take this opportunity of wishing him many happy returns of the day.

Apart from the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Mr. Ground), who spoke earlier, several other right hon. and hon. Members who represent constituencies around Heathrow share my concern about aircraft noise. They include my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) and my hon. Friends the Members for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), for Esher (Mr. Taylor), for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn). I should like to add the name of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). As Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, he does not speak on matters that are the responsibility of other Departments but he makes his views known in his own way.

In the 17½ years during which I have had the honour to represent Twickenham no other matter has preoccupied me more continually than aircraft noise. It is a pestilence. It ruins people's quiet enjoyment of their homes and gardens. It affects their work in offices, hospitals and schools, and on Sundays it affects churches. What people mind about is not only the peak loudness of each flight but the sheer number of flights. At Heathrow there are now more than 750 flights per day, which, at peak hours, means a flight every one and a half to two minutes. The noise lasts quite loudly for 40 to 50 seconds, there is then an interval of a further 40 to 50 seconds before the next flight. The problem is at its worst in the summer when people want to be in their gardens or keep their windows open at night. Furthermore, the noise is more audible in summer because it gets through the air which is lighter, whereas when the weather is cold it is heavier.

Not everyone minds about aircraft noise, but a great many people do mind—some of them very much. Some people find it deeply annoying and upsetting and it spoils their lives. In a few cases, as has been shown by a study undertaken at the West Middlesex hospital, it is a cause of mental illness. For some, any addition to aircraft noise—*[Interruption.]* There seems to be some noise on the Opposition Benches. To those who suffer as a result of aircraft noise, any addition to it can be the last straw. They do not want the noise merely contained; they want a substantial and permanent reduction. Over the years, my colleagues and I have fought to achieve just that.

Obviously, the aviation industry is of national importance. It is a major employer. It brings foreign business men who may buy British goods, and it serves the tourist industry, which is increasingly important as a source of employment. However, aviation must be organised so that it does not ruin people's quiet enjoyment of their own homes. The quiet enjoyment of one's home has been enshrined as a basic principle of English law for centuries. However, the civil aviation Acts specifically exclude the right to sue for nuisance in respect of aircraft noise. A man may go to court to stop nuisance from noise or smell from a factory or a neighbour's home but he may not go to court to sue for damages for noise nuisance from aircraft because the Acts expressly prevent him from doing so. It follows that people who live near airports must depend on the Government of the day—in effect, the Secretary of State for Transport and his Ministers—to protect them against aircraft noise. They must also depend on their Member of Parliament to put pressure on the Government, as my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes and I with the other hon. Members that I have named have consistently tried to do.

Successive Conservative Governments have been sensitive to the problem. Two years ago, the Conservative Government refused to grant planning permission for the construction of a fifth terminal at Heathrow. That was a remarkable decision, because it overrode the advice of the inspector at the public planning inquiry who, after studying the matter for two years, recommended that the construction of a fifth terminal should go ahead. The Conservative Government stopped the Heathrow-Gatwick helicopter link which would have overflown the edge of my consituency. Most aircraft now have quieter engines, although there are some notable exceptions and aircraft are still not as quiet as I would like them to be.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Does my hon. Friend agree that, had it not been for the combined votes of the Labour and Liberal members of the Committee that considered the Civil Aviation Bill and three or four of its Conservative members, the Government would have introduced a limit on the number of flights entering and leaving Heathrow?

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Civil Aviation Bill introduced in 1984 contained provisions to restrict the number of flights at Heathrow. In Committee a vote was carried against it when the Labour Members, the only Liberal Member and three Conservative Members who represented constituencies with aviation interests or who had a particular interest in aviation matters voted together. Had one of those Members voted differently, the vote would have been a draw and the Chairman of the Committee would have had to cast his vote in accordance with convention for the Committee's business to continue. The Bill fell because its central provision was defeated, and it has never been revived. If that had not occurred we should now have a restriction on the number of flights allowed at Heathrow to 275,000 flights per year. I must say in all conscience that even that is high enough, amounting as it does to about 700 flights per day.

As far back as the early 1970s a Conservative Government introduced a control on the number of night flights, and I am glad to have been instrumental in pressing them to do so. A good night's sleep is a basic health need but we have recently witnessed a massive campaign to increase the number of night flights allowed through Heathrow. An unholy combination of the airlines, the British Airports Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority has brought pressure to bear on the Government to allow a substantial increase in the number of night flights.

In his announcement last week, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State proposed to cut by one quarter the number of night flights allowed through Heathrow and proposed a five-year freeze on the number of summer night flights at the existing level of about 2,750 for the six months from 1 April to 31 October. That would mean an average of about 15 flights per night. The present number allowed averages at 20 flights per night through the summer, which is 3,650 over the six-month period. That quota of about 20 per night was not fully used, the average number of flights being 15 per night for the summer of 1987. However, the number of flights was increasing each year and would soon have reached the quota of 20 per night. That is why the airlines wanted the quota increased.

The Secretary of State refused their request. He put peace and quiet and health of the people above commercial interest and thus showed the Conservative Government to be more sensitive to the environment and the quality of life than a Labour Government or a Lib-Lab coalition dominated by the Labour party.

I want the Secretary of State for the Environment to go further. Sleep is basic to health. I like being asleep, and wish I were asleep more often. I should like a total ban on night flights, except in emergencies. There should be an extra hour of sleep from 6.30 to 7.30 in the morning. What has been done is at least a step in the right direction, and I commend the Government for it. I hope that the Minister will convey my remarks to the Secretary of State.

8.29 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The congratulatory remarks of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) will sound extremely hollow to my constituents, 1,400 or more of whom were declared redundant by BREL this summer. That means that about 1,800 staff in the works in my constituency and some 200 or so of the BREL headquarters staff presently face redundancy. Of course, they are only the latest to do so during the Government's period of office. Whatever congratulatory words may have been uttered by the hon. Member for Twickenham to the Minister, and whatever soothing palliatives are offered by other hon. Members who represent Derbyshire, the work force in BREL in Derby feel that they have been misled and betrayed by the Government and their placemen in the industry, and they feel so with cause.

The Secretary of State bragged — there is no other word for it—about the Government's wonderful record in investing in British Rail. I always listen with interest to such observations. I admire the way in which Ministers manage to rise above technical details when they make comparisons with the record of the last Labour Government — the minor technical details of their enjoying about £10,000 million to £12,000 million a year in North sea oil income, which was not enjoyed by that Government—and brag about what in that context are minuscule increases in investment.

I note that the deputy director of Network SouthEast, in a fit of frankness which will possibly cost him his head at some stage, was quoted recently as saying:

> "We think that the level of investment we are planning will fit the amount of cash the Government will allow us to have."

He thereby neatly disclosed the basis on which BR's investment planning has been pursued for several years now, since the real plans that BR knew that it needed for adequate investment in the future were withdrawn a few years ago. It puts forward now only what it knows the Government will approve.

Mr. David Mitchell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: If the Minister will forgive me, I shall carry on. We are short of time.

In 1985, even British Rail, under its present leadership, said that it needed, and would like, to replace 1,500 of its locomotive fleet. Current plans, as I understand them, are that about 171 of the 1,500 may be built in the next five years. Again, that puts the Secretary of State's boasting in a rather better context.

I wish to say most about the opportunity within the investment as it exists that has been offered to my constituents and other hon. Members' constituents in BREL to participate in building such new rolling stock as the Government have been prepared to finance. The Secretary of State referred to the fact that BREL has historically got about 70 per cent. of the tenders that have been put out since competitive tendering was introduced. Of course that is the case, and it ties in neatly with the view of the Serpell inquiry to which my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) referred. It showed that BREL's prices were, and indeed are, competitive.

Recent events have proved extremely worrying. They have directly contributed to the redundancies that have been announced. When the decision was announced that the British Rail board should in future depend on competitive tendering in these matters, some criteria were published. I draw attention to one in particular. Criterion No. 2 was:

> "The competence and financial standing of private sector firms will be taken into account in assessing tenders."

[Mrs. Beckett]

When one looks at the way in which recent tenders have been awarded, it is difficult to see how that criterion has been observed.

In 1984, when British Rail decided that it wanted to advance the time scale for introducing Sprinters and that, therefore, it was not possible to have extensive trials of the prototypes being built—one by British Rail and one by Metro-Cammell—it decided to treat the first group of 100 vehicles as a pre-production run and award the contract 50:50. In practice, it turned out that Metro-Cammell had such technical difficulties in making its prototype run that the board was forced to award the whole contract to BREL. Despite that, it does not seem to have cast any doubt on Metro-Cammell's competence, and the requirement for the next generation of Sprinters —about 468 vehicles, to be delivered by March next year—was split three ways between Metro-Cammell, British Leyland and BREL with the lion's share going to Metro-Cammell, which had just failed to deliver on the previous deal.

I now refer to the peculiar affair of the mark 4 passenger coaches. In November 1986, there were strong rumours in Derby that Metro-Cammell had won the contract to construct mark 4 coaches. About 283 coach orders were awarded. That in itself was again a somewhat strange decision, because Metro-Cammell had had no experience of British Rail main-line coach construction. Many queries were raised—the Minister may recall my raising the matter in the House at the time—because, on good advice, it was believed within BREL that BREL's tender for the coaches was the lowest and that Metro-Cammell was able to come near the BREL tender only by beating the heads of other suppliers against the wall and trying to force them to make changes in their tenders. In the event, of course, as we suspected, the order for the 283 vehicles went to Metro-Cammell.

Again, we were told that it did not matter—the Secretary of State sang the theme tonight—because BREL would get some of the sub-contract work. Indeed, it was awarded a contract to build bogies. Again, I hope that the Minister will recall that the contract was taken away from BREL earlier this year. It was decided that the bogie that it put forward, the T4 bogie, could not meet British Rail's specifications at the time. BREL believed that the bogies could be upgraded to meet the 140-mile-an-hour specification but it could not meet it here and now. The sub-contract was taken away from BREL and awarded to the Swiss firm, SIG.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) for asking the Secretary of State to comment on the situation in regard to the order. Again, the Secretary of State most unaccountably forgot to include that in his observations. I hope that the Minister, despite the pressing demands on his attention, will manage to answer my question. Is it the case that the order that was given to the Swiss company was based on an untested design that had only been computer tested and not tested on the track? As I have pointed out to the Minister, our sources are usually pretty reliable, whatever the Minister may normally say in pooh-poohing them at the time.

Is it further the case, as we have heard in Derby, that, now that the bogies are being tested, they have only attained the same smoothness of ride as BREL's, and that the Swiss company also will not be able to meet the original specifications laid down by the board? If that is the case, I hope that it will not transpire that more consideration is being given to the Swiss company than was given to BREL, that the award of the bogie tender will be reconsidered, BREL's position also reconsidered and, perhaps, some part of the award given back to BREL.

I now refer to the peculiar tendering for locomotives. A most strange argument has been put up about why BREL was not allowed to tender. One of the BREL's senior management wrote hon. Members a letter in which he said that BREL was not being allowed to tender because the board had to go for the most competitive outcome. If the board was so confident that BREL could not be the most competitive, why did it not let it compete and lose? The unworthy thought crosses one's mind that the board was afraid that, if it let BREL compete on equal terms, it might actually win the tender and that it had already decided that it wanted to put it not just to open competition but to open competition outside the country.

A new argument recently surfaced in relation to the issue—that it would not be right for BREL to have had the order because it is a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Rail board, and so, if there were problems with the contract, they could not be pursued in law. I thought that the whole point of setting up BREL as such and not having railway workshops any more was that it would no longer be regarded as a wholly owned subsidiary. Indeed, it is the whole point of the process of competitive tendering that BREL does not have any preferential treatment and that it is supposed to compete, and does compete and frequently win, in the open market. Now, having said that it must compete on the open market, when it wins there it is now being told that it is not on the open market and that it cannot compete in any circumstances.

I find that argument impossible to understand. The Minister, BREL and the British Rail board have not succeeded in justifying that argument. The significance to people in Derby is that, if that argument or the alternative that my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) demolished—that BREL is not a power plant manufacturer which it has not been since the days of steam—are to be sustained, from where will the new orders for BREL come? Also, what about the reassuring noises that have been made to my constituents through one round after another of hundreds of redundancies? What future can there possibly be for BREL, in Derby or anywhere else?

I wholeheartedly endorse the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North that there must be an inquiry into the tendering policy of the British Rail board and how it is working in practice. He said that that inquiry should look properly at the way in which those developments are taking place. Listening to the problems of my constituents and observing the devastating blow that those redundancies have been for the city of Derby, I believe that to set aside a British company—even a public sector British company that we know the Government hate—for the sake of encouraging foreign companies to compete and win orders is little short of economic treachery.

8.41 pm

Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham): The main burden of the attack from Opposition Members has been to suggest that the Government have not spent enough money on public transport and on its investment programme. That is a dangerous charge to level, as are most of the normal stock in trade charges of the Opposition. It is dangerous because it invites the response that, when Labour was in power, the position was much worse, it was all cuts and candle ends, as it was in the case of the transport industries. It is a silly line of attack, because it invites people to tot up how much all the Opposition's pledges amount to over all the programmes that they think are inadequate; we soon see that the country would be bankrupt if we accepted all their advice.

Another worrying aspect about the normal exchanges across the Floor of the House is that hon. Members concentrate simply on quantities of money. People are not interested in quantities of money spent. They are interested in the quality of service, the range of provision and what they get for their money. What is encouraging about the story of the transport industries and the transport sector in the last few years has been the concentration on value for money and the progress that has been made in a number of areas. The Secretary of State drew our attention to many hard figures of output, success stories in terms of roads constructed and new services opened. He might also have pointed out that it is now much cheaper in real terms to build a mile of motorway because of the success of tendering procedures and changes in the cost effectiveness of the road construction industry. That is to be greatly welcomed.

Another line of argument of Opposition Members centred around British Rail Engineering Ltd., the implication being that the Government have not cared enough about it and have not lavished enough subsidy and attention on it. The only way that one can have a successful British Rail engineering business, or any other business, is to have customers, and products that those customers wish to buy. It is extraordinary that, until the contribution of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), there was no discussion about the tendering and the troubles that BREL has had in persuading customers to buy its product. Even the hon. Member for Derby, South made no mention of overseas orders. One would think that one of the main thrusts of BREL strategy should be to win a wide range of orders overseas that will guarantee jobs and provide employment.

Mrs. Beckett: Although BREL has tried, it is not easy to win overseas orders when its own Government say that it is not competent to do things at home.

Mr. Redwood: The Government are not saying that BREL is not competent. BREL has had many orders from British Rail. What matters is the relationship between BREL and BR. One would have thought that BREL has had enough orders for it to be able to persuade overseas rail contractors and Governments that it knows what it is doing and that it can provide the goods.

Another line of argument that has a little more novelty than the money one is the argument that the Government are only seriously interested in privatisation, and that wherever privatisation comes into apparent conflict with competition, privatisation triumphs. The evidence is that exactly the opposite is true in transport. If one had wished to maximise the proceeds from privatising the bus industry, one would have strengthened the quasi-monopoly of the National Bus Company and sold it as a going concern with near-monopoly rights.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: What about British Airways?

Mr. Redwood: Instead, the Government went out of their way to inject competition and deregulation and to split the organisation up to get the benefits of smaller scale and competitive forces. The results have been extremely good.

I will now come to British Airways, as that was just mentioned by an hon. Gentleman from a sedentary position. If they had wished to maximise the proceeds from the sale of British Airways, the Government would not have transferred any routes to British Caledonian when they did. The Government would not have ensured that they were strongly allied with the forces for deregulation and competition in Europe, nor would they have succeeded in getting deregulation of some of those routes that obviously affected the revenues and traffic of the main carrier, which was often British Airways. Again, there is strong evidence that where competition and privatisation came into dispute on maximising proceeds, the Government quite rightly voted strongly for competition, and the customer has undoubtedly benefited.

Public transport services, far from being a picture of neglect and decline, are showing many signs of improvement, as has been illustrated by Conservative Members. They also show that one can create in good circumstances a virtuous circle of falling subsidy, increased usage of the services and increased investment, creating a further virtuous circle, with more usage, falling subsidy and more investment. That is exactly what is happening with London Regional Transport. I hope that it will also happen in more parts of British Rail's networks.

I am pleased to say that in my own area, along the Reading-to-London line, and the southern region line to Waterloo, there is evidence that usage is rising quite sharply, there has been a welcome improvement in a new station and there has been some evidence of service improvements. The efforts of British Rail, coupled with population growth and, it is fair to say, coupled with the growing traffic jams on the principal motorway network, have encouraged an increased usage that will fuel a virtuous circle. I look forward to new timetables because I think that they will show more trains and better services. If BR can keep up its improvement in punctuality, cleanliness and reliability, it will create a virtuous circle that I would like to see carried across to many other parts of the country.

A matter that relates to my constituency interest and the interests of neighbouring constituencies is the state of the M4 and the M25. Hon. Members know that those motorways are heavily clogged with traffic during the morning and evening peaks. There is a growing problem, not only because of economic growth and prosperity, and rising car ownership and usage, but because the Thames Valley has become a major centre of housing and population expansion. I should be grateful if there could be some communication between Whitehall Departments and if the Department of Transport could point out to the Department of the Environment that the more houses and development that are permitted along the Thames Valley, the greater the strain will be on the M4 and the M25 to the west of London and the more difficult that transport link will become. I should be grateful if the Secretary of State would advise whether there are any plans to alleviate the

[Mr. Redwood]

traffic problems along the M4 and the M25, as those problems will clearly get worse over the next 10 or 15 years.

I welcome those signs of partnership between parts of the private sector and the public sector in providing a better and unified range of services to the traveling public, particularly in the growth of new types of retail and service activities in main stations. BR is making the right moves by understanding that running a railway business is not just a question of moving people from A to B in the most efficient or quick manner, but also providing a total service to the users of stations and trains, thus enjoying the many extra revenue opportunities that can come from being alert to the business opportunities on stations and trains.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will give every encouragement to those signs of business acumen which we can now see on some of our better stations.

8.49 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): As I represent Cardiff, West, it will not surprise hon. Members when I say that I want to concentrate my remarks on network south-east. Of course, I mean not Network SouthEast in England to which the Secretary of State referred earlier, but network south-east in Wales, which is much smaller, but very important to the people who live in the valleys of south Wales and in the coastal cities of Cardiff, Newport, Barry and Cwmbran.

The Secretary of State made two interesting remarks about railway and public transport investment in his opening comments. He said that he had never refused an investment project presented to him by British Rail. He also said that British Rail had proved that the commuter was now willing to pay a higher price for a better service and the right hon. Gentleman welcomed that.

Let us consider network south-east in Wales which incorporates the cities and valleys line. That is the seventh largest commuter rail network in Britain, or so I am told. It is much smaller than the London network and follows behind the networks in Glasgow, Tyne and Wear, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. When the local authorities started to take an interest in that network, there were 54 stations. Since the two Labour-controlled county councils of Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan took a constructive interest in it, it now has 61 stations. Therefore, the line has been increased by seven stations and it is expected that the network will have 70 stations before very long.

When the two Labour-controlled local authorities started to take an interest in the network, they had to pay 100 per cent. of the costs of new stations for the line. British Rail rapidly realised that new stations meant increased usage of the whole service and it is now willing to pay 25 per cent. of the costs of new stations. However, the network is still reliant on co-operation between the local authorities. As we can well imagine, the Conservative opposition on the authorities — although there is virtually no Conservative opposition on Mid Glamorgan county council — derided the concept of investment in new stations by local authorities. However, that concept is now widely accepted by everyone.

The authorities have done their bit. They are grant-aiding or building new stations and British Rail has promised to pay its percentage. Therefore, South Glamorgan finally pulled off the feat of grant-aiding the construction of the first new passenger railway in Wales for more than 75 years — the inner-city link line including four new stations, all of which are in my constituency. However, British Rail's contribution was to bring into service 30 new Sprinter sets. That would have allowed smaller trains to run on the line than the diesel multiple units that were used before. The Sprinter sets would run more frequently in the two-car set-up and be very useful for commuting. Unfortunately, between the agreement reached by the two county councils and British Rail and the opening of the service some six weeks ago, British Rail cut the 30 Sprinter sets first to 22 and eventually to 18. The result was utter chaos when the new service opened in early October. Commuters have lost jobs because they could not get to work on time. Others have arrived late. The levels of discomfort have been very high and revenue has been lost because guards at unmanned stations cannot get through the overcrowded trains to collect fares from those who did not pay before they boarded the train. The shortfall of investment in Sprinter sets by British Rail has meant that what should have been a major stride forward in public transport through co-operation of the kind commended by the hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) has been impossible to get off the ground.

Commuters are disillusioned, especially commuters in my constituency, because they cannot get a seat as the trains have been filled up on their way into central Cardiff at stations further up in the coal-mining valleys as people in those areas have a greater dependence on commuting into central Cardiff for employment than ever before. By the time the trains reach stations in the suburbs of Cardiff, people simply cannot get on. Whereas people are willing to put up with that level of discomfort for a while, standing every so often, especially when there is the compensation that it is unlikely that the guard will be able to collect the fares, in the end commuters will refuse to use that service. Ultimately, they will refuse to take jobs which depend on them getting to work on time. That can hardly be in keeping with the image of the enterprise society and the growth in jobs that Conservative Members continue to boast about and that they claim to see when they consider the employment figures.

If the Secretary of State is to be believed, the major problem that I have described could not have come about as a result of British Rail putting forward an adequate investment project, so it must have resulted from the fact that British Rail felt too afraid to bring forward an adequate investment project for Sprinter sets. If what the Secretary of State has told the House is true — that he has never refused an investment project put forward by British Rail — he must consider the decision-making procedures within British Rail, for which he is responsible, to discover why British Rail had to cut the number of Sprinter sets from 30 to 18 after it has reached agreement with the two county councils.

We can well imagine the sense of letdown in those two county councils and the sense of disappointment among commuters. The next time a co-operative venture of that type involving municipal enterprise — which Conservative Members profess to be impossible — is undertaken to assist the residents, there will be a sense of disappointment if British Rail does not have a high enough external financing limit to put in capital investment for adequate numbers of train sets, especially when the local authorities are opening new railway lines, as is the case in my constituency.

I want to consider briefly the question of the second Severn bridge. That bridge is badly needed to make the M4 the motorway that it was intended to be. The M4 motorway, including the Severn bridge, was originally designed as one motorway to link south Wales with the west and south-east of England. It was of colossal importance for the distribution of goods into and out of Wales and for industrial development since the late 1960s when the Severn bridge was opened. Over that time, we have lost more than 40,000 jobs in steel manufacturing and 40,000 jobs in coal mining and we have had to try to transform the economy from being mainly dependent on production from those two heavy industries. Indeed, no region anywhere in Europe has been so dependent on only two industries as south Wales was in the mid-1960s. We have had to attempt to transform those industries and we are now totally dependent on the free flow of traffic along the M4 across the Severn bridge. I am sure that the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) will agree with me on that matter.

The trouble with the M4 began six or seven years ago because of the rapid build up of commercial traffic. It has shaken the foundations of the bridge to such an extent that there are constant lane restrictions. Industrialists have ceased to have faith in the bridge, so we now have two M4s — one in England and one in Wales, divided by a Berlin wall in the middle. The Severn bridge is not supposed to act like the Berlin wall. I am not sure whether I believe the east or west German propaganda or whether it is intended to keep the Welsh out or the English in.

The Rank Hovis McDougall company, in an interview in the *Financial Times* yesterday, was asked why it had abandoned the largest industrial project in job terms for Wales since the Government took office in June 1979. Some 800 jobs would have resulted from that project at the Dragonparc plant in Merthyr. The new owners, Rank Hovis McDougall, had taken over from Avana Bakeries, which had engendered this project. It decided not to proceed with it because chilled foods cannot be distributed dependably from south Wales and because the distribution costs are horrendous. The company did not specifically mention the Severn bridge, but I am sure that the gentlest pressure on the directors would lead them to say that that is the problem.

I am aware of the recent abandonment by the printing industry of a £10 million project in south Wales for precisely the same reason. If publications must be with W. H. Smith and Son Ltd. or John Menzies plc on Thursday morning, it is no good getting them there by Thursday night because of problems on the Severn bridge.

We urgently need a second Severn bridge. Before the election, Ministers at the Welsh Office — who are responsible for the Severn bridge along with the Secretary of State for Transport, although he has the prime responsibility — were going around south-east Wales saying, "The Severn bridge is now a committed fact in the Government's transport planning. It is just a matter of getting it designed, on the stocks and going through the planning and land acquisition procedures." As soon as the election was over the tune changed — "It is no longer a committed scheme. It will come only when demand justifies it. Do not forget about the £35 million that we are committed to spending on strengthening the existing Severn bridge." Many engineers believe that that strengthening is necessary only because the Government would not commit themselves early enough to a second Severn bridge to enable heavy lorries to be diverted from the bridge, where they can cause damage if they go across three or four in a row.

We in South Wales are dependent for our industrial redevelopment prospects on the Government's commitment during the lifetime of this Parliament to a second Severn bridge. If they are not, we have little chance of reducing unemployment levels to those of the south-east of England. The bridge is a major psychological blockage to getting investment from the south-east, where most of the investment decision-makers live. They are aware that the Severn bridge is only 130 miles away from central London but they regard it as being 260 miles away because they hear the stories about the cones, the lane restrictions and the closures to high-sided vehicles on windy days. They know that that is a reason for not investing in south Wales and, if they did, why they would want to be promised a higher return than on the east side of the bridge.

This deprivation cannot continue if Wales is to believe that it is part of the prosperous future that the Government are promising. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Minister of State will offer a commitment to the constituents of south Wales. We live in the other south-east — south-east Wales. The fact that south-east Wales elects Labour Members and that the other south-east elects Tory Members should not be a reason for the Secretary of State to be unwilling to take an interest in the economic future of south Wales, for which a second Severn bridge is essential.

9.2 pm

Mr. Michael Irvine (Ipswich): At the heart of the debate is the link between an efficient transport system and the economic growth. A good transport system and excellent communications can stimulate economic growth; poor communications can strangle it.

I represent a fast-growing town in a fast-growing part of the country. It is a part of the country where transport strains are particularly apparent. We have an out-of-date infrastructure. Superimposed on that out-of-date infrastructure are the strains of fast growth. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the railway links. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State mentioned, quite properly and with pride, the recent electrification of the railway line from Liverpool street through Ipswich to Norwich. Frankly, although it sounds good in the ministerial statements and looks good in public relations brochures and magazines, the efficiency of that line is lamentable. There is chronic overcrowding and regular unpunctuality.

It may be that the figures produced for trains that arrive within five minutes of their allotted time do not look too bad, but that does not go to the heart of the problem because — it is something that affects British Rail's statistics for unpunctuality across the country — the greater number of trains arriving late is concentrated in the peak hours when more people are travelling. That means

[Mr. Michael Irvine]

maximum damage to efficiency and maximum inconvenience to the travelling public. When we consider BR statistics for unpunctuality, we must bear that fact in mind.

Travellers from East Anglia want to see a substantial improvement in punctuality during peak hours. It is not just a matter of punctuality. The overcrowding is regularly chronic during peak hours. On the hour-long journey between Colchester and London people often have to stand in considerable inconvenience and discomfort.

The knee-jerk reaction is to blame the current management of the line. However, that is not entirely fair because the source of the trouble goes back a good deal further in time. But some progress is being made. Improvements are being carried out to the signalling system. Gradually we are beginning to get better rolling stock, although the eastern region has a history of being handed the left-overs from other regions. The lesson to be learnt is that it is necessary to plan ahead. In a fast-growing area, it is important to take future needs into account and to build the necessary capacity into the transport network.

The same problem is apparent on the road system. The links between Ipswich and London have recently improved considerably with the bypass on the A12 around Chelmsford. However, pressures are already building up during the peak hours on the A12 into London and on the A45 to the midlands. Again, with a view to the future, I remind the Minister that the completion of the A1-M1 link, so long delayed and so eagerly awaited, will place major additional pressures on the A45. It is yet another example of why it is necessary to look to the future.

What causes me great anxiety is the repeated tendency of the Department of Transport to underestimate future traffic growth. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) has already pointed out that part of the strain and trouble currently experienced by the transport network is due to the very success that the Government have had in bringing about seven years of uninterrupted, steady economic growth.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis of the problem. He has rightly drawn the Government's attention to the severe problem within out railway system. However, why does he shy away from the obvious conclusion to his analysis? The external financing limits of BR have been reduced so much by the Government that it cannot provide the proper rolling stock, proper signalling system and proper track renewal that is absolutely essential to go hand in hand —if one accepts what the hon. Gentleman has said— with industrial growth. But the same problems that he described exist in areas in which there is no industrial growth.

Mr. Irvine: The hon. Gentleman has it the wrong way round. In fact, the Government have been putting pressure on British Rail to take a more commercial approach. Opposition Members always say that any problem such as the railway or road network can be solved by throwing money at it. The correct approach is to examine the matter commercially. My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) rightly said that we should encourage British Rail to make better commercial use of its substantial assets.

Before I was interrupted I criticised the Department of Transport for its repeated failure to look far enough ahead when planning the road network, and its consequent underestimation of traffic growth. When one hears talk of the M40 link being built with only two-lane carriageways, one trembles. That motorway link should be built with three lanes, and when roads are built in the future they should be built with a designed capacity for expansion.

I ask my right hon. Friend carefully to examine ways of introducing private capital and finance into improving our transport network in general. There has already been considerable progress in tendering procedures, which has brought down costs dramatically. There are already improvements in the standard of inspection and the quality of building of motorways and bridges. Now we need more private capital to be brought in along the lines of the planned financing of the Thames crossing at Thurrock.

In conclusion, a reflection on the colossal amount that is due to be spent on the Channel tunnel: if that money were to be spent instead on improving the infrastructure of this country's transport, there would be considerable benefits all round.

9.13 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I was intrigued to hear the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Irvine) refer to the Channel tunnel in a lively and animated speech. I find it interesting that the advertisements for the Channel tunnel are using the statue of the mannequin pis from Brussels.

Mr. David Marshall Pronounced "pees".

Mr. Banks: I stand corrected by my hon. Friend. I can think of no more appropriate statue to use to encourage people to take up shares in the Channel tunnel.

I wish to discuss London. The Secretary of State's speech was highly self-congratulatory—and aggressive, for him. That was a pleasant change, but, to be frank, his speech bore no relation to reality in London. I should be a little more convinced of his arguments if I thought that he was a regular user of London transport during the rush hour. I am sure that several hon. Members on both sides of the House use that system during the rush hour and they know just how bad it really is. The Government's policy towards London Regional Transport is reducing the transport system in the capital to chaos and discomfort.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The capital of England.

Mr. Banks: Indeed. I am grateful for all these late interventions.

I hope that the Secretary of State has had a chance to read *The London Evening Standard* of Friday 13 November. Its front page carried a story about a major independent inquiry into the shortcomings of the services that are being provided. It said:

> "The Trade and Industry Secretary . . . is to announce the terms for the inquiry—to be carried out by the monopolies and mergers commission—within the next month.
>
> Lord Young's decision follows widespread complaints in recent weeks about the efficiency of the Underground.
>
> Public attention has been focused on the shortcomings of the network since LRT decided to increase fares next January by an average 12 per cent.—three times the rate of inflation."

I hope that whoever sums up for the Government will tell us how widespread the complaints to the Department of

Transport have been, and how detailed will be the inquiry into the running of the London underground. The Minister knows that, because of the policies of the Government, revenue support to LRT has been cut from about £190 million in 1984 to £75 million in 1987, making it the least supported public transport system of any Western capital city. That is the situation in London.

Next year, LRT's income from concessionary fares will be greater than the level of revenue support. It is quite clear that the Government want to reduce revenue support to zero and to throw the whole burden on to London's ratepayers who have little if any say whatever in the transport policies of London Regional Transport. We go through a charade once a year when we have a one and a half hour debate about the LRT revenue and subsidy support. That is the only control that the House and London Labour Members have over policy decisions that used to be taken by the transport committee of the Greater London Council.

Whatever Conservative Members thought about the GLC, I hope that the mists of time have perhaps given them a more rosy vision of how things used to be when my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) was the leader of the Greater London council. At least at that time elected members could be questioned by various interest groups and took decisions in the full glare of the public spotlight and media interest.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why, when he was in control as a GLC member, the number of passengers using the London underground fell from 594 million in 1979 to 498 million in 1982? Since LRT took over in 1984 and it was nationalised, the number has risen to 766 million.

Mr. Banks: More people were using the buses. If the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) looks at his source material, he will find that that was the case. Fares were considerably cheaper on the underground. Now one is seeing an inexorable rise in fares because of the Government's determination to remove all forms of revenue subsidy from London Regional Transport. One is seeing a greater degree of traffic chaos on the roads. We have not yet had deregulation in London but, unfortunately, we expect to receive it some time in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have complained bitterly about access to the House becoming more and more difficult by the day because of the number of commuter coaches that ignore all the yellow lines and park all round the Palace of Westminster. One can see them outside the underground stations in the evening. People are now turning to private contractors because the public transport system of this capital city is being effectively destroyed by the policies of the Conservative party.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*—

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman has obviously found another nugget.

Mr. Bennett: In refuting my point about the underground, the hon. Gentleman said that bus passenger journeys were increasing under the GLC. That is not true. The lowest figure for bus passenger journeys for London Transport was attained under the GLC in 1982 with 1,043 million passengers. It has now gone up to 1,147 million.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman should get the position clear. I said passengers. That is the important thing. I am quite prepared to have a discussion with the hon. Gentleman on a Clapham omnibus on any day that he wants to have such a discussion, and I shall explain to him exactly what is going on.

The Government's policies are a recipe for chaos, not only in London but throughout the country. I would not want it on my shoulders. The Minister is ensuring that London will descend into traffic chaos, and I hope to be around to point that out to him.

9.19 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): This has been an interesting debate. We have had a massive ideological split between the Secretary of State for Transport, who has extolled the virtues of the Government's competition policy and said that it was in the interest of the travelling public, and Conservative Back Benchers, who have systematically slammed his policies and said that they have failed in almost every aspect.

The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) made a typically knowledgeable speech about transport, in which he rubbished the Government's claims about British Rail. The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) advocated the need for an adequate road-building programme. He rightly said that the Secretary of State's claims that the Government had a great record to shout about in terms of road building were bogus. He observed that next year there will be a reduction in the level of spending on that programme.

Mr. Fry: I said that the Government have been successful until now. I was concerned about the future. They have been successful in comparison with the Labour Government.

Mr. Lloyd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has led me to my next point.

The Secretary of State made great play about the record of the Government, who are now eight years old—old enough to bear the consequences of their failures in terms of their investment programme in the construction of new motorways and trunk systems. The Government's record has not surpassed that of the Labour Government. It is a matter of public record. The Labour party did not produce the figures; they were produced by the Royal Automobile Club. In no year since 1979-80—effectively the last year of the Labour Government—have the Conservative Government spent more money on motorway construction. That is a matter of record and makes nonsense of the Secretary of State's attempt to convince the House otherwise.

The Secretary of State can say that plans for the future will include increased spending on road construction, but the hon. Member for Wellingborough noted that the Government have not behaved in the way claimed by the Secretary of State.

I was fascinated by the speeches of many Conservative Members. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) advocated the benefit of nationalisation. Some hon. Members extolled the virtues of the services provided by British Rail—a nationalised system—and said how successful it is. There is much suspicion of nationalisation and national programmes among Conservative Members.

[Mr. Lloyd]

I understand the reason for that. More than 90 per cent. of Government spending has been on the roads system, and they have made a complete mess of it.

The report of the National Audit Office in 1985 examined the Department of Transport's expenditure on motorways and trunk roads. It expressed concern and disquiet about the Department's basic inability to understand what is going on. It commented that, while the Department of Transport was good at bringing in schemes to unblock specific traffic jams, it did not take into account the fact that traffic would be thrown on to other areas. Between 1985 and 1987 the Department planned to start £48 million worth of road schemes showing negative economic returns. This is the Government who lecture the Opposition on the need for economic and fiscal prudence. The Minister looks askance at that comment, but he is the only one who has held office in that Department for four years.

The Secretary of State tells us about the wonders of the roads programme, but that is an area where the Government may feel vulnerable. It is not surprising that Tory Back Benchers have spent so much time attacking the Secretary of State. Perhaps he now begins to understand why five of his predecessors have disappeared from that bed of nails. On that basis, it may not be too long before he also disappears.

One of the most interesting speeches was that of the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), who is not in the House at the moment. I am sure that he has a good reason. He pointed to the failure of the Government's competition policy for airlines. He said that competition was at the forefront of the Government's White Paper. The hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) claimed that the Government had persuaded British Airways to give up routes and slots to BCal. The hon. Member for South Hams rightly argued the opposite. Once again, there was inconsistency on the Government Back Benches, which mirrors the inconsistency between the Front Bench and the Back Benches.

The hon. Member for South Hams is right. BCal is falling into the hands of British Airways, or whoever, because the Government wanted to fatten British Airways for the market and were not prepared to allow space in the market for BCal to operate routes that it had been promised. That is the view also of BCal and of other independents. So the Government's competition policy for airlines hardly bears examination.

Many of my hon. Friends from outside London referred to deregulation, which was almost the jewel in the crown of the Government's competition policy. The Government claim that deregulation has been a great triumph for the National Bus Company. We still do not know, however, what price was obtained for the NBC subsidiaries as they were sold off. We could assess the merits of the Government's claims if the Minister of State were to make that information available so that we might know what went on company by company rather than on an aggregate basis.

We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) about the plight of the Newcastle metro system which was in a sense one of the jewels in the crown of public transport throughout Britain and which has been copied in the United States by those who recognise its viability as a public transport scheme for the future. What has happened in Newcastle is not dissimilar to what we have seen in other areas. There has been the institutionalisation almost of instability in the transport system. It will take years to settle down.

We do not believe that we can make a definite and final judgment on deregulation yet because the process is still unravelling. Nevertheless, we can begin to point to some of the detrimental effects of deregulation. For example, patronage in the metropolitan areas is down. We heard about an increase in miles travelled, but in reality passenger miles have decreased by 10 per cent. throughout the metropolitan areas. Nationally the figure is not dissimilar. The decrease in Merseyside is about 20 per cent. That may be a special case because there has been a massive increase of over 50 per cent. in fares. Although that is an extreme case, in most areas fares have gone up following deregulation.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend said that he would have reservations about giving a definite judgment on deregulation. Does he know that the Minister of State has already given a definite judgment? He gave it before the legislation came into force, because the whole philosophy of deregulation was based upon studies set up by the Minister of State. When we asked him what sort of quantitative analysis had been done about these trials, it transpired that there had been none. His judgment was based on his visit to Hereford, when he jumped on and off a few buses and asked a few old ladies how deregulation was going. They said it was great, and he came back and said that deregulation would work because many people had told him so.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister of State is one of the strongest advocates of competition. He told the Standing Committee, on which my hon. Friend served, that competition was at the heart of the Government's approach to public transport and deregulation and that it was an important stimulus to all the benefits that we were told would ensue.

Greater Manchester is one of the few areas, other than Strathclyde, where there has been genuine competition. The Minister of State spoke recently at the Adam Smith Institute about the competitive process. He asked—I paraphrase and he may wish to correct me—whether it was unfair that the publicly owned bus company in Greater Manchester should respond to competition with the minibuses. He asked whether it was not an abuse that the public sector should choose to compete against others. The Minister of States shakes his head. I am sure that he will correct me later.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman as time is running short and he was not present for most of the debate.

Given the failure of and uncertainty about deregulation throughout the country, will the Minister of State tell us that he is now prepared to think carefully before foisting the same thing on London? My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke about the disasters of the Government's approach to London and the south-east. We have heard how bad London transport is. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has referred the Secretary of State for Transport to the

Monopolies and Mergers Commission because he thinks that this great triumph of nationalisation, as the hon. Member for Pembroke put it, is failing. It is failing for a simple reason — systematic underinvestment by the Government.

Like a magician, the Secretary of State told the House earlier about the £300 million worth of goodies a year on offer to London Regional Transport. We welcome that investment because it is badly needed. It is needed on the northern line where trains which are supposed to run every two or three minutes take 20 minutes to arrive. Opposition Members know to their cost what damage that causes.

Mr. Flannery: One of today's newspapers contains a letter about crowded platforms on the underground due to the late running of trains. A lady, who was only 1 ft away from the edge of the platform and unable to move, was knocked on to the track.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend demonstrates the real crisis about which Conservative Members know nothing because they do not use public transport. They do not see how the failure of the Government's policies affect the ordinary people of London.

The Conservative party claims to be the party of the nation, but I have always found it difficult to understand what unifies it. Many Labour Members have talked about the Government's transport policy failures outside the metropolitan areas — areas which are economically under-developed and where transport is an important factor in their development. I refer to Scotland, Wales, the north of England and the south-west.

In the south-east the position is different, but the cry from Conservative Members is just the same: that the Government are incompetent and have failed the south-east, and with that I must agree. The M25 has been slammed by Conservative Members, and rightly, because it shows the failure of planning to which the Government are a party. The M25 is supposedly the great traffic route out of central London. I remember not so long ago the Prime Minister standing on the M25 boasting about her Government's triumphs in the creation of this brand new orbital motorway. Yet, almost as soon as she had stepped off it, the traffic was way ahead of expectations.

The M25 is a failure because the south-east is being over-developed economically. The Government have failed to address the problems of over-development. The hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) wanted the Government to prevent further development in the Thames valley because of its grossly inadequate infrastructure. The Government have been in power for eight years and their own Back Benchers are rightly telling them that they have failed to invest in the infrastructure of this over-developed part of the country, while other parts of the country, which could cheerfully have used the £1 billion spent on the M25, have not had similar opportunities made available to them.

The Secretary of State told the House that shipping was a vital part of the nation's transport needs, yet the Government have presided over the virtual collapse of the merchant fleet. Shipping receives far too little attention in the House, and it is important that we should recognise the scale of the collapse of the British merchant fleet.

In 1979, when the Government came to power, the merchant fleet had nearly 1,300 ships and about 80,000 serving seamen. By September this year there were about 465 ships and fewer than 30,000 working in the industry. At the same time, we have seen the flagging out of Britain's trade, dependency on foreign ships and even dependency in strategic terms. [HON. MEMBERS: "What would you do?"] If hon. Members will listen, I shall tell them.

One thing that we would do would be to think seriously about reserving coastal and ferry shipping to domestic users. For example, the Swansea to Cork ferry is operated by a Polish ferry with a Polish crew. While that Polish crew is composed of merchant seamen in this country, in Poland no distinction is drawn between the military and merchant navies. In other words, we already have the Polish military navy in Britain's soft underbelly. Even Conservative Members should find that a little surprising. They represent the party of patriotism that would lead us into a great future, but in the process would sell every strategic control that the nation has over its military or economic future.

The Secretary of State said that the Government had a good safety record. The Opposition completely concur with many of the measures that the Secretary of State introduced following the Zeebrugge disaster, but we would be considerably happier if the inspectorate was in place in his Department to ensure that those regulations work.

The Secretary of State recently sent me a copy of the consultative document on operational procedures, management ashore, logbook entries and the reporting of accidents — an important step forward. The enclosed letter says:

> "Such manuals will be required to be available to the Department surveyors who would inspect them in the course of their visits to roll-on/roll-off passenger vessels."

We welcome that. However, while the present Government have been in power, there has been a massive decrease in the number of surveyors in the Department of Transport. No doubt the Government will tell us that that bears some relation to the decline in the merchant fleet, which we accept. But it is disturbing that, even in the year in which the tragedy of the Herald of Free Enterprise is still alive in people's minds, there has been a decline in the number of inspectors and surveyors. Indeed, it was at the inquiry into the sinking that the Department's own chief surveyor made the point that he did not have enough inspectors on his books to inspect ferries regularly to prevent such disasters from occurring.

We shall support the Secretary of State in his safety measures, because that is right and proper. However, we shall condemn him absolutely if he fails to provide adequate personnel to ensure that the new procedures work. The Opposition's case is that the Government have neglected many of the nation's vital infrastructure needs, whether it be shipping, air transportation, the railways or the roads. They have relied on the market system in an anarchic way, and that has reduced the nation's capacity.

The country needs adequate planning. It will not get that from the Government unless they change their ways.

9.40 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I understand that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was to have wound up this evening's debate, but is unwell. I am sure that the House will wish him a swift return to his normal rumbustious good health, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on his first appearance at the Dispatch Box.

[Mr. David Mitchell]

During last week's all-night sitting on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, I wondered at times why Labour Members were so determined to talk out the debate on transport that was scheduled to take place the following day. Perhaps they were more conscious than their Front Bench of the weakness of the case to be deployed. Nevertheless, we have had a wide-ranging debate tonight, and I shall try to reply to all the points put to me.

The hon. Member for Stretford asked about the alleged inadequacy of investment by London Regional Transport. That investment is now higher than it has ever been, and LRT is carrying more passengers than it has ever carried. It now seems to be suffering the penalty of success, and must wait for the £45 million that we have approved for investment in new rolling stock before the pressure can be eased.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the sale of National Bus Company subsidiaries, and about the prices being obtained. Forty-nine companies out of 72 have been sold. It would damage future negotiations if we were to reveal the prices paid in the individual sales so far. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that 29 of those sales have been local management buy-outs, which I hope he will welcome.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman missed the opportunity to congratulate British Rail on the progress being made on the Windsor link in Manchester, which will be completed and opened for the first part of its business next May. I am also sorry that he did not take the opportunity to congratulate British Rail on the station at Humphrey park in his constituency, and the neighbouring stations at Atherton, Hag Fold and Salford crescent.

However, let me turn from the hon. Gentleman's failure to seize those opportunities of congratulating British Rail to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), who began his speech by claiming that he did not like attacking British Rail, but nevertheless proceeded to do so with gusto. He claimed that British Rail can obtain approval only for investments that pay off in 12 months. He is quite wrong.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I did not say that.

Mr. Mitchell: I wrote it down. When the hon. Gentleman reads *Hansard*, I think that he will find it there.

The normal return on investment is 7 per cent., spread over the life of the investment. On loss-making services, we use the best return on outlay to achieve the quality standards that have been set.

The hon. Gentleman claimed that the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on Network South-East said that cleanliness had deteriorated. That is not so. I urge the hon. Gentleman to read page 107 of the report, which states that British Rail's carriage cleaning has improved considerably since 1980, and is continuing to improve. The hon. Gentleman attacked British Rail for having increased some of the cut-price fares which had led to overcrowding on some services last summer. That is plain business common sense. If one runs a special offer to the extent that it is crowding out one's full fare-paying passengers, one reduces the attraction of the cut-price offer in order to enable full fare-paying passengers to be carried in a normal state of quality and comfort.

The hon. Gentleman attacked British Rail for not electrifying the rail to Aberdeen because it said that electrification is not commercially viable. I have two questions for the hon. Gentleman. What is wrong with the HST 125 which goes to Aberdeen? It goes faster than the trains on the electrified west coast main line. If the hon. Gentleman were ever to become Secretary of State for Transport, would he wish to see investment in unviable propositions? Heaven help the country if he would.

Mr. Morgan *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: I will not give way, because I have only just started and I have a lot of ground to cover.

I wish that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North had taken the opportunity to see the significant progress that British Rail is making on the electrification of the east coast main line and found time to congratulate it on the three stations that have been opened not far from his constituency.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) raised the question of the Dornoch bridge. There was no application from British Rail for investment approval. It would have cost £16 million in order to safeguard £250,000 of revenue. If the hon. Gentleman ponders those figures, he will see why British Rail did not see fit to use that as a means of expending its resources.

The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) represents a BREL town, as does my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory), but there was such a contrast in their approaches. The hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich spewed out her vitriol, saying that the Minister and British Rail management are all involved in a plot to do down BREL workers. She is wrong. She attacks competitive tendering, but fails to realise that British Rail does not have a monopoly. It is in a competitive world and it has to give the best value for money in order to attract its customers. To do that, it has to obtain the best value for money itself when it is buying.

There has been £3 billion-worth of investment by British Rail since 1979 and that means that there are new vehicles which are designed to require less maintenance. Because the vehicles are out of service for less time, there are fewer vehicles to maintain. The hon. Lady should know that British Rail has changed its pattern of maintenance, so that most of it is now being done in the depot. Part exchange has revolutionised the system of British Rail maintenance; the hon. Lady should know that.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) claimed that British Rail's investment submissions equate with the sum that British Rail expects the Government to allow it to spend. She must have missed the speech of her hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North, who complained that British Rail has not been spending up to its EFL. They cannot have it both ways.

The hon. Lady asked about the bogies for the class 91. Both BREL and SIG bogies were subject to theoretical testing. BREL fell far short of the specification, but SIG met it. The theoretical tests have been subject to independent verification and are confirmed. British Rail is still of the view that the BREL bogie would not meet the specification and that the SIG bogie will.

Mrs. Beckett: Having told us all about the theoretical study, will the Minister confirm that in practice the Swiss bogie does not meet the requirements either?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Lady may have received leaked results of the SIG bogie, which is currently being tested to give the SIG experience of British operating conditions. That is not the bogie that will be used on the mark 4. That is where the rumour came from. British Rail is satisfied that the bogie will deliver as required.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey), who spoke for the Liberal party, claimed that the Government have neglected Wales and gave some examples. He said that there were no high-speed trains in Wales. I am sorry that he was not there when I flagged off the Red Dragon HST from Cardiff to London. He said also that there were no Sprinters in Wales. Of course, I am not as familiar with the Principality as the hon. Gentleman, but it is strange, because I thought that Holyhead, Bangor and Rhyl were in Wales and they have Sprinters. They also have services into Cardiff valley, Shrewsbury, Pwllheli, Aberystwyth and on the lines from Cardiff to Chepstow and Cardiff to Hereford. All those lines have Sprinters. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is misinformed. I must advise the hon. Gentleman that no area has Super Sprinters yet, but they are to be deployed in Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) drew attention to the potential of a British Rail route from Ashford, through Redhill, to Reading as was envisaged by Brunel and endorsed by Dr. Beeching, for the benefit of the Channel tunnel. The joint consultation committee that meets in Kent has commissioned a study, as a result of which there will be a further reappraisal of the capacity and routing of Eurotunnel traffic. A report will be available next summer and I shall ensure that those who produce it take account of my hon. Friend's suggestion. My hon. Friend also asked me about coach operators not paying their track costs. They almost cover their track costs but do not receive the substantial subsidy that British Rail enjoys on its operations.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) raised, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan), the issue of environmental damage from juggernauts on the roads. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley on having identified a recent case where more than £3 million was given by the Department of Transport under section 8 to enable freight facilities to be installed, resulting in 1,000 lorry journeys a day of roadstone being kept off the roads. Since 1979, there have been 127 projects resulting in 2 million journeys being taken off the roads. I am sure that hon. Members with interest in the environment will welcome that news.

I shall write to the hon. Member for Shettleston on his point about taxis which, I think, can be satisfactorily resolved.

Several hon. Members have referred to bus deregulation. Although there was a temporary hiatus at the beginning, there is now broadly the same level of service in rural areas; bus mileage has increased by more than 10 per cent. and more than £40 million has been saved for hard-pressed ratepayers as a result of deregulation. The productivity of operators has increased and I am sure that the hon. Member for Stretford will be delighted that in Greater Manchester the bus company's operating costs per mile are down 23 per cent. Bus miles are up 17 per cent. and costs are down by 13·5 per cent. over all. Innovation has been the biggest single result of deregulation. New ways are being found of providing customers with what they want. I cite as an example the 250 minibus services that are now operating up and down the country. Countless villages now have bus services when they did not have them before. The other day I was sent a cutting entitled "It's the bus—after 33 years". There are dozens of other examples.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Where are they?

Mr. Mitchell: If the hon. Gentleman looked out of the window while the train taking him to his constituency was passing through Hemel Hempstead he would see other new bus services serving local hospitals which did not have services before. Scores of estates throughout the country now have bus services that did not have them before. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members' constituents have reason to be glad that the buses have been deregulated and that passengers have turned into customers who are given care and attention by those who operate the services.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) made a thoughtful speech in which he drew attention to the need for longer-term future planning on roads. The Department plans roads on the basis of traffic flows 15 years after opening. My hon. Friend said that traffic forecasts exceeded high growth figures. I assure him that the figures are rebased every year so that the actual increase since the latest national road traffic forecast in 1984 has been taken into account in assessing future traffic flows. The money for national roads was halved in real terms under the Labour Government. Under the Conservative Government it has been increased by 30 per cent. in real terms. That is a substantial increase.

Good transport is an important component in the quality of life of our fellow citizens; for our manufacturers and business men it is essential to success. I have not sought to disparage the record of the Opposition when they were in government. However, it can be demonstrated that in every key area transport has improved and continues to improve under this Government. The amount spent on the national roads programme is up by 30 per cent. in real terms. Investment in regional airports has increased 10 times since the Government came to office.

British Rail has invested more than £3 billion since 1979 and no investment proposition has been rejected. Today we announced that up to 204 Super Sprinters have been sanctioned. Investment in electrification has soared from £41 million a year under Labour to £72 million a year in real terms under this Government. The National Bus Company which was a Whitehall-controlled nationalised giant is passing into the hands of a spread of local owners and operators. Nothing has given me more pleasure than to help to remove power, wealth and decision-making from the state and see it spread out throughout the community. The business is now run by owner-managers and worker-shareholders. This is modern Conservatism in practice, spreading power and wealth throughout the community rather than concentrating it in the hands of the state, and I am proud to have been involved in that process. Indeed, I hope to announce another sale tomorrow.

Bus deregulation was fought tooth and nail by the Opposition because it extended choice and competition. Choice and competition are the enemies of Socialism and the best possible friends of the customer and the consumer. I ask hon. Members to join me in the Lobby to support the policies that are proving to be successful and in the national interest.

[Mr. Mitchell]

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 293.

Division No. 71] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fearn, Ronald
Fenner, Dame Peggy

Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 256, Noes 186.

Division No. 72] **[10-14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian

Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Watts, John

Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George

Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Primarolo, Ms Dawn

Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Walley, Ms Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. James Wallace and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates the Government on the success of transport policies which have led to an improved transport infrastructure through increased investment whilst reducing the proportion of gross domestic product taken up by public expenditure, which have provided better value for money for taxpayers, ratepayers and industry, and which have increased choice of service to the customer; and furthermore notes with approval the Government's policies to safeguard the environment and to maintain and improve transport safety standards.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, concerning a matter of some urgency and importance. This afternoon, the divisional court ruled on the deportation of Frank Larsen, who was one of the four defendants in the Lambeth case, which came before the House in the form of points of order and a statement from the Attorney-General last month. At that time, he was ordered to be deported, and the learned judge sitting on that occasion said that some time should be given to Mr. Larsen in which to choose when he was to go. It now turns out that he is to be moved to the Queen's building at Heathrow at 8 am tomorrow and deported at 2 pm, which is before the House sits again.

The Home Secretary should be summoned to the House tonight to make a statement on why there is this unseemly haste in the deportation. Could it possibly be that Mr. Larsen has a number of matters in his knowledge and possession that would be somewhat damaging and dangerous if revealed? Could it be that someone is trying to obscure the fact that he was not prosecuted for forgery of certain documents, for example, or for being in receipt of certain classified information — for example, Operation Layout——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot possibly answer questions such as that. What is the point of order for me, please?

Mr. Bermingham: My point of order is that, before the House sits again, someone is to be removed from this country in respect of whom a considerable number of important and relevant questions must be asked and about whom the Attorney-General made a statement last month. All I wish to do is to request you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the Home Secretary to come before the House and explain why Mr. Larsen is to be deported with such speed, the learned judge's comments notwithstanding.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a matter for me. Undoubtedly the Government Front Bench will have heard what has been said.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House has a problem of the sort that you may think occurs from time to time. The House can express a view or even ask a question only if the process is initiated in some way. For example, it can be initiated by a ministerial statement. If that does not happen, it is normally open to hon. Members to initiate the process in some other way.

In this case the vital decision will be taken tomorrow and the House will have no opportunity to initiate the process until the horse has escaped. You may think, Mr. Speaker, that that is likely to bring the House into disrepute. Normally the House would not seek to review an executive decision by the Home Secretary, but here there is some reason or some allegation that what is in issue is not the public interest, but the political interest of the Government. Therefore, you may think that the House is in a difficulty, and I respectfully invite you to advise the House on how it can proceed.

Mr. Speaker: The only advice that I can give the House is that the Leader of the House is present and will have heard these comments. I cannot answer this question, but I can tell the House that we now have the timed business

[Mr. Speaker]

of a prayer and that we should get on with it. The debate on the prayer must end at 11.30, and these points of order take time from the debate.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you well know, you and I have had correspondence on this issue about this person, and you were kind enough to call me at Prime Minister's Question Time when the matter was raised. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: I wish that the hon. Gentleman had not said that.

Mr. Caborn: A number of court cases are now taking place and the person who is to be deported, or who may be deported, before the House meets again is a major actor on that stage. Many serious questions have been raised and we are asking for your guidance about how we can prevail upon the Executive not to deport this person until the issue can be debated, because there are major political implications in the case.

Mr. Speaker: Again, the only advice that I can give the hon. Gentleman is what I have already said. It is a matter not for me but for the Government, who will undoubtedly have heard what has been said.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since the Leader of the House is present and heard your earlier comments, perhaps he will respond to the anxiety of my hon. Friend and say whether between now and 11.30 he will consult the Home Secretary to see whether a statement may be made.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Gentleman's comment will undoubtedly have been heard. This is a matter to be discussed through the usual channels, if at all. We should now get on with the prayer.

Further Education

10.33 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (Governing Bodies of Institutions of Further Education) Regulations 1987 (S.I., 1987, No. 1160), dated 2nd July 1987, a copy of which was laid before this House on 20th July, be annulled.

This order takes back more than 20 years of students' rights to participate in governing bodies. In many respects, it would have been much more appropriate for my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to lead in this debate, because I am sure that all hon. Members will recall that in the days when he was president of the National Union of Students he was instrumental in pushing forward students' rights and the ability to participate in governing bodies.

At a stroke, with these regulations, the Government will revoke those rights and push students back to a position that pre-dates the mid-1960s. The regulations come from the Education Act 1986 and arise from a problem that the Government feel they have in dealing with under-age governors. As I understand the Government's position, the rationale is that they feel that it is necessary by law to exclude governors under the age of 18 from participating in discussion and voting on certain decisions. The Government argue that people under the age of 18 cannot enter into contracts. Therefore, it follows from the Government's logic—as I understand it—that governing bodies containing youngsters under the age of 18 cannot enter into a contract. Can the Minister tell us why that is the case?

It seems that there are procedures whereby it may be possible for youngsters to continue to participate, and even to vote, without the need for these regulations. If the Government say that the contract is made severally by each individual governor, that is understandable. But if the Government say that the contract is made collectively, is it possible to have a vote whereby the first decision is confirmed by the governors and then the governors collectively become responsible so that youngsters under the age of 18 can participate? The Government need to answer that point.

The Government also need to deal with the much greater powers in the regulations to exclude all student governors, regardless of whether they are under or over the age of 18. One of the more distressing aspects is that the Government have not even bothered to consult the National Union of Students about how the regulations should work. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) feels that that is a normal process. Of course, we know that, with his politics, he would not consult anybody; he would simply take decisions.

Can the Minister tell us why the Government have not consulted the National Union of Students? I suspect that they have not even bothered to consult polytechnic directors, principals of further education colleges or directors of education authorities. But those individuals and bodies will have the responsibility for implementing the regulations. Why has there been no consultation?

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The lack of consultation is a continuation of what happened when Parliament was in recess and schools were on holiday. There was no consultation with all the people who should be concerned with legislation on education. The Government are casual about consultation with students, but these are elected people on the campus. If they are not consulted they will find ways of making their presence felt. There is a democratic process for consultation. Those who are against that process are asking for demonstrations and so on by adopting that attitude.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend is right. If people are not given an opportunity to participate they will seek other ways of influencing decisions. My hon. Friend is also right in his assertion that it is typical of the Government that they do not bother to consult. We have seen that with the general education proposals. Sadly, we see it with these regulations.

The Government are dealing not simply with student governors under the age of 18; they have extended the regulations to cover student governors over the age of 18. It is worthwhile reading regulation 4, under which the Government restrict student governors to such an extent that it is almost impossible to envisage that they can play anything but a second-class role in governing bodies. The first condition that the Government impose is that any student governor, regardless of age, must leave the meeting when it is discussing staffing if another member of the governing body so proposes. That immediately limits the ability of students to participate.

The Government go further. Even if no one proposes that he leave, the student governor must not participate in or vote on any discussion. So, even if no one proposes that the student governor should leave the meeting, he will not be entitled to vote on or to participate in any discussion. Just in case they have left a loophole in the process, the regulations say that if no college regulations exist either way, it should be taken that the student governor should withdraw. If a person is not caught by condition one and somehow survives condition two, condition three will catch him.

But the Government, true to their nature, are not happy with conditions one, two and three. They have introduced a fourth condition, just in case there is a loophole. Regulation 4(4) concludes by saying that a college can add further restrictions, whatever their nature, if it so wishes.

The Government have given no justification for such restrictions on student governors. We look forward to hearing from the Minister. I have looked to see whether any press releases have come from Elizabeth house to tell us what justification there is for such regulations, but so far there has been none. Student governors are simply to be excluded.

The Government say that student governors can participate, like any other governor, as long as the decisions do not concern staff and finance. I have spent a lot of time trying to see what decisions of any merit or substance will not have staffing or financial implications. I am prepared to give way to any Conservative Member who can come forward with an example that would fall outside those categories. I do not see any volunteers, but I see many Conservative Members thinking hard for an example. But, of course, they are the supporters of the legislation. All that they want to do is effectively exclude student governors from all participation in governing

[Mr. Fatchett]

bodies. In reality, one can hardly think of a decision of merit or substance that will not fall within staffing or finance.

Why the change? We wait to hear the Minister. There is no justification in argument so far, and there is no justification in practice either. Many institutions in Britain allow students to participate in those decisions. I do not believe that a queue of polytechnic directors or further education principals has been knocking on the door of the Department of Education and Science to say that they want to get rid of their student governors. Perhaps the Minister will tell us of those who have made that point. I suspect that they may knock on the door of Elizabeth house for other reasons, but not necessarily to get rid of student governors.

If we want a practical example we can look at Leeds polytechnic, in my constituency. That is a good polytechnic where the practice of student governors has continued for a number of years without difficulty or complaint. The director supports the practice. The students union is desperately worried about why it is to excluded from the process of government. Why change arrangements that have worked for many years?

The result of the regulations is that we shall simply turn students into second-class citizens. They will be asked to keep quiet. The educational and political argument for student governors and participation has always been based on three premises. First, it is good in educational terms that students should have the right to participate in the decisions that affect their institutions. Secondly, it is good that it provides practice in responsibility and citizenship. What sort of practice and responsibility will people gain from provisions that say that they cannot participate in the vast majority of important decisions? Thirdly—this is an argument that ran for a long time in the 1960s and 1970s and is still relevant—the process of student participation provides good management and good practice for the institution. That is the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery). Without that involvement students will not feel that it is their institution and that they have the right to influence it.

The Government have turned against good practice and principles that have been established and have run for many years. They have done so without justification, but with the clear result that students will be turned into second-class citizens. We see no reason or justification for that, and that is why we shall be voting against the regulations tonight. The Labour party, above all other political parties, believes in democracy and participation and in allowing our young people the full rights of citizenship.

10.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): Of the regulations before us tonight, regulations 1 and 2 are routine. Regulation 3 is an extension of the principle of open government, requiring agendas, minutes and other papers—*[Interruption.]* It is clear from the speech made by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) that he has not understood the regulations, so he should listen carefully as I lead him through them.

Regulation 3 requires agendas, minutes and other papers considered by governing bodies to be available at the institution for inspection by anyone who wishes to see them. The only papers excluded from that requirement are those that name individual students or teachers, or are otherwise confidential. Similar arrangements relating to the papers of school governing bodies have been in force since 1981. We are now extending them to further education institutions. The system has worked well with schools. Governing bodies rely for their vitality on the support and interest of the communities that they serve, and I am sure that the House will support the principle that their proceedings should be open to those communities. I want to stress that element of the regulations.

Regulation 4 is the one on which the hon. Member for Leeds, Central has concentrated his fire. It contains provisions restricting the participation of student governors in the discussion of certain topics connected with finance and staffing. Let me emphasise, as the hon. Gentleman has clearly misunderstood the regulations, that student governors will have full rights of participation in the discussion of any other matter. We have confined the restrictions to instances in which they are reasonable and necessary, as I propose to show. The Government have no wish to diminish the role that student governors can play in the great bulk of the business with which governing bodies have to deal.

Regulation 4(2) prevents governors under the age of 18 from voting — I emphasise the word "voting" — on proposals concerning the expenditure of money by the governing body, or on proposals under which the governing body or any members of it would enter into any contract, or would incur any debt or liabilities. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central has asked why we are doing that. As a matter of law, minors cannot normally enter into binding contracts. We believe, therefore, that their votes should not count when matters of expenditure, contract, debt or liability are at issue. However, there is nothing in the regulations to prevent student governors under the age of 18 from participating in discussion of such matters. I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. And, of course, student governors over the age of 18 will have full rights. That seems eminently reasonable to me.

Regulation 4(3) is the one that has incurred the hon. Gentleman's particular ire. It restricts the participation of all student governors in meetings of the governing body at which the item under discussion—the hon. Member for Leeds, Central should listen carefully, as this is a crucial point which he has misunderstood — relates to the appointment, remuneration, conditions of service, promotion, suspension, dismissal or retirement of an individual member or prospective member of staff. If the instrument of government permits any one member of the governing body to require the withdrawal of a student governor from the discussion of those topics, and if such a request is made, he must withdraw.

If the governors have that right but none exercise it, the student may stay to hear the discussion, but may not speak or vote. In the absence of such a provision, which it is open to the institution to make, the student must withdraw from any discussion of those topics.

We recognise, just as the hon. Member for Leeds, Central does, the value of student participation in governing bodies. Like him, we believe that it is of benefit both to the institution, by directly involving the students, and to the students themselves, for whom it is good training. But there is an overriding principle – that of confidentiality, and, it might almost be said, of natural justice. Staff responsible for the teaching, assessment and examination of students would be put in an invidious position if those same students were able to speak, and even to vote, on matters concerning the conditions of service, promotion, suspension or dismissal of those individual members of staff.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The previous regulations allowed students to participate in financial matters and in debates on all subjects. Can the Minister give us one example of a college that has been drawn to his attention where there has been a major problem? When we debated the Education (No. 2) Act 1986, from which the regulations come, nobody showed us any examples of problems that existed.

Mr. Jackson: It is important to clarify the position and to establish it firmly in the instruments of government. Those points were made and they were accepted in the debates that took place here and in another place when the policy that underlies these regulations was debated in 1986. Several noble Lords and the former hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, Mr. Freud spoke from their experience of the higher education world and testified to the normality of the sort of restriction envisaged in the regulations. Therefore, I cannot accept the view of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central that the regulations will put back the clock. They will merely consolidate the existing position.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Minister has the Floor.

Mr. Jackson: The principle of the withdrawal of institutional governors during the discussion of staffing matters is not new, nor is it confined to students. The instruments of government of most polytechnics and colleges already provide in some way for the withdrawal of student governors in such circumstances, and they also commonly require staff governors to withdraw from governing body discussions about the appointment, promotion, suspension, dismissal or retirement of a member of staff——

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman should listen to my point.

As I have said, they often require staff governors to withdraw when there is a discussion relating to a member of staff in a post that is senior or equal to that of a staff governor. There is nothing new there. The restriction on the participation of staff governors is not regarded as contentious. Nobody complains about that. There are no claims that they are not able to take a proper role in governing bodies because of that restriction, and I believe that the same is true of the restriction on the participation of student governors.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil) *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: I emphasise that the regulations do not prevent student governors from playing a full part in discussions about staffing levels in general.

Mr. Fatchett *rose*——

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman should listen to what I am saying rather than seek to interrupt me. At no stage has the hon. Gentleman understood the central purpose of the regulations. The basic point is that students will be able to participate in discussions of a general character about staffing matters, closures and reorganisations of departments. The restriction applies only to personal matters involving individual named members of staff such as I have described. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central was confusing those points out of either malice — I had better not accuse him of that — or a simple misunderstanding. It is absurd for the hon. Gentleman to seek to say that this limited restriction makes students second-class citizens. He does no service to the cause of student governors to make that point.

Mr. Fatchett: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman has had his chance to make his speech. Let me make mine.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central alleged that there was inadequate consultation before the regulations were made. He made much of that, but he will not let me deal with it. The regulations were shown in draft to the local authority associations, which had no observations on them. We did not consult more widely because the regulations had been debated during the passage of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. We believed them to be based on accepted principles. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) who was the Minister of State, Department of Education and Science when the matter was going through the House.

The regulations apply only to maintained further education institutions. They form part of the present scheme of governance of those institutions as required by the Education (No. 2) Act 1968.

The forthcoming legislation to reform education will reconstitute the polytechnics and colleges. The governing bodies will have a central role. They will have much more responsibility. The institutions will have to make new articles of government which will require the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We will be looking carefully to see whether it would be appropriate to apply to the new sector of higher education provisions similar to those in the regulations now before the House. We shall be consulting widely about that at the appropriate time. We shall take careful account of the points made in tonight's debate when we draw up those regulations.

I believe that the regulations are well founded and I ask the House to reject the prayer for their annulment.

10.54 pm

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): The House will note and recall that the Minister refused to give way on a number of perfectly legitimate questions on which we sought clarification, and to which the Minister might have provided an answer in the middle of his speech. However, knowing the way in which Front-Bench Members of this Government behave, I have no confidence that, if I were to ask a question now, it would be answered at the end of the debate.

I shall ask the questions that I was hoping to ask but it will not pass the notice of the House that the Minister once again refused to give way to several legitimate

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

interventions. That characterises the attitude that he has taken over the regulations whenever he has been questioned about them, whether by the National Union of Students or any other body. It is indicative of the arrogance and lack of consultation that has characterised the way in which the Government have pushed through their so-called consultation paper.—*[Interruption.]* No doubt those Conservative Members who are sniggering are among those who would regard this as a matter of not very great importance. *[Interruption.]* Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a limited amount of time and the more that Conservative Members interrupt me — *[Interruption]*—Conservative Members are causing me to spend longer making my speech than I otherwise might. If I were to be given a modicum of silence, I might be able to get through my speech and they might have the chance to make their speeches.

The hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) said that he wished that his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) had been making the speech. I rather wish that my predecessor, Clement Freud, had been making this speech because he moved for the representation of student governors.

The issue of consultation is important. It strikes at the heart of the representation of student governors on governing bodies. As the Minister suggested, it may be that some governing bodies follow a practice similar to that which he is proposing in this legislation. However, there is a great deal of difference between a governing body taking decisions which it thinks are appropriate to its institution and the Minister enshrining the legislation in such a way that it could be changed only by Parliament. He knows that there is a great deal of difference there, and it is typical of the centralisation that the Government have sought to impose that he will not leave such decisions to governing bodies, but will prescribe and dictate what will happen from the centre. Moreover he does so without any consultation with those affected.

The question that I was going to ask the Minister, and which perhaps the Minister who replies will be kind enough to answer, is: how many requests—I should like a precise figure — has he received from directors of polytechnics or governing bodies to have the legislation that he is proposing put into practice? If there were a case for student governors not having access to information about, for example, staff appointments, one would assume that the directors of polytechnics would be the first to make it. I believe that there has probably been none, but, if there have been any, I shall be interested to hear of them. How many requests for such legislation have the Government received? It is on the answer to that question that many of us will be able to judge the Government's attitude to this matter.

I am not opposed to parts of the legislation. For example, the part that requires documents to be placed in the public domain is probably to be welcomed. In so far as that contributes to some kind of open government, it is welcome to us. However, I differ with the Minister on his remarks about any matter which is of a confidential nature. That is not exactly what the regulations state. They refer to

> "any matter which. . . . the governing body are satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis."

That is very different, given the fact that the majority of those on governing bodies are, in effect, to be the Secretary of State's nominees. That definition is far too broad and open to abuse in a way that will perhaps diminish further the rights of student governors.

As the Minister said, the main question is whether student governors should from time to time and for one reason or another be excluded. I do not question the idea that one might wish to exclude student governors under 18 from voting on decisions which have financial implications. The suggestions on that point of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central were interesting though complex, and, while I am not sure I could go along with his proposals, they are worth considering.

The Minister said that student governors could be excluded in relation to the conditions of service, promotion, suspension, dismissal or retirement of a named member, but that is not what the instrument says. It refers simply to "a member", not "an individual member" or "a named member".

When one thinks of the Government's education proposals that will soon be placed before the House, one must conclude that scarcely one of them relating to higher or further education will not involve, in general, matters relating to the engagement, retirement, dismissal or conditions of service of employees. If that is a general catch-all provision, we are right to oppose it. If, on the other hand, the Minister is amending that—in view of his remarks tonight — and is saying that these conditions, when enacted, can require a student governor to withdraw only in the case of a named individual member of staff, we would regard that as a matter of a profoundly different nature. The Minister's comments on that when he replies to the debate will determine the attitude of many of us.

The present wording of the proposals represents a catch-all provision which will cause student governors to be removed and their legitimate opinions to be isolated and not heard on all matters of importance that are likely to be considered by governing bodies in the forthcoming discussions on the Education Bill—a measure which will change fundamentally further and higher education in this country.

It will be noted outside the House that the Government are now seeking to act to remove the only representatives on governing bodies who are elected, remembering that all the others are appointed — and appointed by the Secretary of State. The only representatives on governing bodies who are accountable to and have the mandate of an electorate are those whose powers the Government now seek to diminish. Once again the Government are acting against the individual's exercise of democracy.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously saying that a student in his last term should take part in deciding whether a member of staff should be sacked?

Mr. Ashdown: That is the type of decision that can be taken by the governing body concerned. If that body, as a majority, decides that a student should not be present, so be it, and that is the position now. I see no reason for legislation on that, I see no reason why such a decision should not be taken by the governing body and I see no reason why a student governor, under those or any other circumstances, should be prevented from giving his views on the basis of one, perhaps capricious, objection. I see no fairness, justice or reason in such a step.

As usual, whenever there is a chance to diminish individual rights, the Government take it; whenever there is a chance to go backwards and be regressive, the Government take it; and whenever there is a chance to diminish the capacity for consultation and partnership, the Government take it. The Government claim that this is all being done in the name of freedom. In fact, this is a mean and petty-minded measure which will damage student participation, cause students sometimes to take their grievances out of governing bodies and take them elsewhere into the campus, with damaging consequences, and do neither education nor the Government any good.

11.4 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): The regulations are something of a curate's egg. There are parts that I commend, parts that I do not particularly commend but recognise that the Government have little choice but to accept as being forced upon them by the legal position, and parts that I dislike intensely. I am much in favour of the regulations that ensure that, so far as is reasonable, there shall be a full flow of information about what is happening within educational institutions to those inside and outside educational institutions who, for legitimate reasons, may need to know.

I am concerned also, as other hon. Members have been, about the way in which the regulations deal with governors. We are creating not two but three classes of governors. There will be those who are appointed to a governing body with full powers, those over the age of 18, who are elected as student governors but will be restricted and forced to withdraw when certain matters are discussed, and those who, because they are under 18, will be prevented from voting on key financial issues. The Minister may have cast his eye over the correspondence that I had with his predecessors at the time of the last education legislation dealing with the issue.

In the case of polytechnics, the problem regarding the age of student governors is not too serious. Students enrol at the age of 18, so all student governors will fall into the second category. However, in colleges of further education and technical colleges, many students are under the age of 18. If they are to participate at all, they will fall into the third category — that is, the group who will have the least right to express their views in the governing body. I fear that the result of that will be that many potential student governors will say, "I shall not take part. If I am not to be a real governor, I do not want to be some kind of token." We have had too much tokenism, and we do not want it in that regard. It will also mean that it will be difficult for student bodies in colleges of further education, in which the bulk of students are below the age of 18, to be properly represented.

We must also remember — this point has not yet been made — that student governors over the age of 18 might well be extremely responsible, mature students. They may be older than other members of a governing body. For example, I find it difficult to understand why a man with a career who goes back later in life to serve as a governor at the same time as being a polytechnic student, should be restricted as though, in some way, he is immature or likely to be irresponsible with the information that he obtains.

I presume that the regulations will be adopted, but the Minister should take on board the fact that it is not only the National Union of Students that is unhappy. The strongest representations have been made to me by the chairman of governors of a college of technology in the midlands. He made these points and asked that they be drawn to the attention of the House. It is not only students who are complaining but those who want to see their college communities represented on governing bodies. If we suggest to students that, in some way, they are to be second or third-class governors, they will not consider themselves to be part of the college community in the fullest sense. That is the tragedy of the regulations.

11.8 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) made a thoughtful contribution, and I hope that the Minister will examine it.

The hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) deplored the fact that the Minister would not give way to any hon. Member. The answer is obvious. The Minister is unsure of himself. He just does not know the regulations, and nor do many Conservative Members. The Minister has not read them. For instance, he missed one of the most fundamental points and referred to three other points.

Regulation 4(1) provides that under certain conditions restrictions can be prescribed. Paragraph (3) gives the conditions under which a student can be removed. Regulation 4(4) states:

> "The instrument of government for a relevant institution may contain provisions specifying restrictions on the participation of student governors in the proceedings of the governing body of the institution additional to those imposed by paragraphs (2) and (3) above."

There is a catch-all regulation that has been noticed by the National Union of Students, which, like every other organisation, has its lawyers who have gone through the regulations. The NUS, having given all the points that are relevant to what is happening to the students and having pointed out that democracy was being stifled, put it neatly when it said:

> "NUS is obviously worried that if students are excluded from the legitimate decision-making structure of the college, they may choose other, less constructive, mechanisms of ensuring their voice is heard."

That is what it is being invited to do, because democracy functions at that level. The NUS said about regulation 4(4):

> "Furthermore, the regulations contain an additional clause for governing bodies to introduce additional restrictions on student representation as they see fit."

That is a catch-all regulation that will totally undermine student representation. Having set out in the regulations those reasons, some silly and some specious, one says to oneself, "Why in heaven's name do they do this?" The hon. Member for Yeovil touched on that when he said, "Why do things that take us way, way back and replace procedures that have been tested previously and have been proved to be workable?" Such conduct only enrages those honourable people who are elected students. Many of the governors are not elected. It is wrong to take such draconian measures and then say at the end in the most insulting manner, "If we have not got you out, there are additional catch-all provisions under which you will be got out." The Government ought to look at such a draconian measure because it is not on.

11.12 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I thought that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) overstated his case. I listened to what he said and I assumed that he was quoting from an NUS document when he said that there was a possibility of students adopting a less constructive method of participation. I hope that that will not be the case, because students will be in a stronger position than has been implied in the debate. I thought that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) over-egged the pudding when he said that we were returning students to the mid-1950s. In the mid-1950s, the powers of students were minimal and I do not think that we are going down anything like that road.

We are invited this evening to pray against the statutory instrument, but if we do we will vote against the publication of minutes and papers as set out in regulation (3) — the agenda, the draft minutes, any report, documents and other papers considered at such meetings. It is to be regretted that we are being invited to vote against those entirely worthwhile provisions. If we vote down the prayer, it will be a vote against openness. While glasnost might be popular in the Soviet Union, it does not seem to be popular on the Opposition Benches.

Regulation 4(3) excited the attention of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), he raised the matter of the names of individuals. Paragraph 4(3) states:

"the subject of discussion is the appointment, remuneration, conditions of service, promotion, suspension, dismissal or retirement of a member or prospective member of the staff".

That seems to get down to the individual and that answers the point raised by the hon. Member for Yeovil. If he requires further clarification, my hon. Friend the Minister may say a word or two about that when he replies.

I believe that we have returned to the individual and specific case. Paragraph 4(3) restricts the participation of the student governor only when we are referring to specifics. Members of staff have a right to confidentiality when discussing their particular and specific pay and conditions, just as much as anyone else.

Student governors will still be able to play a major part in a wide range of other matters. For example, they will be able to participate in discussions on staffing levels and the reorganisation of departments. I stress that point to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central. Students will have a major part to play in the running of their institutions. That is why I believe that the hon. Member for Hillsborough was wrong to say that it is necessary for students to look for other methods of participation.

Paragraph 4(2) is fair since, whether or not those under 18 are students, they are unable to enter into legal and binding agreements that are enforceable at law. Once we accept that, it is unreasonable that students should vote and commit governors on financial matters. Again, if the hon. Member for Leeds, Central feels that students should be allowed to speak and vote on financial matters as they affect governing bodies even though they are minors in law, why does he not go the whole hog and say that minors should be able to enter into legal and binding agreements enforceable at law? Clearly no one would argue for that and I have perhaps taken that case beyond its logical conclusion.

The regulations are fair and I hope that the House will reject the Opposition prayer tonight.

11.17 pm

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The logic of the regulations defies comprehension. The regulations are petty, and most of all they demonstrate a lamentable lack of knowledge on the Government's part of the good practice in institutions of further and higher education. They also show that the Government have no sensitivity and very little understanding of the process of education. To state that mature students and people who have been working and living within an institution should take part in all the decisions does not necessarily mean that they should have the majority. However, they should take part in the decisions and accept a level of responsibility; that is the essence of any educational and democratic process. Obviously the Minister is frightened of that.

When the Minister suggests that the position with regard to staff governors is similar to that described in the regulations, that shows that he has not understood the regulations with respect to staff governors. They are not allowed to vote when they have a personal interest. In other words, they cannot vote when they may be promoted because of the advancement or demotion of another member of staff. Students are not in that position, and will not be in that position. Therefore, the only rationale that the Minister offered the House is bogus. He has demonstrated his lack of understanding of what has enabled those of us who have worked in higher and further education to develop good practice and take responsibility for the decisions in which students are involved.

I ask the Minister to give us some rationale and to reconsider the matter. He has an opportunity to demonstrate that he understands these matters, and that he has some sympathy for the process. I hope that he changes his mind.

11.19 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Government and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) chided us for not welcoming regulation 3, which led to this call for far more openness. One of our reasons for not doing so is that the provisions already exist in local government legislation. However, we are pleased that the provisions are included in these regulations, but that is about all that we can say for them.

I welcome the fact that the Minister said that he would be consulting widely with higher education institutions about students' representatives on governing bodies. It is odd that he is prepared to do that, yet he was not prepared to consult widely about regulations relating to the larger number of students in further education colleges.

The Government have double-crossed students and the House. In the Education (No.2) Act 1986 the Government said that they wanted to remove student governors under the age of 18 from these bodies. Strong representations were made by students and hon. Members that that change was unnecessary. With the pressure of time in the House, the Government agreed to the concession to keep student governors under the age of 18 years on FE institutions. The Government's original intention of removing student governors under that age from these bodies will be implemented by the introduction of these mean regulations.

In 1986 the Government could not and still cannot give any examples of how, over the past 20 years, the participation of student governors in these matters has led to any problems. No one can give an example of litigation against a college because of a problem about who took a decision within the governing body and whether it involved someone under the age of 18. I challenge the Minister to give us an example from the past 20 years. If he can, at least we will feel that he has a shred of evidence on his side; so far I cannot find any.

I am worried that students may lose the opportunity to vote on financial matters. Further, I am concerned that the regulations appear to be misleading about staff. The Minister said that he was referring to individual staff, but that is not what the regulations say. I hope that he will clarify that point when he winds up the debate.

I suspect that the regulations are not clear, because of a major problem. With regard to a particular contraction within a college or department, how do we know whether the individual is concerned as an individual or as the head of the department? It is extremely difficult to decide whether the regulations refer to the individual or the post that he occupies.

The danger of these regulations is that student governors will feel that they are only on these bodies to choose the colour of the paint. Presumably, if the Conservative party had its way they would be able to choose any colour as long as it was blue.

The regulations demonstrate the Government's fundamental attitude towards democracy — there is an election every four or five years and, as a result, the Government can exercise autocratic power. We argue that if one genuinely believes in democracy one must encourage people at all levels to participate. It is essential to have consensus about the running of colleges for students, staff and the local community. That consensus will be achieved by encouraging all concerned to participate as equals in the debate and argument on policy, not to offer one individual the chance to veto whether a student can even remain at a meeting, which seems to be weighting the balance of power within a governing body against students.

Some of my hon. Friends have suggested that conflict may return to the student communities at colleges. Let us consider the record. In the period when students were not represented on governing bodies, there was far more conflict and student views were expressed as a result of sit-ins and other activities. As student representation on governing bodies was steadily increased such activities declined. Now, if one visits colleges, more often than not, principals make the point that the student representatives are vital to the government of colleges because they represent an extremely good way of passing on information and arriving at consensus with, and obtaining consent from, students.

That good practice should not be ruined by the Government's doctrinaire attitude that one cannot trust students. I hope that the House will approve the prayer and that the Government will return with new regulations that will enable studens to continue to play a major, active role in the government of FE institutions.

11.25 pm

Mr. Jackson: This has been a lively and interesting debate. I believe that there has been an underlying current of agreement between all sides.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) has repeated the exaggerations and misrepresentations of his hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), whose remarks were designed to obscure the extent of agreement. When the hon. Member for Leeds, Central was speaking, I thought that we were faced with a genuine muddle rooted in intellectual confusion. However, from the speech of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish, it is clear that that muddle is deliberate and that it is rooted in the politics of opposition for opposition's sake.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Mr. Griffiths) made a thoughtful and significant contribution to the debate. I must tell him that under-18s will be able to participate fully in the governing of further education colleges. The only restriction upon them is that they may not vote in those limited instances where a matter of contract, debt or liability is involved. My hon. Friend was concerned that they should be able to participate, and I repeat that nothing in the regulations will touch their right to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North also said — it was taken up by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) that the student governors may be mature students, and, indeed, older than the staff. The point at issue is not the age of students, but their status in relation to members of staff. I believe that that represents perfectly reasonable grounds on which to proceed.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) complained about paragraph 4(4) which specifies that instruments of government may contain further restrictions beyond those that are envisaged or have been discussed. Opposition Members cannot say that this matter should be left to the institutions and their instruments of government and, at the same time, complain when provisions are made in legislation to enable them to do precisely that.

Mr. Ashdown: It is forcing them.

Mr. Jackson: On the speech of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), I must make a point of clarification. I used the word "individual" to make absolutely clear, by way of a gloss the meaning of the regulation which uses the singular article "a", as in "a member". My intention was simply to make clear the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish made the same point and it is what the Opposition want to obscure and represents their muddle, exaggeration and misunderstanding — that the restriction we are talking about is a limited one designed to protect the individual rights of members of staff. Indeed, the hon. Member for Yeovil spoke about individual rights.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jackson: I must press on, as this is a timed debate.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish asked how many requests we had had from institutions. This is a matter of public knowledge and we had a debate about it in relation to the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.

Let me remind hon. Members of the provision in the Act which states that the participation of any student of such an institution who is a member of the governing body may be excluded in certain circumstances. That was well known at the time, and the Opposition accepted that amendment to the Act without debate or division.

It has been said that I have not spoken to students about this matter. I assure the hon. Member for Yeovil

[Mr. Jackson]

(Mr. Ashdown) that I have had extensive discussions with students in many institutions about it. The hon. Gentleman seems to have forgotten that, in 1986, Mr. Clement Freud, whose absence the hon. Gentleman said he regretted—he may regret it more now—said:

> "When I was rector of Dundee university, students sat on the court of the university. They did not have a vote and, rightly, were not involved when we discussed staff misdemeanours or salaries." — [*Official Report*, 10 June 1986; Vol. 99, c. 204.]

So Mr Freud was right, and the hon. Member for Yeovil is wrong. He should have studied the background to the debate before making his speech tonight.

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)).*

The House divided: Ayes 147, Noes 200.

Division No. 73] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galloway, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Redmond, Martin
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Frank Cook.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby

Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wiggin, Jerry

Tellers for the
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Richard Ryder

Question accordingly negatived.

PETITION

Rating Reform

11.40 pm

Mr. Calum A. Macdonald (Western Isles): With your permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that of the House, I beg leave to present a petition on behalf of my constituents residing on the islands North Uist, South Uist and Benbecula. The petition protests against the proposed implementation of the community charge or poll tax, which is considered unfair, unjust and inequitable as it takes no account of the ability of citizens to pay. The petition also says that it will be inefficient and expensive to operate and will infringe the civil liberties of the people of the Uists and Benbecula.

The petition concludes:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House repeal the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987.

I beg leave to present the petition.

To lie upon the Table.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Can you tell the House whether you have been notified that it is the intention of the Home Secretary to make a statement about the case of Mr. Larsen? The matter was raised earlier by some of my hon. Friends. Since it appears that the person is due to be deported at 2 o'clock tomorrow, that will remove any opportunity for the House to ask questions about the motives and the accusations that have been made that Mr. Larsen has been in the employ of the South African Government. Clearly, the House needs to have a statement. Is it possible for you to find out whether the Home Secretary will make a statement tomorrow and whether Mr. Larsen will not be sent back until the House has at least had an opportunity to question the Home Secretary? This is a very important matter, and once again the House has been treated with disrespect.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): First, I shall answer the hon. Gentleman's initial point. No, I have not been approached by the Home Secretary. Secondly, I re-emphasise what was said earlier by Mr. Speaker, that this is not a matter for the Chair. I understand the concern of hon. Members, but I repeat that this is not a matter for the Chair. Thirdly, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that the Chair cannot direct a Minister to come before the House. Points of order and comments were heard earlier. Again, I emphasise that there is nothing further that I can do.

Housing Estates (Vandalism)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

11.43 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the matter of vandalism on outer city estates. That vandalism causes fear, aggravation and harm to people who live on estates in parts of my constituency and on similar estates throughout the United Kingdom.

Quite rightly, great emphasis has been placed by Governments on inner city deprivation, on problems of urban renewal, and on the needs of people who live in deprived city centre areas. What has not been highlighted has been the disadvantage suffered in the outer city housing areas, such as Beaumont Leys, Braunstone, New Parks, Stocking Farm and Mowmacre in my constituency, places where people are living very often in difficult circumstances, partly because the Government have not provided them with the resources which are needed for them to be properly protected.

I pay tribute to the people of those areas for the efforts they make as communities to help and to serve each other. I pay tribute to my Labour colleagues who are councillors in those areas for their constant, unremitting efforts on behalf of their constituents. The work that they have to do is often difficult. As a result of growing deprivation, need and disadvantage, vandalism has become a scourge which makes too many people's lives thoroughly miserable, makes too many people afraid to leave their homes, and too many elderly folk in particular, afraid to walk in the streets.

I ask the Government to consider how greater resources particularly housing resources, can be brought into those areas. We must not forget that local authority housing has been severely cut, that 50 per cent. of the housing money has been removed from local authorities and that they are not even allowed to make use of the money that they received from the sale of council houses. Hon. Members on both sides of the House feel that any restriction on the use by councils of their own money, realised from the sale of their own council houses, is totally wrong and that these moneys should be released for use by the councils.

Secondly, there are not enough police in those areas. In some places the police stations are shut at weekends and in the evenings. There are not enough policemen on the beat and there are not enough police available on call when they are needed so that those whose houses are robbed, those who are attacked and those whose property is vandalised feel that they have no direct access to the authority that could help them.

Thirdly, most of the vandalism is carried out by young people. Of course, they should know and behave better, and one can often place the blame on parents. But the reality in these estates is that a vast number of parents are coping in circumstances which are very difficult for them. There are broken homes and single parent and other families where people are struggling without the support which decent society should provide.

The youngsters on those estates are not merely entitled to jobs and to schooling, but also and as of right to have care taken of them when they have free time outside school and employment. It is not generally recognised that there is huge unemployment in the outer city estates. In Leicester the highest levels of unemployment are on these estates, not in the inner city. I am told that in south Braunstone, unemployment is as high as 60 per cent. When so many of the unemployed are youngsters, and when they have nothing to do with their days and evenings, it is scarcely surprising that they turn to criminal mischief, which is such a misery for all. What do they find on the estates after school or after work? There is nothing for their recreation. These are deserts of houses where communities grow up together without the sort of facilities for young people to have supervised enjoyment in a way that, happily, so many of the inner cities have.

That is changing. There are now some neighbourhood and community centres. But youngsters want discos. They want to dance, play football and enjoy themselves, and so they should. If they do not, they will be liable to run wild. I know something of this because before I was elected to the House some 17 years ago I helped to run a youth club in the east end of London for many years. We used to work with youngsters who were clubbable and some who were unclubbable. It was most enjoyable. We learnt more from it than the youngsters, but they had a place to go where they could spend their time with people whose company they enjoyed.

The effect of the disadvantage, lack of facilities and policing, and unemployment has been a growth in criminal damage and vandalism, which is completely unacceptable. The Government's programme does little to assist and, as a result, we have seen an incidence of crime of which the Government should be deeply ashamed, saying as they do that they are concerned about crime — a Government who came into office and stayed in office on a law and order programme.

Vandalism, I am told, costs local government about £800 million a year. It costs private business, including insurers, £1·2 billion a year. It costs British Telecom about £36 million a year. In Greater London, there are 5,000 incidents a month when phone boxes alone are vandalised. The House should understand that the vandalising of a phone box is not merely a matter of inconvenience. They are often used by people who cannot afford telephones in their own homes to attain and achieve the immediate help they may need when they have to call ambulances, ask for help or reach the police.

Vandalism costs British Rail £1 million a year. In some places, the police and the Government have turned their attention with some results, but in outer housing areas vandalism is getting worse. Criminal damage is now 15 per cent. of all reported crime. In Leicestershire in 1980 there were 4,357 incidents, and in 1986 there were 7,141—an increase of 64 per cent. in the last six years of Tory rule. That is reflected elsewhere in the United Kingdom. Indeed, it is almost the same. In 1980 there were 360,000 incidents in England and Wales and in 1986, 584,000 — an increase of 62 per cent. From 1985 to 1986 incidents were up 8 per cent. We are told that the Government estimate that under 10 per cent. of offences of criminal damage are reported, so it is clear that there are literally millions of acts of vandalism each year.

Vandalism has reached a stage in parts of my constituency where the local communities are gathering together in neighbourhood watch schemes, and I congratulate them on that. They are seeking ways to come together in order to reduce the damage. St. Aidan's vicarage on New Parks estate and St. Aidan's church have suffered vandalism of the sort that we thought would be kept away from a house of God. Windows have been smashed and are now kept permanently bricked up, and cars have been stolen. The home of Father Darren Smith was burgled, and insurers are saying that they may refuse to cover further damage.

I shall be chairing a meeting of citizens of New Parks on Saturday evening which will be attended by the police, councillors, local authorities and education authorities. They are coming together because the local community is seeking help. It is seeking to work together, seeking more facilities for the young, more police, and improvements on the estates with better lighting and security, vandal-proof equipment and alarms. It is seeking an education programme for public awareness to improve the vigilance of local people. It is seeking to improve the maintenance of the facilities on the estate.

I ask the Government to recognise the needs of the outer city housing estates. I ask them to recognise the failure in the past to make provision for those needs. I ask them to understand that that failure has led to vandalism on a growing scale, and to real difficulties for the good people who live on those estates.

11.54 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): I congratulate my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) on his good fortune in obtaining this debate, and on the work that he has done over 17 years in Leicester in promoting the interests of the outer estates. As a fellow Leicester Member, I associate myself with his comments.

I feel very worried about the Government's obsession with inner city areas. Like my hon. and learned Friend, I think it extremely important to place more resources on the outer estates. I join him in calling for the establishment of an outer estates task force. If it is all very well for the Government to give £1 million to Highfields, they should give £1 million to Northfields, Netherhall, Thurnby Lodge, Braunstone and the other outer areas of Leicester. Unless we adopt that approach, many of the scenarios painted by my hon. Friend will become a reality.

11.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I am pleased that the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) has raised this topic for debate. I also note the contribution made by the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz), and the presence in the Chamber of my hon. Friends the Members for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

The debate gives me the opportunity to restate the Government's commitment to promoting effective measures to combat vandalism, and to set out our approach and the progress that we have made so far. As the hon. and learned Member has explained, vandalism is one of the most prevalent and distressing blights on the quality of life today. It takes many and varied forms; it affects all walks of society and all types of property. However, vandalism on housing estates is especially distressing and serious because it intrudes upon, and can destroy, what people hold most dear—their security in their own homes, and their families' quality of life.

Vandalism is by no means a recent phenomenon. As a statutory offence, criminal damage has been on the statute book in various forms for a long time. But there is a

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

general perception, born out by the Home Office's published statistics, that the problem has become more serious and common in recent times.

In the 1950's, criminal damage accounted for less than 1 per cent. of recorded offences. It now accounts for about 15 per cent. That proportionate increase has taken place during a period when the overall crime rate has also been rising.

It is possible, as the hon. and learned Gentleman has done tonight, to try to explain the problem by reference to particular factors, such as the design of modern housing estates or the lack of recreational and employment opportunities for the youngsters who are most likely to indulge in vandalism. In fact, evidence from the research studies that have been carried out and our own individual experience tell us that vandalism—like crime in general — is a product of many and various social and individual factors. It cannot be pinned down to any specific cause or causes, important though some of those mentioned by the hon. and learned Gentleman undoubtedly are.

What is perhaps more important is to reach some measure of agreement on the need for action, and on effective measures to tackle the problem. I am glad to be able to say that action is, indeed, being taken.

No one can doubt the Government's commitment to reducing crime in all its various forms. The momentum generated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's crime prevention seminar held in January 1986 has been carried forward by the setting up of a ministerial group which, under Home Office chairmanship, helps to co-ordinate efforts and initiatives across Government Departments.

Among those in the front line of the fight against vandalism are, of course, the police. The hon. and learned Gentleman called tonight for more policing on estates. That is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, but everyone knows that the Government consider it essential that there is a strong police service of high morale.

That we have achieved. The strength of the police force is now higher than it has ever been, standing at 122,000 officers supported by 40,000 civilian staff. As a result of the increase that we have made in police strength, chief officers have been able to deploy more officers on local foot patrols. That will help to build public confidence and will improve the officer's detailed knowledge of his beat. That should help directly to prevent and detect many of the sort of offences that have been referred to in this debate.

But the police cannot do the job unaided. There is now almost universal acceptance that the fight against vandalism can be really successful only if there is participation throughout the community. It is obviously essential that the local authority should work closely together with the police in tackling crime and vandalism on housing estates.

But even with the statutory agencies working closely together, there is still a need to enlist the active support of the local community. It is this approach, seeking to tackle the problem at a variety of levels by a variety of means, which is reflected in the initiatives which the Department of the Environment is actively promoting to tackle problems on run down council housing estates.

That brings me to the specific measures that my Department is supporting to deal with these problems. Since 1979 the Department has supported the priority estates project, which works closely with local authorities to improve conditions on their run down estates. The PEP approach involves giving residents on these estates an effective say in how their estates are run.

It is, of course, the residents who suffer the vandalism, graffiti and other anti-social occurrences. It is often they who come up with the most imaginative and effective ideas for tackling the problems. PEP has to date been focusing its efforts on 30 of the most difficult estates in England and Wales. It aims to stabilise the community, encourage self-help and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

My Department and the Home Office are jointly funding research, just begun, to quantify and evaluate the effectiveness of crime prevention measures on run down estates. Those results will be published and made widely available.

Many of the approaches pioneered by the priority estates project are now being taken forward on a broader front under the Department's Estate Action programme. That initiative was launched in June 1985 specifically to help local authorities tackle problems on their most difficult, run down and vandalised estates. In Estate Action's first year the Government approved 138 schemes covering 58,000 properties in 66 local authorities, involving proposed expenditure of more than £50 million. The lion's share — some £17 million — of those extra resources was targeted on measures to increase security for residents on the council estates concerned.

Leicester, along with over 60 other local authorities, has already benefited from extra resources under our Estate Action programme. Last year Leicester received a extra allocation of over £90,000 towards the first phase of a refurbishment scheme on its St. Peters estate. This year Leicester is likely to receive a further £800,000 or so from Estate Action towards completing the scheme at St. Peters estate, and other schemes are under consideration.

The Department recognises that poor design, bad layout and environmental drawbacks can all contribute towards unacceptable levels of vandalism and other crime, such as break-ins and burglaries. The extra resources being provided to local authorities through Estate Action are thus enabling them to take effective measures to improve the dwellings and their physical surroundings. Nationally, £50 million was made available in 1986-87, and £75 million in the current year, and we have increased Estate Action's budget to £140 million next year.

On high-rise blocks some of the most effective ways of eliminating vandalism and break-ins have been the introduction of door-porters, or concierges. By having someone in charge of who enters the block the basic cause of insecurity is dealt with. By putting someone on the door, it is possible to deter vandals and, at the same time, increase the sense of security for residents, who know that they will be able to contact someone in case of emergency.

Key measures being promoted by Estate Action involve putting housing managers back on to the estate, rather than have them located in remote town hall offices. This not only helps to improve the responsiveness and delivery of services on the estate, but having responsible local authority officers on the spot serves to deter vandalism by increasing "human presence" on the estate.

We must be careful to guard against developing a siege mentality. It would be counter-productive to concentrate solely on making individual dwellings into fortresses and leaving the outside areas and approaches to estates unsafe. All the evidence shows that it is the risk of detection which is most crucial in deterring vandals and, therefore, we must take measures which make people feel secure in walking to and from their homes and make the would-be vandal feel uncomfortable. Things such as better lighting and door entry systems can help in this, but they must be accompanied and backed up by a human presence so that there can be a rapid response if there is a breakdown. Similarly, if litter goes uncollected, or graffiti is not quickly removed, these are signs that encourage the vandal and lead to a spiral of decline and neglect. Effective, estate-based housing management, with active involvement of the tenants, is the key to breaking out of this downward spiral.

Community refurbishment schemes are another type of initiative which Estate Action is currently promoting to tackle problems on some of the most vandalised estates in the country and to involve local residents to the full, in the process giving employment to local unemployed people. Under the schemes, environmental improvements are carried out, usually by unemployed people who actually live on the estate. The works carried out typically involve fencing, removal of rubbish and graffiti, tree and shrub planting and tidying up open spaces. If the people who live on the estates carry out the improvements, it helps to secure their continuing support and care afterwards. In these ways we are helping to restore a sense of pride and belonging in local communities which previously felt forgotten and neglected.

As well as remedying the physical deficiencies on council estates, for example, by providing more defensible space and making the housing tougher to break into, Estate Action is seeking to ensure that those benefits prove of lasting benefit and do not themselves become vandalised and ineffective. We are, in other words, building on the lessons of the PEP approach by seeking to ensure that physical works are properly backed up with improved management and that residents are involved as fully as possible at every stage. Increasingly, we want them to take on responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the estates where they live.

Nor are we limiting our financial assistance under the Estate Action programme to inner-city areas and estates. We recognise that some of the worst housing problems can be found on peripheral estates where residents feel cut off, neglected and forgotten. This type of problem estate was highlighted in Estate Action's first annual report for 1985-86 and many peripheral estates have received Estate Action support.

If any local authority has a run down estate and comes up with innovatory proposals, including appropriate management arrangements for tackling its problems, for example, by involving private sector skills and resources, the Department is prepared to consider making extra financial help available under our Estate Action programme.

My Department's inner cities programmes also have an important contribution to make to solving the problems that we are debating tonight. Under the urban programme, Leicester has received a provisional allocation of £5·43 million for this year as against £5·53 million for last year.

Mr. Janner *rose*——

Mrs. Roe: I still have much to say in answering the debate.

More generally, under the urban programme last year, the Department of the Environment provided £10·5 million grant to local authorities in support of 378 projects aimed at combating crime, for victim support, as help for ex-offenders and for preventing drug abuse.

Mr. Janner: What proportion, if any, of the money that the Minister says is going to Leicester is for the outer city estates, which is what we are discussing tonight?

Mrs. Roe: I spoke of the importance of help going to the peripheral estates. The hon. and learned Gentleman obviously did not hear what I said about that. When he reads my remarks in the *Official Report*, he will see that I covered that point. I said that if any local authority with a run down estate came up with innovatory proposals, my Department would be prepared to consider making extra financial help available under the Estate Action programme.

A great deal of financial assistance is, therefore, being provided by the Department to help local authorities take effective action to combat vandalism and anti-social behaviour in general, and this is being backed up with advice and research.

I mentioned earlier the study we are sponsoring with the Home Office on the effect of the PEP approach to crime. The Department of the Environment has been working with the National House Building Council to publish guidance on security design for new homes. An information sheet on secure layouts for new housing has recently been published.

The Department of the Environment is also preparing a handbook on estate improvement, for publication next year, which will include a section on security. PEP's guide to estate-based management, which was published earlier this year, includes advice on tackling crime and vandalism.

I hope it is clear to hon. Members that the Government are fully seized of the urgency and seriousness of the problems caused by vandalism on housing estates. We are taking considered and carefully targeted action to deal with the problems and are making available to the police and local authorities the extra resources they need to take effective action. We are disseminating the lessons learnt from pioneering projects and research so that others can benefit from them.

If Leicester or any other authority has innovatory proposals for tackling crime and vadalism on its housing estates, we would be keen to consider them for support under the initiatives that I have outlined tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 18 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords]*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered Tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

1. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on Soviet violations of human rights.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): There have been some developments in Soviet human rights performance recently, in particular the release of a number of prisoners of conscience and a modest increase in Jewish and other emigration. But there is a long way to go. Individual gestures are no substitute for the abolition of repressive legislation and an end to the use of state power to crush individual rights. We continue to press the Soviet authorities on these matters, both in bilateral contacts and at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting in Vienna.

Mr. King: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply. Is he aware that in my constituency Dr. Dick Rogers is one of the leading campaigners for the freedom of Anna Chertkova, a Soviet dissident who has been imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital for her religious beliefs since 1973? Will he impress on the Russian people, and especially on the Russian Government, that if they want rapprochement with the West and with this country such behaviour towards people who are imprisoned for their religious beliefs must stop?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend that it is unacceptable to persecute those who seek no more than the freedom to profess their religious faith. The case of Anna Chertkova has, as he will know, been the understandable subject of an extensive campaign throughout the country in which his constituent has taken part. The case has been raised in the House on several occasions and was debated here as recently as 6 November. I hope that that serves to underline the importance attached to that case by all hon. Members.

Mr. Mullin: Does the Foreign Secretary agree that we would be in a better position to lecture the Soviet Union on human rights if our own gaols did not contain so many innocent prisoners? I refer especially to the 11 innocent people who were convicted in connection with the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings and the six innocent people convicted——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That case is sub judice.

Dr. Blackburn: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept from me, as the vice-chairman of the all-party committee for Soviet Jewry, that there is widespread support from hon. Members of all parties for the cause of Soviet Jewry? Will he continue his efforts with the full support of the House and rejoice with me that the Kholmiansky family, who are mentioned in question No. 92, have been released during the past 24 hours?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I join my hon. Friend in welcoming that good news on one individual case. As he will know, we continue to stress consistently and tenaciously the importance that we attach to a substantial improvement in the freedom of emigration, not just of Jewish citizens, but of others from the Soviet Union. It is true that there has been an improvement in the total number of Jewish people who have left the Soviet Union this year. That number is between 6,000 and 7,000, but it still compares unfavourably with the peak total of 51,000 who left in 1979.

United States of America (Meeting)

2. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the United States of America.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): My right hon. and learned Friend held extensive discussions with Mr. Shultz on 20 October in London, and they also met in Brussels on 24 October. A wide range of bilateral and international topics were discussed. We value this regular frank and constructive dialogue.

Mr. Canavan: How does the Minister explain Britain's humiliating defeat yesterday at the United Nations, when the United States and other allies, with more than 100 other countries, supported the rejection of Britain's intransigent stance on the Falklands? As Britain can now muster the support of less than a handful of other countries, is it not time to enter into negotiations with Argentina on the future of the Falklands and to follow America's advice, at least on this issue?

Mr. Eggar: We regret the fact that some countries failed to agree with us on this important issue, but I thought that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to agree that the fact that the United States takes a different view from us does not mean that we are wrong.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my hon. Friend reassure the House that the British Government will press the United States Administration to ensure, in the negotiations with the

Soviets, that Soviet officials will limit their verification of nuclear bases in the United Kingdom, as part of an INF deal, to RAF Molesworth and RAF Greenham Common, and that they will not tour the country and visit naval institutions and other Royal Air Force bases?

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Friend will be aware, details of verification are still being discussed. We are in close consultation with the United States.

Mr. Ron Brown: Did the Minister discuss with his American counterparts compensation for the Libyan people, remembering that not so long ago that country was bombed thanks to support from the British Government? Is that not an important issue of human rights and basic justice? Did the Secretary of State mention that matter in America?

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman chooses to refer to Libya, he should also refer to its appalling conduct in supplying arms to the IRA.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister must accept that if the Americans are free to criticise us about the Falklands, we should be free to criticise them—if we believe that they are wrong — about Central America. Will he give an assurance that the next time Ministers meet the American Administration they will mention the report of the Congress investigation committee into the Iran-Contra affair, which is said to criticise the President for "subverting law" and undermining the constitution of the United States? Will the Government at last use what is called our special relationship with the United States to get the President to stop funding terrorists and to use the money instead for humanitarian and economic aid to Costa Rica and the peoples of the other countries of Central America?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman knows that our position on Central America is clear. We advocate a peaceful negotiated solution, not a military solution, to the problems of the region.

Jordan

3. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Jordan.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: During my visit to Jordan from 1 to 3 November I held friendly and detailed discussions on international and bilateral issues with King Hussein and his Ministers. Relations with Jordan are excellent.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that that is welcome news? Does he agree that King Hussein's work for a peaceful solution in the middle east has been extremely valuable and an example to other Arab leaders?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I endorse my hon. Friend's tribute to His Majesty King Hussein. His courage and tenacity have been an example, not just in that region, but much more widely. The House will wish to acknowledge his most recent considerable achievement in securing full representation from the Arab states at the recent Arab League summit. The final communiqué from that summit offered several important contributions to the two key regional issues: the Iran-Iraq war and the Arab-Israel dispute.

Mr. Faulds: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, in view of the great success of a move to moderation among the Arab states, it would be a wise time to use what little influence we have on the declining years of the Reagan presidency to get the American Government — the only one in the world who could do it — to pressure Israel into adopting a more realistic attitude towards a settlement of the Palestinian problem?

Mr. Winnick: For once I agree.

Mr. Faulds: Then I must be wrong.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall leave the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) to resolve his dispute with his hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) privately. I, at least, am prepared to accept the central thrust of the points that he has made. The United Kingdom, and, indeed, all 12 Community members, have come out firmly in favour of an international conference — one of the initiatives being supported by King Hussein. The United States has not done that. We shall certainly continue our efforts to convince the Americans and the Israelis that an international conference is an opportunity, not a trap or a threat. It is clear that the status quo serves no one's interests. There is no viable alternative to the international conference as a way forward.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what steps Western leaders are taking to support King Hussein's heroic efforts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that the visit that I undertook, and the extent to which we have been in close and continual consultation with King Hussein, are intended to underline the support that we give to his efforts.

Of course, we also give support to Jordan itself. During my time there, a couple of weeks ago, I announced a 50 per cent. increase in our capital loan as a contribution to the five-year development plan. That, however, is only one outward manifestation of the support that we consistently give to the courageous and far-sighted efforts of King Hussein.

Mr. Kaufman: In view of the success of the Amman summit and the opportunity that it opened up for possible new initiatives for a settlement of the conflict between Israel and her neighbours, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman use all his influence to persuade the United States to put pressure on the Israeli Prime Minister to accept the view of his Foreign Minister that an international conference opens the first possible opportunity, under the auspices of the five permanent members of the United Nations, for a long-delayed and wholly desirable settlement to provide security for Israel and self-determination for the Palestinians?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman's question precisely underlines the point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I make no complaint about that. This is a matter on which there is a widespread community of views on both sides of the House. We shall continue tenaciously to press the case for an international conference on the basis of the principles that the right hon. Gentleman has identified, because that is the right way forward.

European-American Relations

4. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the United States Secretary of State to discuss European-American relations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I expect to see Mr. Shultz at the North Atlantic Council meeting planned for 11 and 12 December.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend will doubtless continue to indicate our support for the INF agreement. However, does he agree that the issues that might divide us are as important as those on which we are agreed? To that end, will he take every opportunity to signal to the Americans our determination to campaign vigorously against any proposed protectionist legislation that would damage the interests of Europe and, indeed, the United States and the whole free world?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There will no doubt be some discussions about both those points. I hope that, by that time, there will have been further — if not final — progress towards the signing of the INF agreement. I shall emphasise the extent to which that has the support of all 16 members of the North Atlantic Alliance and, therefore, deserves the wholehearted support of the United States Congress as well.

On the question of trade and protectionism, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the one thing that we must continue striving to avoid is any increase in protectionism across the Atlantic in either direction. The United States Administration are well aware of the strength of our feelings about that, and it is a topic that I regularly discuss with the Secretary of State, George Shultz.

It is important that the political dimension of that question should be fully appreciated. It would be politically damaging to the unity of the West, and to the prospect of free trade throughout the world, if we allowed ourselves to lapse into a trade war either way across the Atlantic.

Mr. James Lamond: Is there any chance of the Foreign Secretary asking the Americans to help us with our special responsibility towards Cyprus by exerting their undoubted pressure on another member of NATO — Turkey — to withdraw its troops, which have been invading the southern territory of a fellow signatory of the Helsinki Final Act?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman says, that is a topic on which Britain has a special position as one of the guarantor powers. It is a topic that we discuss with other friendly nations, including the United States. We seek to impress on all parties to that dispute the need for the withdrawal of foreign troops, including Turkish troops, from the island as part of the settlement that we all want.

Sir Peter Blaker: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that he deserves the congratulations of the House on the robust support that he has given consistently to NATO's twin-track policy on intermediate-range nuclear forces, which has led directly to the present prospect of an agreement by both sides to abolish those forces?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware also that, subject to the resolution of one or two difficult outstanding problems, such as verification, the words that he used in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) reaffirming our wholehearted support for the proposed treaty will be extremely welcome?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that support. We welcome the prospect of signing an INF agreement at the forthcoming summit between the United States and the Soviet Union. We hope that by that time the issues still outstanding, including the crucial one of verification, will have been resolved. My right hon. Friend is right to say that achieving such an agreement will be a success for multilateral, not unilateral, disarmament, which contrasts vividly with the Opposition's policy, which has been described by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) as morally flawed and riddled with inconsistencies.

Vietnamese Refugees

5. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any further plans to relieve Hong Kong of the burden of Vietnamese refugees.

Mr. Eggar: We are pursuing our diplomatic campaign to urge other resettlement countries to do more to help Hong Kong. We are also discussing with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the main resettlement countries durable solutions to the Indo-Chinese refugee problem.

Mr. Alexander: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Are there not about 9,000 refugees in the Hong Kong camps, of whom about 2,000 only are likely to be settled this year? Bearing in mind that those who have been settled here have been no trouble and that this must be one of the most appalling tragedies of our time, would it be possible to relax the family relations criteria for settlers here and allow those without families here to come to settle?

Mr. Eggar: The world is suffering from the problem of refugees fleeing from Communist regimes. About 5 million refugees have had to leave, or felt forced to leave, Communist countries. With the specific problem of Hong Kong, the United Kingdom has a good record. We have accepted nearly 20,000 Indo-Chinese refugees since 1975, including about 13,000 Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong. That is the third highest number of refugees accepted from Hong Kong. My hon. Friend knows that we announced in May that we would be prepared to take 468 further refugees from Hong Kong. I do not think that we can announce any further moves at present.

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the Minister accept that, with a resettlement rate of about 2,400 per annum and an inflow to August this year at a higher figure than that, we shall never get anywhere near a solution to the problem if we continue to approach it in the way in which it has been approached so far? Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that about 1,200 children in Hong Kong have never seen anything but the inside of a camp? Is this not a major disgrace, which the British Government, because of their responsibility for Hong Kong, have a special duty to act upon?

Mr. Eggar: I recognise the problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers. That is exactly why we are taking an initiative with other countries and urging them to follow our example and be prepared to accept more refugees for resettlement.

Mr. Churchill: Having recently returned from a visit to the Chi Mah Wan camp for refugees in Hong Kong, may I inform my hon. Friend that the authorities charged with looking after the interests of the Vietnamese refugees should be congratulated on the humanity with which they discharge their tasks? It is time that Her Majesty's Government redoubled their efforts to secure the placement of these refugees. Of the 9,000 refugees referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander), some 3,000 are in closed camps behind barbed wire, and many of them have been there for five years, with no prospect of being resettled. It is frightful to think that those people are refugees from totalitarian oppression.

Mr. Eggar: I welcome my hon. Friend's comments about the way that closed camps are operated and I understand his concern for the refugees. I have already said that we are doing everything that we can to urge other countries to increase the number of refugees whom they are prepared to accept.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Does the Minister accept that there is concern among all hon. Members about the inhumane conditions that people in the camps in Hong Kong are suffering? As we have a special responsibility for Hong Kong and those refugees, we believe that we should be doing more. I agree with the Minister and understand that we need to persuade other countries to do more, but Britain must take a bigger step than it has in the past.

Mr. Eggar: As well as asking other countries to increase the number of refugees whom they are prepared to take, we recognise that resettlement alone is not the answer to the problem. Therefore, we are considering longer-term solutions. In particular, we support the orderly departure programme from Vietnam as a mechanism to reduce pressure for illegal departures. We are doing all that we can to urge Vietnam to accept back people who are prepared to return. Thus far, that idea has not been well received in Vietnam.

Yugoslavia

6. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is satisfied with the present state of relations between the United Kingdom and Yugoslavia.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Mellor): Relations with Yugoslavia reflect close ties over the years, and there remain many shared interests. A regrettable problem is the failure of the Yugoslav authorities to settle British claims arising out of the Zagreb air disaster in 1976.

Mr. Janner: Have the Government had conversations with the Yugoslav Government regarding documents that the British Government have in their possession and are refusing to reveal about the activities of the German Group E—which is alleged to have been involved not only in the mass killings of Yugoslav civilians but in complicity in the deaths of British prisoners of war—particularly regarding the charge laid by the Yugoslavs to the United Nations, which placed in category A of wanted war criminals for murder and putting hostages to death the man who was then Lieutenant Kurt Waldheim?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. and learned Gentleman has pursued this matter with customary perseverence and courtesy. He knows that we are always ready to engage with him on the detail of this matter, which evokes widespread concern and interest among hon. Members. We regard the complaints laid by the Yugoslav authorities in 1947, which were not followed up by them, as a matter for the Yugoslav Government and not for us. A matter that would concern us is any mistreatment of British service men. As a result of the allegations that were made, the Ministry of Defence made a thorough search of the files, and the hon. and learned Gentleman received a detailed letter from my right hon. and learned Friend on that matter. I am ready to reply to any further inquiries, but I know of no document relevant to that matter that has not been properly considered during the investigations about which I have told the House.

Mr. Allason: Will my hon. and learned Friend give consideration to the release of the retained file on Klaus Barbie? The file has been retained by the Foreign Office.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Gentleman's question have anything to do with Yugoslavia?

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman is a double agent; let him carry on.

Mr. Allason: With regard to the many files relating to Yugoslavia and war criminals, particularly Klaus Barbie, will my hon. and learned Friend consider releasing them as soon as possible, because some of those individuals have been convicted?

Mr. Mellor: I was getting the wrong impression from the trainer's hints that I was receiving.

The rules about the disclosure of documents have been clearly put forward in the House. I have nothing to add. The files that my hon. Friend mentioned will not be released.

Namibia

7. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation regarding the future of Namibia.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): We remain committed to the independence of Namibia on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolution 435, and without preconditions. The United Nations Secretary General and the United States Administration are engaged in continuing efforts to secure its implementation. We support their efforts.

Miss Lestor: Is the right hon. Lady aware that we are being seen, as others are, to be dragging our feet over Namibia? With no foreign journalists allowed into that country, we had to go to the children's conference in Harare and Zimbabwe to learn of the torture, detention and murder of the children who are caught up in the conflict. When her right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary meets Archbishop Huddleston shortly to discuss the matter, will he bear in mind that the world should be alerted to what is happening in Namibia, with a view to some concerted action being taken at the summit in Copenhagen?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand the hon. Lady's anxiety. It is simply not true that nothing has been done. We have made sure that representations about Namibia have been made here and in Pretoria to the South African Government. We continue to be well aware of, and condemn, all abuses of human rights, wherever they may occur and whoever may perpetrate them. Indeed, we shall continue to urge South Africa to withdraw from Namibia. We voted in support of resolution 601, and we shall help the implementation of it wherever we can. As I said earlier, we remain fully in support of the withdrawal of troops, but that is not a precondition for a Namibian settlement, which should be an internationally accepted settlement.

Mr. Atkinson: Will my right hon. Friend consider visiting Namibia? She will see for herself the considerable progress that has been made by the transitional Government towards eliminating apartheid and racial discrimination. She will also have the opportunity of meeting the committee of parents whose sons and daughters have been abducted to SWAPO camps, where they have been held against their will, in Zambia and Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no plans to visit Namibia at present. We do not and shall not recognise the TGNU or any settlement that is inconsistent with the United Nations plan. We shall not meet members of the TGNU in their official capacity. We shall continue to promote dialogue across the political spectrum with all parties in the Namibian dispute. That is why we have made several representations to South African authorities on behalf of detainees, and we shall continue to do that.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Minister elaborate on what the Government are doing to encourage the implementation of resolution 601? Does she agree that the British Government's treatment of the Namibian delegation to Vancouver was contemptible? Does she agree also that the Prime Minister's craven attitude towards Pretoria at the Commonwealth conference — whatever the Minister's personal good will might be — makes one wonder whether the British Government will do anything to impose a settlement on Namibia that might inconvenience the Prime Minister's friends in Pretoria.

Mrs. Chalker: I have already answered the point on resolution 601. We shall help its implementation wherever we can. We wish to see a ceasefire between the South African Government and SWAPO, which will lead to SCR 435. In regard to the hon. Gentleman's other comments, we did not enter into any discussions with Namibia — it was not part of the Commonwealth conference at Vancouver — and there is no reason why we should have done so.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a most significant further step towards the democracy that we all wish to see established in Namibia would be taken if the South African Government would agree to the repeal of the Administrator General 8, which presently enshrines ethnic divisions in that country?

Mrs. Chalker: Sadly, I see no sign of the withdrawal of AG 8. But my hon. Friend is right; it might help the overall position, which, as I made clear, we wish to assist.

South Africa

8. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of representations received about South Africans under sentence of death in South Africa; and what response he is making.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received various representations about South Africans under sentence of death. We are ready to consider making appeals for clemency in cases where the crime is clearly political and there are extenuating circumstances, or where there are strong humanitarian grounds for doing so.

Mrs. Mahon: As this House rejects capital punishment, will the Minister make the strongest representations, because there are still approximately 150 people on Death Row? Will she give an undertaking that, when the United Nations Security Council intervenes, Britain will not vote alone, as it did before, to veto that intervention, leaving us isolated yet again?

Mrs. Chalker: We make inquiries into every case that comes up. The case to which the hon. Lady refers is that of Mr. Mulungisi Luphondo. His offence was clearly a criminal act. He and two others were on the run from the police. Their car ran out of petrol and they waved down another car. An argument ensued and the three drew guns. Luphondo shot dead a black female passenger and an accomplice shot dead the black driver of the car. That is in no way a political act; it is clearly a criminal act. Frankly, if we expend credit in making appeals to the South African Government about cases that are clearly criminal cases, we shall devalue our representations and risk the consequences that the South African Government will take less notice of the appeals for clemency that we always make in cases of a political character, such as that of the Sharpeville six.

Mr. John Carlisle: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the crimes committed by the so-called Sharpeville six were horrendous? Those under sentence of death dragged the deputy mayor of Sharpeville out of his house, having stoned and petrol bombed it. They put him in his car, turned it over, poured petrol on him and set light to him, causing his death. Does my right hon. Friend accept that in this case the British Government are in no position to make any comment at all on the just sentence passed upon these evil men?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand what my hon. Friend says. In the case of the Sharpeville six, the matter went to appeal. The case was heard on 2 and 3 November, but the court reserved judgment. It would not be appropriate or right for us to make representations until judgment is given. I shall comment no further.

Mr. Anderson: Has the Prime Minister personally ever criticised sentences in cases that are clearly political cases? Has the Prime Minister personally ever criticised the torture of children in South Africa?

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has repeatedly criticised the torture of persons in South Africa, particularly young people. I am not aware of the answer to the hon. Gentleman's other question, but I shall look into the matter.

Mr. Forth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that were we to make representations to another country, such as South Africa, about its domestic judicial arrangements, it would be entitled to react in exactly the same way as we would if South Africa made representations to us about our domestic judicial arrangements?

Mrs. Chalker: I understand entirely what my hon. Friend says. However, he must realise that there is a difference between cases that are brought to court and the general appalling state of apartheid in South Africa. We believe firmly that we do, indeed, have a right to express our views on apartheid.

Arms Control

9. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what recent discussions he has been engaged with Governments of the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning verification procedure relating to arms control.

Mr. Mellor: Verification procedures relating to all aspects of arms control are frequently discussed as part of the continuous dialogue between the United States and British Governments about arms control matters. Verification procedures relating to a chemical weapons ban and nuclear testing are also discussed at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Mr. Lloyd: As the Government are not directly involved in negotiations with the Soviet Union but are merely in the process of consultation with the United States, will the Minister tell us — in response to an earlier question — what the British Government's minimal line is? For example, will they say that inspection can take place only at Greenham Common and Molesworth, or will they unquestioningly accept what the United States negotiates on our behalf?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is fully entitled to pursue that point. He may be interested to know that I gave as full an explanation as I could in Committee on the Arms Control and Disarmament (Privileges and Immunities) Bill. The discussions on the treaty have not been concluded. The way in which the arrangements work means that the United States would not put forward any negotiating gambit with the Soviets that had not previously been cleared with us. At the moment negotiations are concerned with disclosed sites, which in this country involve only Greenham Common and Molesworth.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that we must not forget that the historic breakthrough in INF arms reduction is the result of multilateral disarmament and this Government's policy of negotiating from a position of strength? Does he also agree that if the Labour party had had its way there would be no chance of ridding Europe of SS20s or cruise missiles?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is entirely right. It was only the decision of the Alliance to deploy a new generation of cruise missiles and Pershing IIs in Europe that compelled the Soviet Union to abandon its stance of boycotting the disarmament talks while it thought that unilateralist Governments would be elected in Europe, to come back to the negotiating table and to negotiate seriously. That could not have been achieved if the Labour party had been in power.

Mr. Robertson: Will the Minister tell his hon. Friends that if he wants to talk across the Dispatch Box he cannot do so from the Strangers' Gallery? The Government are in the Strangers' Gallery at the negotiations and are not part of them. Last weekend the Defence Secretary was telling the media that the Government had serious reservations about the concessions being made by the Americans on an INF treaty. At the same time the Minister was telling the world that the Government were in favour of the INF deal but were enthusiastically in favour of a strategic arms limitation deal as well. Since there is clearly an argument within the Government on the issue, can he tell us who is winning, or has the Prime Minister not yet made up Ministers' minds for them?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is wrong on both points. First, while of course the talks are bilateral, because the weapons systems concerned are wholly American, the agreement upon which the talks are predicated was reached by the NATO Alliance. All members of the NATO Alliance subscribe fully to the American negotiating position and any matters relevant to Alliance-basing countries are cleared by the United States with those countries before negotiations proceed.

On the second point, the hon. Gentleman knows full well that when the Prime Minister went to see President Reagan at the end of 1986 the communiqué stated clearly that it was the priority of those two leaders that there should be an INF deal, followed by a START deal, followed by talks to try to bring about conventional stability. Subsequently, that became the position of the whole NATO Alliance. It is the sheerest mischief-making for the Opposition to try to suggest that the INF deal does not have the support of all members of the Government. Their only aim is to give aid and comfort to those in the United States who are trying to prevent Senate ratification in due course by saying that the Europeans do not want it.

Council of Ministers (Foreign Policy)

10. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there have been any recent foreign policy initiatives by the Council of Ministers of the European Community.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The 12 have called on Iran and Iraq to implement Security Council resolution 598 forthwith, and have expressed their firm support for the fundamental principle of freedom of navigation. They have also welcomed the recent Central American peace agreement. They are working closely together at the Vienna CSCE follow-up meeting. The 12 have worked hard for the successful outcome of last week's record United Nation's vote on Afghanistan. They continue to intervene together on human rights questions.

Mr. Taylor: I welcome the news that the Council of Ministers meeting on political co-operation was more united on foreign policy. Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to press his colleagues to go further on Afghanistan, and in particular to take further the overwhelming vote on 10 November, to which he referred, urging the removal of foreign troops? Will he stress that the whole European Community is dismayed at the continuing atrocities against people in Afghanistan carried out by the Soviet Union?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I can assure him that the 12 will continue to make plain their view exactly along the lines that he has described. For the eighth successive year, ahead of this year's United Nations debate, we have called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops and for genuine self-determination for the Afghan people. We have made it clear that that is the thing for which the whole world is looking. The Afghan people deserve peace and they must be allowed to decide their own future on that basis.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Council of Ministers intend to follow the example of the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, which, at its last meeting, decided to become involved in the internal political and constitutional affairs of Gibraltar?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, the Council of Ministers does not intend to do any such thing. It respects the constitutional proprieties of each member state.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Will my right hon. and learned Friend suggest to the Council that one of the main causes of transatlantic trade stress is the huge farm subsidies which the Americans feel obliged to match to protect their own agriculture, thus deepening their deficit, to the disadvantage of us all?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall certainly make sure that the European Community joins the United States in making plain the need for the removal of extravagant and grotesque food subsidies throughout the world. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her speech to the Guildhall on Monday, there are massive food subsidies in the United States, probably about twice as much as in the European Community, if one measures them in terms of dollars per cow per annum. In Japan, the prices being paid to the farming community are in some cases eight times the world price, so it is necessary for all countries to engage in the "disarmament" of agricultural subsidies as quickly as possible.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Has the Council of Ministers addressed itself urgently to the problem of famine, particularly in Ethiopia, or are we to have a repeat of the events of 1984-85 in spite of all the recent warnings by the BBC? Is the Council of Ministers prepared to try to prevent a crisis, instead of merely responding to it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman can be completely assured that this is a matter which my hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development keeps well to the forefront of the agenda of Community Council meetings. Yesterday he announced a further extension of Britain's aid to Ethiopia because of the famine there, and he will be certain that this matter remains at the top of the Community's agenda.

Mr. Jack: In the light of reforms in the United Nations, will my right hon. and learned Friend suggest to his colleagues in Europe, that they take a joint initiative to try to persuade the United States fully to pay its dues this year so that the world body can continue the very valuable work referred to in my right hon. and learned Friend's responses to earlier questions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that important matter. I have discussed the topic with Secretary of State Shultz on more than one occasion. It is a topic on which the United States Administration are striving to make headway, but on which they have not yet been able to persuade Congress.

Mr. Kaufman: Given that five of the seven naval contingents in the Gulf have been sent by Community members, and bearing in mind the recent Iranian attacks upon innocent shipping, and other recent acts of war by Iraq, does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, four months after the passage of resolution 598, it is unacceptable that no action has been taken to implement that resolution and that killings and warfare in the Gulf continue? Will he therefore take an initiative, in collaboration with the members of the 12, plus the United States, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, to sponsor a resolution in the United Nations that will contain a package of an immediate arms embargo, coupled with a United Nations command for the naval contingents in the Gulf? I know from my own discussions that that would be acceptable to both Kuwait and Oman.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman is supporting almost all the right propositions in his somewhat lengthy interrogation. It is certainly the case that all 12 European Community members and, more specifically, the seven members of the Western European Union, are actively engaged in maintaining freedom of navigation in the Gulf. Also, we are all equally committed to the implementation of resolution 598. That resolution carries with it two commitments: first, to sustain the work of the Secretary General; and, secondly, to proceed to measures for its enforcement. The pressure that I, together with all the partners of the European Community, have deployed is to get effective commitment now from the Soviet Union to move on to the enforcement measure that is clearly necessary as part of that process. I believe — this is the one point where I part company from the right hon. Gentleman — that the proposal for a United Nations naval force is not one that we regard as a sensible way forward. The Soviet espousal of that idea has all the hallmarks of a propaganda exercise. The Soviets have not put forward details of the proposal that they support. The Soviet Union should now let its actions live up to the commitment made by Mr. Shevardnadze at the meeting in New York on 25 September.

New Zealand

11. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to pay an official visit to New Zealand.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit New Zealand.

Mr. Wigley: Can the Minister tell the House what representations the Government have had from New Zealand concerning the access of New Zealand butter to the United Kingdom, particularly after 1988 when the present agreement runs out and in view of the importance of this matter not only to New Zealand, but, from a different view, to the dairy producers in Britain? In particular, can he tell the House the Government's standpoint on the possibility of making the quota of New Zealand butter that currently comes to the United Kingdom available to the EEC?

Mr. Eggar: The questions that the hon. Gentleman has raised are, of course, a matter for the Community as a whole to answer, but, for our part, we shall continue to support the New Zealand case for access for its butter.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend remind his right hon. and learned Friend that he called the New

Zealand Government's attention to this country's extreme irritation at their attitude to defence and linked that, at that time, to the import of New Zealand butter?

Mr. Eggar: We were not very happy with the New Zealand anti-nuclear legislation that was enacted last June. There is no way in which Her Majesty's Government can change that legislation; nor, because of that legislation, is there any way in which we can contemplate sending Royal Navy ships to New Zealand ports, unless New Zealand amends or repeals that Act.

Mr. Corbett: I thank the Minister for the support that he expressed a few moments ago for the continued access of New Zealand butter to the United Kingdom market. Will he confirm that, even if the Community were to change its view on access, that would not make any significant contribution to avoiding the problem of expensive over-production of dairy products within the Community?

Mr. Eggar: As regards over-production, the important thing is the steps that have already been taken within the Community to reduce Community production, but we must take account of New Zealand's ability to undercut production prices within the Community. That is an inevitable factor that will be considered.

French Foreign Minister

12. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the French Foreign Minister; and what subjects were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend last met the French Foreign Minister at the Western European Union ministerial meeting on 26-27 October in The Hague. Their most recent bilateral talks were on 9 September in London, when they discussed the Gulf, East-West and Community matters.

Mr. Shaw: Will the Minister convey to the French Minister the support and congratulation of this House on the recent way in which the French customs services and secret services managed to impound a ship carrying IRA weapons? Will my hon. Friend confirm that there are people on this side of the English Channel who will continue to co-operate with the French to ensure that terrorists are stopped? Will she also confirm to the French Minister that there are no Conservative Members who, in any way, shape or form, support the murderous IRA terrorists?

Mrs. Chalker: I am glad to join my hon. Friend in congratulating the French authorities on their successful seizure of a large shipment of arms from the Eksund. They have undoubtedly saved lives in Northern Ireland and elsewhere by seizing those arms. I assure my hon. Friend that the British and French Governments are united, in co-operation with their partners, against terrorism, and we will co-operate with them in all ways necessary to combat terrorism.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister confirm that neither her Department nor any other is discussing Anglo-French arrangements on nuclear weapons and that if, following the agreement between the Soviet Union and America in the INF talks, Britain were left isolated as a nuclear power, it would not reach out and come to any agreement with France on an Anglo-French nuclear bomb?

Mrs. Chalker: The United Kingdom and France have had contact on a variety of defence subjects, including nuclear issues, for a long time, and we shall continue to do so. It is natural for two neighbouring European nuclear powers, who are partners and work closely together in all areas to do so on the subjects mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Argentina

13. **Mr. Gerald Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: We continue to seek more normal relations with Argentina, while honouring our commitment to the Falkland Islanders. We look to the Argentine Government to respond positively to our efforts.

Mr. Howarth: Is my hon. Friend aware that Great Britain's rejection of the United Nation's resolution last night is far from humiliating and will be widely welcomed at home and in the Falkland Islands? Will he confirm that the question of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands is non-negotiable? Does he agree that what is humiliating is the enthusiasm shown by the Opposition to treat with those who invaded the Falkland Islands and cost the lives of British soldiers?

Mr. Eggar: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Last night's debate avoided the central issue. The resolution before the United Nations sought to fudge the differences between the British and Argentine Governments. That is not possible when the differences are so fundamental. The difference is that we do not regard the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands as a matter for negotiation.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that many people will view that statement as a tragedy because, ultimately, Britain must negotiate a settlement with Argentina on the Falkland Islands? The money that was wasted and the lives that were lost by both sides were a tragedy. Will the Minister think again and assure the House that at some stage negotiations will be held?

Mr. Eggar: The whole country and the House will reject that simplistic and naive assessment. Self-determination is an inalienable right. It is a basic principle within the United Nations charter.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my hon. Friend comment on the current situation of the fisheries between the Falkland Islands and the mainland of South America?

Mr. Eggar: I am delighted to tell the House that the last fishing season went extremely well. The revenue raised by the Falkland Islands Government tripled as a result of the fishing conservation zone. Applications have now been received for the 1988 fishing season and the companies involved have recently been informed of new licences that have been awarded.

Suva

14. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current establishment of the British mission in Suva.

Mr. Eggar: The current United Kingdom based establishment of the British high commission in Suva is eight.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister aware that there is justifiable concern among Indian citizens about the situation in Fiji? Has the high commissioner received any representations on behalf of the Indian citizens, who are the majority there? Will he also tell us what representations are being made by those Indian citizens?

Mr. Eggar: Of course, our high commissioner keeps in close touch with members of the Indian community, as he does with the Fijian community. He reports regularly to us on developments in that country.

Iran/Iraq War

17. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to meet the Secretary-General of the United Nations to discuss the Gulf war.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I value greatly my periodic meetings with the UN Secretary-General. My most recent meeting with him was in New York on 25 September, when we discussed the Gulf conflict. There are no plans for a further meeting in the immediate future, but we remain in close touch through the United Kingdom permanent representative in New York.

Mr. Robertson: When the right hon. and learned Gentleman meets the Secretary-General, will he explain at some length why we are so implacably opposed to a United Nations flag flying over our naval presence in the Gulf, and why Britain seems to be oblivious to the dangers to which our naval ships are put while they sail under one of the eight different flags of the eight different navies that are sailing around in the Gulf? Surely it would be in the interests of the safety of shipping in the Gulf, as well as the safety of our mariners in that area, if we bit the bullet and got down to having a United Nations flag over the naval presence.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman presses with astonishing enthusiasm a proposition that does not commend itself anywhere else. There are formidable practical difficulties about that proposal in present circumstances; for example, in obtaining agreement in the Security Council itself, when it is hard enough to get agreement on the support for the arms embargo, agreeing operational instructions and rules of engagement, and seeking agreement on cost burden-sharing. The truth is that there has never been a United Nations naval peace-keeping task force. It would represent a problem of a new order of magnitude. It is the view of those who have naval vessels in the Gulf that in the current situation it is much better for individual national forces to look after their own shipping and to co-ordinate their activities locally. The Opposition would be far better engaged in pressing the Soviet Union to take the simple step of delivering its support for an arms embargo, as Mr. Shevardnadze said he would on 25 September.

Mr. Frank Larsen

3.31 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the decision to deport Mr. Larsen from the United Kingdom.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Tim Renton): Mr. Larsen is in fact Mr. Viggo Oerbak, a Norwegian national and convicted criminal there. My Department has produced fingerprint evidence from the Norwegian police to the court, which was satisfied as to Mr. Oerbak's identity. Mr. Oerback's application for leave to move for judicial review against the decision that he is an illegal entrant was dismissed yesterday in the divisional court by Mr. Justice Macpherson.

Mr. Oerbak originally arrived in the United Kingdom in 1982 with a false Norwegian identity. He subsequently claimed yet a further false identity in the name of John William Pearson Lewes Parker, a British national. Both identities have been disproved and in particular Mr. Oerbak's claim to a British nationality in the name of Parker has been found to be false and I understand was also dismissed by the judge yesterday as "scandalously inappropriate and wrong". In view of his unlawful entry to the United Kingdom and the fact that he has no claim to remain, Mr Oerbak is being removed to Oslo today. His removal has already been deferred to enable him to pursue his application to move for judicial review of the decision to treat him as an illegal entrant. In view of the fact that that application has been unhesitatingly — the judge's words — dismissed, the way is now clear for Mr. Oerbak's removal to proceed. We see no reason for it to be further delayed.

Mr. Winnick: As this person was undoubtedly involved with the South African security service in trying to kidnap members of the African National Congress in London, and in other illegal actions, why are these matters not being proceeded with in the courts? Is it not a fact that he has become such an embarrassment to the Government that he is being sent off quickly? Would an agent who had acted for the Soviet security service have been allowed to get out of the country without any court action if he had no diplomatic status?

In view of the concern about the close co-operation between the British and South African security services, is the Minister aware that my hon. Friends and I remain most dissatisfied with the way in which the case has been handled?

Mr. Renton: I find it wholly incomprehensible that, in view of the answer that I have given, the hon. Gentleman should remain completely unsatisfied.

We have not been informed that there was any evidence of any involvement of South African Government agencies. As regards the hon. Gentleman's point that the court should be involved — it has been involved. As I have described, it has dismissed the man's application for leave to be given for judicial review. It is a clear-cut case of an illegal entrant and it is right that he should be treated as such.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Would it not have been better if the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) had done his homework before he asked his question?

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. The hon. Gentleman is engaged in a wild goose chase that does him no credit.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): We have already had the explanation for why the conspiracy charge was dropped. However, does the Minister agree that, during the police investigation into the African National Congress case, the man was found to be in possession of a number of classified documents — including those relating to Operation Layout—or in receipt, control or possession of various forged documents? Does the Minister agree that if a person is in possession of documents that are classified or forged, he should be charged with those offences and dealt with by the courts?

Mr. Renton: The points that the hon. Gentleman has raised were dealt with fully by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on 23 October. He said:

> "The Security Service advised that the documents purporting to be governmental documents were not genuine." —[*Official Report*, 23 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 1101.]

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my hon. Friend. Will he be reassured that my hon. Friends and I take the view that anyone acting against the interests of the British people should be got rid of—so we are grateful to him?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his support. I stress to him that as far as my Department is concerned, this is merely a question of treating this man as an illegal entrant, which is what he has been shown to be, and therefore of removing him from this country at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Minister answer clearly the question that his right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General did not answer? Is there no evidence that now, or at any time, Larsen— or Oerbak—has been engaged by British, South African or other security forces?

Mr. Renton: I refer again specifically to the point made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, on 23 October. He said:

> "I am advised that none of the defendants in this case has at any time been employed in any capacity by any of the security or intelligence services." — [*Official Report*, 23 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 1096.]

I have already dealt with the point about South African involvement.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Does my hon. Friend accept that the smokescreen put out by the Opposition about this man's involvement in South African and British security forces is designed merely to cover their own embarrassment? The man is obviously a deceiver and liar, and my hon. Friend was right to remove him as quickly and efficiently as he did.

Mr. Renton: I agree with my hon. Friend. The affair shows the willingness of the Opposition to run with any fantastic story or allegation that could lead to the disadvantage of our security services.

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Does the hon. Gentleman understand that when questions are asked about the security services it is too easy to refuse to answer them by pleading security considerations that cannot be disclosed? A possible alternative explanation is that someone has something discreditable to conceal. Given that our security services have been under question in the past two years in a way that they have not been under question since the Napoleonic wars, will the hon. Gentleman consider with his right hon. Friend the Prime Minister the establishment of some body or group that enjoys general confidence and which can consider the merits of these matters?

Mr. Renton: I have to say to the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who is very expert in these matters, that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General made a very full statement to the House on these subjects on 23 October. In the light of what he said there is absolutely no need for an inquiry—if that is what the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question was leading to. I am answering now on the question of this man's position as an illegal entrant, and I must make it plain to the House that the judge found very clearly in favour of the evidence lodged by the Home Office that this man was an illegal entrant and was not a British citizen.

Mr. John Watts (Slough): Is my hon. Friend aware that he is to be congratulated on his speedy action in deporting this undesirable? Will he take steps to ensure that this man does not have the opportunity to strip off on the tarmac to delay his departure? Can he understand the willingness of the Labour party to rush to the defence of any illegal immigrant?

Mr. Renton: I sympathise with my hon. Friend's second point. It is a great pity that when we follow immigration procedures the Opposition should immediately seek to load them with political allegations. We seek to enforce immigration procedures as quickly as possible—as the Opposition often urge us to do—and that is what we are doing in this case.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I have listened very carefully to the Minister's explanation to the House. Can he answer two questions? First, why is there urgency to deport this gentleman, especially when there are further actions in the court, particularly by Mr. Solly Smith, the chief representative of the African National Congress, about compensation for the conspiracy to kidnap? Secondly, the Minister said in his statement that all the evidence was forged. Can he tell the House whether that evidence will be available to the African National Congress so that it can scrutinise it carefully and decide whether it has been wronged?

Mr. Renton: On the first point, I stress to the hon. Gentleman that—to use his word—there is no urgency whatever to deport. The man is not being deported; he is being removed as an illegal entrant. The procedures to remove him were held in suspense when the judicial application was lodged. Now that the judicial application has been dismissed, it is perfectly right and proper for us to proceed under the procedures that we were planning to use two or three weeks ago. The hon. Gentleman spoke about the ANC prosecution. I understand from the press that the ANC may be contemplating a civil action against those who attempted to kidnap its members. However, as that would be a civil action, it cannot be allowed to influence the removal of Mr. Oerbak in connection with the offence of unlawfully entering the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is it not hypocritical of the Opposition to object to the deportation of a convicted criminal to Norway, the country of his citizenship? If any further questions are to be asked about this entire affair, should they not be asked in the Norwegian Parliament rather than in this one?

Mr. Renton: There is a lot of sense in that. Mr. Oerbak is a Norwegian citizen and it is absolutely right that he should be returned to Norway as soon as possible.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Is the Minister of State aware that I have absolutely no objection to the removal, but merely ask questions about the details? First, on 23 October the Attorney-General announced that this man was guilty of masquerading as a police officer. Why was he not charged with that offence in open court? Secondly, this man claims that he had impounded papers that implicate the security services in his activities and also implicate Members of the House. Are those papers to be returned to him or to his legal representatives? Thirdly, in replying to his hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle), the Minister of State accused the Opposition of following any course that would lead to the disadvantage of the security services. What did he mean by that? How could pursuing this case lead to the disadvantage of the security services?

Mr. Renton: The right hon. Gentleman misquotes me on the last point. I said that this exposes the willingness of the Opposition to run with any fantastic story that could lead to the disadvantage of the security service. That is precisely what this afternoon's performance shows.

On the first point, those matters are clearly for the police. Whether they decide to pursue other charges is a matter for them, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General made plain in the House on 23 October. On the second point, there is nothing to stop Mr. Oerbak's legal representative from going today—or having gone any day in the past—to collect any documents that Mr. Oerbak wishes to be collected.

Unemployed People (Training)

3.45 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement on a new training programme for unemployed people. Unemployment has now fallen for 16 months in succession by a total of nearly 500,000. Over the last 12 months, long-term unemployment has shown a record fall and the latest figures for unemployed young people also show that we are well on the way to eliminating the problem of school leaver unemployment. This September there were fewer unemployed school leavers than for 13 years.

I believe that this is the right time to review the Government's programmes for unemployed people. We need to be sure that we have the right programmes to meet the demands of an improving labour market. We need to be sure that we are giving unemployed people the help that they need to take advantage of the increasing number of jobs now becoming available, and we need to be sure that the programmes we operate are helping to provide the skills that we require to compete in world markets.

I am clear that the priority now must be to provide training for the long-term unemployed. The emphasis should be switched away from providing temporary jobs as an alternative to unemployment and towards providing training to help unemployed people to get back into permanent jobs. But more than that, we must ensure that the training we provide is geared both to the needs of the individual and to those of the economy.

We already have a unified programme for young people —the youth training scheme. I have now decided to bring together all the existing programmes for unemployed people over 18 into a single new programme. It will involve the substantial reform of the community programme, including a major enhancement of its training content. The new programme will offer up to 12 months training for anyone who has been out of work for more than six months. Entry to the programme will be through the restart interviews and jobcentres. Training agents will then assess the needs of each person and training providers will arrange a suitable programme. There will be special arrangements for disabled people and others with special needs.

This new programme will involve employers and a range of other organisations like chambers of commerce and voluntary and training bodies. I hope that managing agents now in the community programme and the job training scheme will play a full part. The programme will provide training and practical experience with employers and on projects. The emphasis will be on practical learning to help people get back into employment. Accordingly, the training will range from basic working skills, including numeracy and literacy, to training at craft and technician level. The aim is that the new programme should improve significantly on the number of people who obtain jobs when they leave.

For all its merits, the community programme in its present form does not attract unemployed people with dependants and with higher benefit entitlement. It has become increasingly a programme for single people rather than the family man with children. It has also become overwhelmingly a part-time programme, with little opportunity for training. We need to tackle those problems at the root. It is essential that unemployed people who join the new programme know that they will be better off than they were on benefit. I therefore intend that all trainees in the new programme should be paid a training allowance that will give them a lead over their previous benefit entitlement.

The budget for the new programme will be just under £1·5 billion a year, so maintaining the provision for the schemes it will replace. When the new programme is fully operational, it will be possible to provide training for some 600,000 people a year. It will therefore make a major contribution to fulfilling the Government's commitments to the long-term unemployed. It will also help to ensure that we train the work force with the skills that we shall need in the 1990s and into the next century.

I am asking the Manpower Services Commission for its comments on the new programme and to let me have proposals for introducing it from September next year. I propose to publish a White Paper early next year setting out the detail of the new programme and putting it in the context of the Government's overall strategy for employment and training.

At a time of rapid growth and change in employment opportunities, training through life is of key importance. That means training for the young and for adults, for the unemployed and for the employed. The programme I am announcing today focuses on the long-term unemployed and complements the youth training scheme for young people and our efforts, through employers, to improve and increase training for employed people. No other country has a programme on this scale. It will provide new opportunities for long-term unemployed people to obtain the skills and qualifications employers need. This programme will benefit unemployed people, employers and the economy as a whole and I hope that it will command the support of the whole House.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that, while the Opposition have consistently called for improved training for the unemployed, we strongly reject the Government's strategy of providing mass programmes of low-level work experience dressed up as training such as the Secretary of State has described today? Is he aware that his much-vaunted guarantee of a job or a place on a scheme in reality means compelling people by threat of withdrawal of benefit on to low-paid placements without choice and with minimal training? The Government talk about freedom of choice for everyone else. Why then do they not have the confidence, if those schemes are so worthwhile, to allow the unemployed to make a free choice?

Does not the statement mean that the community programme will be dragged down to the level of the JTS, which has been a monumental flop in which the Government have only managed to fill a quarter of the places that they intended? Is the Secretary of State aware that even near his constituency some two months ago only 3 per cent. of people on JTS found jobs after completing the course?

Is the Secretary of State also aware that the community programme managers running the schemes are deeply opposed to his plans and expect there to be poor take-up, resentful participation and a loss of momentum on those schemes as a result of a switch from the rate for the job to merely benefit-plus? Is the Secretary of State further aware that the Government have already cut the rate for the job from £89 a week under the community enterprise programme to an average of £67 a week under the present community programme? With a further near 50 per cent. cut to about £35 a week proposed for a single person, is it not clear that today's announcement is much more about cutting low pay than about improving training?

Why has the Secretary of State not told us exactly what the so-called training programme entails? In reality, it is benefit-plus. That was the major omission from his statement. It is widely rumoured that it will be only £4 or £5 a week above social security levels. Will the Secretary of State confirm that figure?

As the training allowance will almost certainly be less in many cases than necessary work expenses for travel and clothing, and since the link with benefit means that in future the employer top-up will no longer be available, is it not clear that the Government are now officially sanctioning poverty wages on those schemes? Is the Secretary of State also aware that his claim that he is increasing training is scarcely credible from a Government who have abolished 16 of the 23 industrial training boards, closed 29 skillcentres and cut apprenticeships to half their pre-1979 level? Is he aware that his claim of enhanced training today is totally incredible when he is offering no additional funds whatsoever?

The Secretary of State's statement perpetuates his myth that people can get training on the cheap. Is he aware that his proposals today will actually worsen the situation for many people on the community programme? Is he not writing off persons over the age of 50? Is he not penalising those who need part-time work, such as single parents and disabled people? As the people on the schemes will be reduced to the status of benefit claimants rather than employees, will they not lose entitlement to sickness or industrial injury benefit and the protection of health and safety legislation?

The statement is not about training. It is about compulsion and working for benefits. By contrast, the unemployed want to volunteer, not to be forced. They want to have the chance to train for real skills and recognised qualifications, and when they work they want to be paid the rate for the job and not to provide cut-price labour at benefit rates.

Mr. Fowler: The response of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is even more nonsensical than usual. The hon. Gentleman has once again gone raving over the top in his typical way and has avoided all the points that have been announced. Let me try to tell the hon. Gentleman about—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fowler: Let me tell the hon. Gentleman about the scheme and respond to his questions. The programme will cost £1·5 billion and will provide training for 600,000 unemployed people a year. That is an improvement on the 400,000 people who receive training at the moment. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

The fact is that the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues made exactly the same mistake with YTS. They condemned it at the time and have been shown to be totally wrong in their judgment. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Oldham, West and his hon Friend—if that is what he is—the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) give the impression of being terrified that the unemployment position in this country is improving, which it is.

On training, I should like to respond to what the hon. Member for Oldham, West said about the job training scheme. The cause for concern about the job training scheme is that at the moment 50 per cent. of those who agree at a restart interview to go on to the job training scheme do not turn up even for the start of the scheme. They do not even look at what is on offer. I should not have thought that the hon. Gentleman would justify that.

I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we are retaining the good features of the community programme. We want the continuing involvement of the voluntary organisations which do useful work. However, I must advise the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench that at the moment training does not take place on the community programme. It is part-time—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask the House not to ask questions while the Secretary of State is giving answers, since otherwise there is little point in asking them afterwards.

Mr. Fowler: The community programme is part-time work, not full-time.

As far as the benefit-plus premium is concerned, the comments of the hon. Member for Oldham, West are simply not the case. I have asked the commission to advise on all aspects of the scheme, including the level of the training allowance. I am obviously required to do that. We aim for a lead over benefit not only on the community programme but on other programmes, such as the job training scheme. In other words, that will apply not only to the community programme but to every scheme in the programme.

Mr. Meacher: Why?

Mr. Fowler: I have just told the hon. Gentleman that I have asked the Commission to advise on all aspects of the scheme, including that. I can certainly give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that the amount will be more than the £4 or £5 that he alleged a moment ago.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that the present structure of benefit-plus means that predominantly single people will benefit from the community programme. The new structure would treat everyone according to his individual circumstances. A training allowance would mean that, for the first time, married men with children could benefit from the community programme.

This is a good and serious attempt to provide better adult training for the unemployed, and I deplore the hon. Gentleman's response to it.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): My right hon. Friend's statement is welcome and timely, because there is a real need to reach out to the long-term unemployed with families. The Opposition's frenetic shrieking about the transferability of benefit is completely misplaced, because we cannot help the wide variety of long-term unemployed unless we accept the principle of the transferability of benefit, plus a suitable premium which allows for the training that a person desires. I commend my right hon. Friend's decision to proceed by way of a White Paper, in which many of the niggles that we hear shrieked by the Opposition can be properly discussed with the Manpower

[Mr. Jim Lester]

Services Commission. I hope that all those who are really worried about the long-term unemployed and those who want proper training leading to qualifications which will get them jobs will participate in that discussion, and that there will be no repetition of the niggardly way in which the Opposition have greeted this statement.

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Many people inside and outside the House recognise the need for a unified scheme such as the youth training scheme for young people. The present schemes and the community programme provide too little training. We need a full-time scheme, not a part-time scheme, and we need training that will meet the needs of the individual. The programme is intended to achieve that, and I am sure that it will.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Secretary of State accept that his announcement will be greeted with much scepticism by many of those who are involved in training the unemployed, especially in view of the Government's declared intention of compelling people to join schemes in exchange for taking them off benefit? Does he accept that the premium that will be paid on a training allowance will be a crucial factor in whether people regard the scheme as cheap labour or as real training? Does he further accept that many of those who run training schemes do not want unwilling people forced on to them to lower the morale of those who want to be trained?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the demise of the community programme, which many of us believe is wrapped up in this statement, will be resented? The community programme has demonstrated that there is a great need for such community work. But the Government should fund it so that people can gain training and then go on to full-time jobs in the community. At present, the Government are not providing such funds.

What special schemes does the Minister have in mind for the disabled? Will he provide interpreters so that the deaf may benefit from training which many of them are now denied?

Mr. Fowler: The disabled will be an exception to the rule that people should be unemployed for six months. We shall make any other reasonable exceptions that we can to meet the problems of the disabled and other groups.

My announcement does not remotely mean the demise of the community programme. We shall try to retain the good features of the community programme. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that much good project work is done by many organisations, including voluntary organisations. But I hope he will agree that it is better to have full-time training than the part-time work that we have now. Above all, there should be training inside any such programme.

I heard what the hon. Gentleman said about the benefit-plus concept, and we shall take it into account. But the £67 average that is paid on the community programme does not meet the needs of many married people with children—irrespective of what the plus will be—whose benefit is already more than that. Those on the job training scheme are paid benefit with no premium at all. We are trying to rationalise and improve the system.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): My right hon. Friend has put a welcome emphasis on skills being provided that will lead to jobs for people, and on the skills that employers want. Does the statement mean that he is thinking of expanding the technical and vocational education initiative courses in schools in which his Department is involved? May we have an assurance that, as they build their expertise, the Government will make full use of city technology colleges, which are very much involved with chambers of commerce and employers?

Mr. Fowler: I can give my hon. Friend an assurance on both points, especially the second one. We want the TVEI to be built up, and the most encouraging trend is that now all local education authorities are taking part in the TVEI. A few days ago, I saw an example of that near my hon. Friend's constituency.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is this not a curious statement, in that it does not tell us much? It hides more than it tells us, and it gives us no figures. It does not tell us what the wage—if I may call it that—will be. It gives a figure of £1·5 billion, which is meaningless because it represents the gross cost, not the net cost. The community programme costs £1 billion in gross terms, but the real cost is one third of that.

The trade unions okay each scheme on the present community programme. Will they be involved in the new scheme, or will they be shut out of the Training Commission? Another six employers' representatives will be added to it, but will the trade unions be involved, as they were with the community programme?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, the JTS has been a monumental flop. If we turned the community programme into something like the JTS, it would degrade and even ruin it in the eyes of many people like me. If there is to be financial compulsion, most of us fear the worst. Does the Secretary of State agree that there should be full consultation and proper discussion in the House and with the trade unions?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I do, and that is precisely why I made this statement. The hon. Gentleman asked about its purpose; it is to tell the House that we are consulting the MSC on our proposals and that early in the new year the Government will introduce a White Paper setting out the full details of the scheme. I have set out the outline of the scheme, which I believe will meet some of the fundamental criticisms made about adult training by committees such as the Select Committee on Employment, which the hon. Gentleman chaired. It will provide better training while retaining the best features of the existing provision.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend has outlined the scheme, and I am most grateful for his assurance that people taking part in it will be better off than those living on unemployment benefit. In the past, so many of these schemes have been designed by townees ignorant of everybody except those who live in towns. As unemployed people in rural areas can have to spend up to £3 a day merely to get to training schemes, I am happy with my right hon. Friend's implied assurance, but I would ask him to spell out that their transport costs to and from the schemes will be covered; otherwise, they will be worse off than if they did not participate in the scheme.

Mr. Fowler: With the benefit-plus premium, we will ensure that the training allowance which is paid gives a lead over the benefit that the individual would otherwise have received. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning travel costs. I shall ask the MSC to consider especially the exceptional travel costs which trainees must meet, because I see the force of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that, even if there was a lead of £15, one person on the scheme might be receiving £40 a week while the person sitting next to him received £120? Is not that bound to lead to tension and rankling feelings between such people, and towards difficulties in the scheme?

Can the Secretary of State comment on the position of a married couple, both of whom are unemployed? How will the lead figure be worked out in those circumstances?

Mr. Fowler: We are trying to provide a rate for the individual, rather than for the job. We are talking about a training allowance, which means that married men with children will, for the first time, have an incentive to go on to the training programme. That is the whole purpose of benefit-plus.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Will my right hon. Friend join me in deploring the total absence of any welcome from the Opposition Benches for the rapid and continuing reduction in unemployment to which he has referred? In complete contrast, will he confirm that the Government's principal aim in bringing in these changes is to ensure that those entering training schemes will leave them better equipped to find permanent, full-time work?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with both those points. I believe that the public generally will want to make their views known about the reaction that we have had from the Opposition. As for the point about skill training, there is no doubt that, if people are increasingly to go into jobs — that is what is happening — they will need to be trained for the skills that those jobs require. Moreover, if the country is to remain competitive, we shall need skill training. Both those points are behind what we are doing. The Opposition do not begin to understand the concept.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Will the Secretary of State recognise in his proposals for training — the current position on training is disastrous — that some skills cannot be taught in 12 months? Some take far longer than that. Is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to make some adjustment, so that skills that require two or three years' teaching, or even longer, can be taken into account?

Mr. Fowler: Obviously, I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's point. The training that the individual receives, leading to a qualification or a credit towards a qualification, will be of help to him by providing him with skills that he needs. However, if anything further can be done, I shall do it. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's rather more constructive approach.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Is it not clear that the jobs of tomorrow will require higher skill levels and qualifications? Over half of today's unemployed have no qualifications whatever. Unless we take action to ensure that more people have skills, there will be persistent skill shortages, combined with persistent unemployment.

Today's statement is concerned with ensuring that the unemployed have the necessary skills to tackle the jobs of tomorrow. Conservative Members are engaged in a skills crusade. The Opposition must decide whether they wish to join us—and, I hope, every employer in the country—in being part of that crusade. Or do they prefer to sulk in their tents?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree. What we require in this country is training through life: that applies to the unemployed and the employed alike. However, unless the lesson is taken on board, we shall not be able to compete with our major international rivals. My hon. Friend is absolutely right about that, and the Opposition are entirely wrong.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): Is there not a great mystery at the centre of the statement, and also a great nonsense? The Secretary of State tells us that the scheme will cost £1·5 billion, which works out at about £48 a head. How much of that will be allocated to the people taking part, how much to the cost of training and how much to the commissioners?

Is the right hon. Gentleman really announcing a scheme costing £1·5 billion without knowing how much will be paid to the 600,000 people participating in it? Is not the real conclusion to be drawn that, once again, a number — in this instance, 600,000 — will be taken off the unemployment figures? Is this the 23rd or the 24th time that the right hon. Gentleman has changed the figures, and has not every such change reduced them?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is not right about that. I am asking the Manpower Services Commission to examine the details of the proposals. Clearly, the commission will want to look at the balance between the provision and the allowances and other matters connected with it. But it will work within the budget, the limits of which I have made clear. I have also made it clear that we shall be introducing a benefit-plus arrangement.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): In view of the excellence of the programme that my right hon. Friend is putting forward today, does he not agree that it would be heartless to continue to pay benefit to those who do not take advantage of the wonderful opportunities that are being provided? As, in some areas of the country where job availability is at its most abundant — in London, for example — male unemployment is also at its highest, does my right hon. Friend not agree with me that the greatest training aid that some people need is a well-placed boot up the backside?

Mr. Fowler: The scheme seeks to provide better training for the benefit of the country, and of the long-term unemployed in particular. Certainly, the normal arrangements for checking availability for work will continue.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose*—

Hon. Members: Tell him to withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The phrase used by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) was inelegant.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I agree with you, Mr. Speaker. It was inelegant.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Ask him to withdraw it, Mr. Speaker. You would if one of us had used it.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The phrase was not unparliamentary. I said that it was inelegant.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: When the Secretary of State says that no other country has a programme of this size, does he not mean that no other country has a programme of this nature? Most of our European counterparts have real

[Mrs. Margaret Ewing]

training schemes and real apprenticeship schemes, offering the real prospect of real jobs at the end of them. Does he not understand why many of us are cynical about today's statement? There seems little likelihood for many people here of a job at the end of their training.

During the consultation period, will the right hon. Gentleman please ensure that education authorities are involved? Many of our further education colleges that are involved in training schemes are already bursting at the seams, and are desperate for resources.

Mr. Fowler: The education colleges will certainly be involved in the programme. That has always been our intention.

The hon. Lady will recognise that, during recent months, the unemployment rate has been falling faster in this country than in many of the countries to which she referred. I am not remotely complacent about international comparisons, but I think that the training scheme for the long-term unemployed, with which the statement is basically concerned, will be one of the major schemes in Western Europe.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): While welcoming the statement, may I put it to my right hon. Friend that there is a case for concentrating particularly heavily on institutions — for example, our technical college in Canterbury — that make a considerable effort to ensure that their schemes are oriented towards the needs of the local market place?

Mr. Fowler: Obviously, my hon. Friend is right. Training generally must be orientated towards the demands and needs of employers, because that is where the jobs will come from.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that it comes ill from some of his friends to attack the unemployed? One example is this one here — the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)— who is a member of the goose-stepping tendency. Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that we can do without lectures from moonlighting Tory Members, some of whom have three or four jobs and are picking up more than £50,000 a year? If he wants a tip on how much should be paid, why does he not copy the training system in another place, where £55 is paid each day tax-free with all the extras? There is no need for consultation. Get on with that.

Mr. Fowler: It seems that the hon. Gentleman, who comes from the hectoring tendency, has not quite focused on what the Government are proposing for the long-term unemployed. I am sure that, when he has, he will welcome it with his customary fairness.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): Perhaps we can get back from the hectoring and the goose-stepping to the unemployed. Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that those who have been on the community programme, or who are on it, have often expressed the wish that it should contain some element of training? As the Government's most welcome statement suggests that the long-term unemployed will be given precisely that for which many of them have been asking, is my right hon. Friend surprised by the extraordinary hostility of Opposition Members?

Mr. Fowler: The extraordinary hostility of those on the Opposition Benches is surprising. It comes partly from their terror that the unemployment position is improving and partly from their recognition that this training proposal will improve the position of many who are currently unemployed. What my hon. Friend says about the community programme is right. Many have argued for a long time that the programme should include a much greater element of training and should be full-time, not part-time. That is precisely what we are proposing.

Miss Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): The Secretary of State and some of his colleagues seem to question the attitude of Opposition Members and imply that there is some cynicism. That is understandable, because the right hon. Gentleman has not given us the facts. He keeps saying —*[Interruption.]* I shall get to my question in about 30 seconds. I hope that I shall be allowed to preface it as others have prefaced theirs. The right hon. Gentleman has said that he will communicate with the MSC and enter into discussions with it, but he has not given us any background details. I have a short and straightforward question for the right hon. Gentleman and I shall appreciate a short and straightforward reply. How much new money is there?

Mr. Fowler: The £1·5 billion that is being made available is the budget that is being provided for the existing schemes. It is now being put to the new programme.

Hon. Members: No new money.

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): Conservative Members might be entitled to say that the comments that we have heard from Opposition Members will merely undermine the confidence of many of those who are on the schemes of which we are talking. I think that I am entitled to say that that is disgraceful.

My right hon. Friend has said that he expected a rather larger contribution from the private sector. As corporate profits are now at a high level—I think a 20-year high— we must not have the private sector pleading poverty when it comes to it making a contribution to make the new scheme a success.

Mr. Fowler: I hope that we shall see an increasing contribution from the private sector. I pay tribute to the training providers who are working within the JTS and other areas, but we would look for an even greater contribution.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Will the Secretary of State accept that there is a part of the United Kingdom where unemployment has increased, not fallen? This is an area in which employment in manufacturing industry has decreased to the extent that there are more unemployed who used to work within it than there are currently employed. In the light of this experience in the north of Ireland, will the right hon. Gentleman accept that, unless skills are translated into jobs, we shall have nothing more than another large piece of blotting-paper to soak up the unemployment figures?

Mr. Fowler: I recognise the position of Northern Ireland, but that does not apply throughout the United Kingdom. The unemployment rate has been falling in the rest of the United Kingdom. In all regions of it there are jobs available, certainly in Northern Ireland. The figures that we announced last week were the best for Northern Ireland for more than 10 years. Increasing numbers of jobs are becoming available throughout the country and it is crucial that individuals should have the skills to enable them to take up these jobs.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the great involvement of the private sector in the community programme will be most welcome? Will he accept that one of the problems so far has been that the public sector has been unable in many instances to offer the unemployed long-term prospects?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. One of the problems of the community programme is that the long-term unemployed have not been able to find jobs after leaving the programme. The design of the scheme has made it ring-fenced and has kept it away from the normal employment programme. I hope that the flexibility within the new programme will enable jobs to come through from project training and from training with employers.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): In the light of the statement, will the Secretary of State consider the letter that I forwarded to him on Monday of this week? This is a letter that I received from David Ward of 25 Palmerston street, Stockton-on-Tees, in which he gave an account of his first visit to the restart programme a week last Monday. He asserts that he was encouraged to complete his form falsely. He develops that to an accusation that the set-up is no more than a semi-disguised confidence trick that is designed to persuade people to complete forms to the effect that they are asserting that they will accept employment at a much reduced rate of pay so that employers can come along and pick them up for the labour market under the threat of them losing their DHSS benefit. Will the Secretary of State have the courage to answer that letter? Will he deny that the programme that he proposes is nothing more than a fulfilment of Mr. Ward's fears?

Mr. Fowler: It is not remotely a fulfilment of what the hon. Gentleman suggests. I am prepared to give the guarantee that I shall consider the individual case that he has sent to me. His description of the restart interview process is not remotely general and is not remotely a fair description of it.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a major distinction to be made between a training programme and work? The constant sniping about the plus part of benefit and the training allowance demonstrates clearly that there is a serious lack of recognition that training is in itself a major benefit and will provide opportunities for earning greater sums in future. Does my right hon. Friend accept that there will be a great welcome for the proposals that he has outlined in many parts of the country, including my constituency, where at any one time there are over 1,000 vacancies that connot be filled because of a lack of necessary skills?

Will my right hon. Friend agree with me, finally——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must be brief.

Mr. Paice: —that there is a welcome on this side of the House for the aspect that he mentioned about basic literacy and numeracy? We have just heard that £1·5 billion equates to £48 per head for the people that have been mentioned. Does my right hon. Friend accept——

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness, I think that that is enough.

Mr. Fowler: I agree very much with what my hon. Friend says. The importance of training cannot be overstated. There are many who will recognise its importance, and what my hon. Friend has said in underlining that is right.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall endeavour to call those hon. Members who have been standing. However, there are likely to be further opportunities to question the Secretary of State.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): While we all want improvement in the quality of the training available to unemployed people, will the Secretary of State accept that there is often a sharp contrast between the aspirations of Ministers and what happens on the ground? Is he aware that, despite the shortage of skilled building craftsmen in Greater London, skillcentres have reduced the number of training places for bricklayers and carpenters? As a result, my unemployed constituents must wait two years for a training place, while building firms cannot employ skilled labour. Is there anything in what the right hon. Gentleman has announced today that will deal with that short-sighted nonsense?

Mr. Fowler: The purpose of this new programme is to seek to match the needs and demands of the economy. I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's aspirations in that regard.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, more than any other region, the north-east will welcome his announcement of better value training that is better tailored to each individual according to his needs and ability? Will he confirm that one of the targets of his new programme will be to increase the striking rate—the rate at which those who enter the programme go on into real work at the end of it?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, sir, I can confirm that that is our aim. We want training that will meet the needs of the individual, with individual assessment. This is the first time that that has been done in Britain.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Is the Minister aware that the voluntary organisations, which act as managing agents, will view his statement with great concern and distress? They have made representations to the Minister about rumours that they heard, and today he has confirmed them. Will he confirm that he is spending the same amount of money on 200,000 more people? Inevitably, that means that the quality of training for the individuals who take part in the scheme will be diminished because quality training needs quality resources.

Mr. Fowler: The budget for this programme—£1·5 billion—is what we are providing for existing schemes; I said that in my statement, so there is no surprise about it.

I am not sure that I regard the hon. Lady as a spokesman for voluntary organisation up and down the country. We have spoken to a number of them, and I believe that a number of them will welcome these changes. I should like to see voluntary organisations fully involved in the new programme.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Will my right hon. Friend accept that in Wales his statement will be especially welcome? Long-term unemployment in Wales has fallen

[Mr. Nicholas Bennett]

faster than in any other part of the country. Does he accept that one of our largest problems is that 25 per cent. of those who go on restart interviews are shown to be functionally illiterate and innumerate? Therefore, before they receive training they must have had a basic education. Will this new programme take account of that?

Mr. Fowler: One of the issues with which we must deal — I hope that there will be no disagreement on this point — is that of literacy and numeracy. The restart interviews demonstrate the need in that regard. I hope that we shall use not only the colleges of further education but open learning techniques and the open college to solve the problem.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): As there is no new money available, is it not a dishonest charade to ask the Manpower Services Commission to make recommendations to the Secretary of State when he must know to the nearest pound what the basic training allowance will be? Will there be an official or unofficial upper age limit for entry into the scheme? Will any previous training scheme debar a long-term unemployed person from joining the scheme? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that if a person refuses a place on the scheme he will be suspended from benefit?

Mr. Fowler: The normal rules will apply; there is no change in that regard. The scheme will be open to people of any age, but clearly the top priority is people between the age of 18 and 50. They must have been unemployed for six months — with the exceptions that I have given, such as the disabled — but there will be room for people above that age group. I hope that we shall be able to provide a training programme that will offer training to people of all ages.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Will my right hon. Friend ensure that the MSC gives training in the skills that are needed to fill vacancies in Sheffield — *[Interruption.]* I do not interrupt Labour Members, so I hope that they will not interrupt me. In Sheffield there is a mismatch between vacancies and jobs.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): The hon. Gentleman is unaware of the realities of the matter.

Mr. Patnick: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that training is made available to people who require jobs? I have listened to Labour Members, and they seem to enjoy the fact that people such as my daughter have been unemployed and unable to obtain retraining in skills for jobs with vacancies.

Mr. Fowler: I agree with my hon. Friend. What we are trying to do, and what my hon. Friend is rightly urging, is to ensure that training matches the vacancies in the job market. That must be the sensible thing to do, and that is what this training programme is about.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Will the Secretary of State accept that Labour Members' complaints are compounded by the fact that he failed to repudiate the vicious attack on the unemployed by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)? It was a disgraceful example of an unscrupulous attack on people who are not here to defend themselves. Will the right hon Gentleman accept that his speech will have no credibility unless he gives the amount of the training addition? Will he further accept that many people outside the House will consider this measure to be a cynical manipulation of the unemployed, creating a conscript army forced into low-paid jobs as a smokescreen for the coming slump that will inevitably hit the Government and this country?

Mr. Fowler: I am not sure that I take the economic forecasts of the hon. Gentleman too seriously, and I doubt that the Labour Front Bench does either. We are demonstrating our concern about unemployment and the unemployed by reducing, by a record amount, the numbers of unemployed, by providing and producing a new scheme that is geared and aimed entirely at bringing the long-term unemployed back into work.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the more interesting elements of his statement — the concept of the needs assessment — has been ignored by Labour Members? Does he consider that that development would be of particular benefit to older people who have been unemployed for a long period, to help them return to work and reintroduce their skills to the labour market? Will he give consideration to producing a document, perhaps entitled "Training for Jobs", to communicate the benefits of his programme? That document could be along similar lines to the successful "Action for Jobs" leaflet.

Mr. Fowler: I shall consider that proposal. As to my hon. Friend's first point, we want to provide training for older unemployed people and bring them back into employment. I shall consider his proposal regarding a document on action for training, which was a useful suggestion.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): It ill becomes the Minister, who earns almost £1,000 per week, together with the Alan B'Stards with whom he surrounds himself on the Government Benches, to lecture the unemployed on the need for another cheap labour scheme. Why does he not consider Coventry, where, according to his fiddled figures, 22,000 people are out of work? Less than 500 vacancies exist, and even if everybody was equally better trained, there would still be 43 unemployed people for every vacancy that was filled. This has nowt to do with unemployment, but everything to do with reducing the unemployment figures.

Mr. Fowler: As the hon. Gentleman should know, in the west midlands generally, including Coventry, the rate of unemployment has declined faster than in any other region of the country. The hon. Gentleman knows, or should know, of the tremendous achievement of many companies in Coventry, such as Jaguar, which are providing new jobs and better products than ever before.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that he will not fall into the trap of believing that the best and most effective training is carried out in a training school or behind a desk? What sort of measures does he intend to introduce under the new scheme to improve the quality and level of on-the-job and field-based training?

Mr. Fowler: We want to do both. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. We want on-the-job training in the conventional form. We also want training in the open learning sense, through the open college. We want all the new techniques, and they will be available under the programme.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Does the Minister understand the real anger that is felt when Ministers who could no doubt quote BP share prices to several decimal points, are unable to answer the simplest of questions to which any person considering a job would need to know the answer; that is, how much in pounds will the individual receive each week for going on one of the schemes? Will he say—he should be able to do so, as he represents a west midlands seat—that the simple answer to training is restoration after the collapse in engineering apprenticeships that has occurred in the past eight years? Why on earth should an employer establish a proper engineering apprenticeship scheme when he knows that he can get labour schemes on the cheap?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman refers to the wrong age group, apart from anything else. The apprenticeship schemes, which were good, were for a minority. Schemes such as the YTS and the programme that I announced today provide much more general training for the population at large. I have answered the hon. Gentleman's first point before. We are asking the MSC to examine the details of the proposal. I make it absolutely clear that the payment will be above the level of benefit of any individual training.

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): Opposition Members are interested in real and effective training. That is why we have no enthusiasm for the Minister's cheap, complacent statement. Will the right hon. Gentleman reflect on his statement about eligibility criteria? It seems that 18 to 25-year-olds will be excluded from his new programme because it is targeted at people aged 25 and over. Will the Minister tell the House that that is a fact? If this is about conscription, if people do not accept a place on the Minister's new programme, will they remain on the register, with benefit being paid to them? The MSC is talking about using the restart programme, the merger of benefits and the employment office further to harass the unemployed and exclude them from the register. Will he comment on the Treasury suggestion that £6 will be the training premium? That would be a disgrace to the people who enter the programme.

Mr. Fowler: There is no change in regard to benefit and the withdrawal of benefit. As I have said, I have not made any proposals on that matter. The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the proposal regarding age groups. The fact of the matter is——

Mr. Skinner: The fact of the matter.

Mr. Fowler: The position is that our aim will be to provide training for people in the 18 to 25 age group and also the 25-to-50 age group. One of the priorities will be the 18-to-25 age group.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I congratulate the Minister on his effrontery. Not once did he acknowledge the fact that his own Government removed the training element from the community programme. It is rather like Santa Claus turning up with presents that he stole from children several years ago. We cannot have bold new initiative without bold new money. Will the Minister confirm the impression that he gave my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Miss Mowlam), that there will be no new money? If that is the case, is it not a three card trick rather than a brave new hope on the Minister's part?

Will the Minister acknowledge also that the measure is based on a cruel and crucial deception — a gulf of understanding between Conservative Members and the poor souls who work in many of the schemes — that there is quality training available for them? Does he accept that that is a fraudulent conception? Will he agree further that to conscript people into schemes on the basis of that fraudulent proposition is indeed criminal and immoral?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman was wrong in virtually everything that he said. The gulf of understanding to which he referred is the gulf of his understanding. He does not appear to understand the value of training and the need for training not only unemployed but employed people. Nothing is more important.

It is recognised that we need to reform the community programme to make it full-time and not part-time and also to ensure that people are better off on the programme than they are on benefit. That is what we propose. The result will be a training programme that will be a great improvement on what has gone before.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Will the Minister accept that, far from being good news, as suggested in the grovelling question by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), the statement is bad news for Wales and other areas with high unemployment? It merely means shuffling money with no new resources. It depends on voluntary organisations and companies putting in more resources if there is to be quality of training. Therefore, in areas with high unemployment, voluntary organisations and firms will be under pressure and will not be able to contribute. Areas of high unemployment such as south Wales will once more be disadvantaged as a result of the three card trick that the Minister has tried to play on us today.

Mr. Fowler: That is totally untrue. It means using the £1·5 million more effectively than it has been used up to now. By any standards, that is a vast budget for training in this country.

Points of Order

4.39 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I refer to the circumstances that prevailed after last Wednesday's business was lost. As you know, the Order Paper was published. Indeed, I have a copy of it in my hand. Sixty questions for oral answer were put down a fortnight in advance, 206 questions were put down four or five days in advance for priority written answers, and some were put down a longer period in advance for normal written answers. It now becomes clear that, on either the advice or the instruction of the Table Office, none of the questions has been answered. Surely, with the questions and the Order Paper having been printed, and, without a shadow of doubt, all the answers being printed and in envelopes ready to go on to the letter board for hon. Members who have put questions down, it would have made good economic sense for the answers to be issued.

Because we played stupid games in the House, last Wednesday's business was lost. It would have been sensible automatically to transfer all the questions to the following day and still have them answered. If any hon. Members — *[Laughter.]* It is not funny, even for Conservative Members. They were also involved. They have put down questions. If they want answers to their questions, they will have to table them again, with all the printing costs that that will involve. Surely that is absolutely outrageous and we should do something about it.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one question at a time.

I thank the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) for giving me notice of this matter, but he must know that, like everyone else in the House, the Table Office is bound by Standing Orders. Let me explain the position to him. Paragraph 9 of Standing Order 17 lays down that, on a day on which the House does not sit because the previous day's sitting has not ended in time, questions down for written answer are deemed to be questions for answer on the next sitting day. By virtue of an express decision of the House on 27 February 1986, that does not apply to questions put down for oral answer, which are accordingly lost.

I do not think that I can do more than to state the terms of the Standing Order to the hon. Gentleman. I have sympathy with what he has said and I suggest that he puts the matter to the Select Committee on Procedure so that, if this happens again, a change can be made.

Mr. Ewing: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am interested in your kind explanation regarding written questions because this morning I obtained copies of *Hansard* for last Thursday and last Friday and there is no evidence that questions down for written answer — I accept the distinction between written and oral questions —have been answered.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that all the questions were answered. There may have been some delay in printing them in *Hansard*, but they were all answered in the normal way. As I said, I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's position. I hope that we shall not lose the day's sitting again—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh"] Order. If that happens it would be sensible to look at the matter again.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Given your role as protector of the rights of Back Benchers against the Government in this Parliament, how can you argue, even before the evidence is presented in the allowed time limit of 180 seconds, that today's business on the European Community should occupy a higher priority in this House than the fate of an 11-week-old baby refused a heart operation? It takes only three minutes to make an application since we changed the rules. How can you argue that this baby and its family and the constituents of the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher), who is sitting on the Treasury Bench and whose constituents are waiting for operations in Birmingham, should not have their case put before the House? I can say honestly that I play more or less by the rules in this place —sometimes less reluctantly than other hon. Members. For those who do not understand the rules of this House, the clear implication of a decision that prevents a debate is that someone is protecting the Government's reputation on the Health Service. You, Sir, would not like that allegation to be made about you and the best way to solve the problem would be to make sure that the debate can take place.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am reluctant to state in the House the details of what was a matter of private conversation between the hon. Gentleman and myself. However, as he has raised the matter, I must tell him that the reason why I turned down his application under Standing Order No. 20 was that it referred to a hospital that was mentioned on Monday. I explained to the hon. Gentleman that, deep though my concern was for his constituency case, there were other ways of raising the matter. The whole House would accept that if we received Standing Order No. 20 applications every time an operation had to be delayed, we should not get much business done.

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: No.

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have explained the matter, and I do not intend to take further points of order on it.

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have explained to the hon. Gentleman that there are other ways of raising this matter. I hope that he will take advantage of ensuring that the matter is raised in that way.

Mr. Nellist: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Cryer.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that, during questions on the statement of the Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said that the unemployed needed kicking up the backside. You made the comment during the interjection——

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) kindly sit down?

Mr. Nellist: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nellist: I was about to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the statement that you made.

Mr. Speaker: Will the hon. Gentleman kindly sit down? If he wishes to thank me, I shall with gratitude accept his thanks when I have heard the second point of order.

Mr. Cryer: You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that you said that the remarks of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) were not unparliamentary because they did not attack a particular hon. Member, although many of us would find that distinction extremely offensive because it represents the protection of a tiny elite. You will have heard the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) say that, in spite of the booming economy of the Government, his daughter is unemployed.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): No, with respect.

Mr. Cryer: Therefore, the remarks of the hon. Member for Northampton, North reflect on——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has returned to us after some time away from the House, and we welcome him back. However, he must remember that we cannot continue questions on a statement on which every hon. Member who wished to be called was heard. There is no point of order in the hon. Gentleman's remarks. We cannot have a continuation of that.

Mr. Cryer: I am just trying to stop hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Northampton, North making imputations affecting other hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Hallam. The hon. Member for Hallam made it clear that his daughter was in a difficult position because she was unemployed. She should be protected from——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear this. It has nothing to do with the matter. Now, Mr. Nellist. May I express my appreciation to the hon. Gentleman if he is going to thank me?

Mr. Nellist: While thanking you, Mr. Speaker, for your statement, could I ask you to reflect later on the fact that the Birmingham children's hospital serves a wide area and that twice in the past seven days Conservative Members in my area have had to save the operations of individual children?

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Sit down.

Mr. Nellist: What has it got to do with you?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is unfair of the hon. Gentleman to seek to raise this constituency case on a point of order. As I have told him, there are plenty of other opportunities and I will ensure that he has a chance to put these matters to the House. I cannot take them on a point of order.

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I genuinely understand the hon. Gentleman's concern for his constituent, but I cannot take the matter on a point of order. I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said. If he will kindly come to see me privately, I will tell him of the other opportunities that he may have.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. While the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) was on his feet causing trouble, the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), the daughter of one of your assistants in the last Parliament, shook her fist at the hon. Gentleman. Is it in order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I really do not think that the pursuit of such matters helps our reputation. Mr. Skinner, on a completely different point of order.

Mr. Nellist: There is a completely different one here and all.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been listening to exchanges beween yourself and my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist). The case that my hon. Friend wished to raise was different from the one that arose last week. I would like to know whether you would rule out applications under Standing Order 20 on different cases at the same hospital. Many instances might arise in which it was necessary to try to differentiate between two incidents. To wrap it all up—especially as you are to have a discussion with my hon. Friend—could we not have some recognition of the fact that when there are two different cases it may be absolutely necessary for different hon. Members to make different representations?

Mr. Nellist *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: No.

That was a most helpful suggestion. I shall certainly reflect upon it.

Mr. Nellist: I have a helpful suggestion.

Mr. Speaker: One helpful suggestion, then—in one phrase.

Mr. Nellist: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When you consider the matter, would you bear it in mind that if an hon. Member had complained about a series of cases at one hospital in a constituency, I could fully have understood your point? However, you surely cannot mean that the 57 Members of Parliament in the west midlands who have constituents affected by events in Birmingham will never have the opportunity to raise the matter again. I ask you to reflect on the matter, because a number of hon. Members are involved.

Mr. Speaker: Just to clear the matter for those who may not understand our procedures, I am not stopping the hon. Gentleman raising the matter. I am saying that I cannot allow him to raise it today since it was raised only on Monday in an application for an emergency debate, which unfortunately did not meet the criteria of Standing Order No. 20.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS

FOR FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. William Shelton
Mr. Tony Lloyd
Mr. James Lamond

Coal Mining Subsidence (Damage and Arbitration)

5 pm

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish the rights of owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence resulting from the working and getting of coal or of coal and other minerals worked therewith, to full repair or equitable compensation of their properties; and further to establish an independent arbitration procedure to resolve any disputes that may arise out of such damage or any matters relating thereto.

With only 10 minutes to put my case, I must first emphasise that it is not just my constituents who are suffering the problems of subsidence damage to their homes and property caused by the mining activities of British Coal but also the constituents of many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. Since highlighting the problem I have been contacted by a number of hon. Members with constituencies geographically as far apart as Lancashire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, north-east England, south Wales and Scotland. In many instances, coal mining in the vicinity is taking place or has taken place in recent years. Sadly, that is not always the case.

Problems also arise from old mine workings which collapsed many years after operations ceased. In part, the need for the Bill arises because current legislation applies a six-year time limit, laid down by the general law of limitation, following cessation of coal mining beneath the property. The law is archaic and unjust. It reiterates unfairness by requiring that claimants should submit claims within two months of damage becoming apparent. That is not only wrong but borders on the ludicrous. It implies that owners, many of them elderly, should be eternally vigilant and that they should be expert in recognising damage. In the same way as with people who live close to railway lines—sadly a diminishing number these days—main roads or airports, it is more often the visitor or relative who notices the damage.

The problem of mining subsidence damage is severe. This is evident because, since the 1960s, hundreds of thousands of claims have been made to the industry's management bodies. In the east midlands coalfield area I am informed that in the period from 1967 to 1980 a study of the records shows that some 62,000 damage claims were made. In my constituency, as in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), serious problems arise because of subsidence damage to homes and communities. In the Mansfield area alone, schools and hospitals have had to be closed because of the danger to children, patients and staff from damaged properties. Further, some farmland, buildings and business premises have been rendered unusable. Hundreds of homes, private and public, have been and remain damaged. The owners are rapidly losing patience about repairs or compensation for their loss.

It is generally thought by all who are affected that British Coal is avoiding its responsibilities rather than attempting to find a speedy solution to the problem. Hon. Members whose constituencies are affected are inundated every week with cases arising within and outside the set time limit. Local authorities are continually harassed by tenants seeking repairs to their subsidence damaged homes. I understand that they have already spent substantial amounts of money for which they await reimbursement. Individual owners who have invested in their homes for their own future and that of their dependants are continually denied their right to repairs or compensation, delay or denial being the order of the day.

I wish to refute the suggestion made by some that for British Coal to find a solution to the problem will mean that it will have to close pits. That is like saying to someone who has been mugged, "Do not prosecute or they will not mug anybody else." The reality is different. I have here a recent official press release issued by British Coal headquarters which proudly boasts a half-yearly operating profit this year of £104 million. Why cannot some of that money be spent on British Coal's responsibility in this matter?

It is a fundamental plank of my Bill that no time limit should apply to damage claims. Such a get-out clause would not and should not be offered to a second-hand car salesman, let alone a public industry. After all, who in the Chamber would feel safe in arguing that mining subsidence will occur only within six years of mining?

Another part of the Bill embodies the right of every ratepayer, where possible, to have access to mining records, past and present, in the vicinity of his property, with an obligation being placed upon the management of any company or public body to inform residents or owners in advance of mining activities under their properties.

Perhaps the most fundamental part of the Bill covers the need for the establishment of a system of independent arbitration to resolve disputes between owners of damaged properties and British Coal, together with a back-up system which would provide an independent surveying and damage assessment service for owners of damaged properties.

I am aware of the recent publication of the Waddilove report which carried out a review of subsidence damage and compensation. I welcome wholeheartedly the publication of that document. However, it has gaps, which my Bill will fill.

As hon. Members will know, I had to queue for 24 hours to be given the right to present the Bill. That, in comparison, is little when one sees the heartbreak, worry and despair of tenants who find themselves isolated from any satisfactory help. The primary purpose of my Bill is therefore to achieve justice for those in this plight. I commend the Bill to the House for its approval.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Alan Meale, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Joseph Ashton, Mr. Harry Barnes, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. John Prescott, Mr. Alexander Eadie and Mr. George J. Buckley.

COAL MINING SUBSIDENCE (DAMAGE AND ARBITRATION)

Mr. Alan Meale accordingly presented a Bill to establish the rights of owners of houses, land, buildings and other constructions which have suffered damage due to subsidence resulting from the working and getting of coal or of coal and other minerals worked therewith, to full repair or equitable compensation of their properties; and further to establish an independent arbitration procedure to resolve any disputes that may arise out of such damage

or any matters relating thereto: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday, 12 February and to be printed. [Bill 56.]

European Community

Relevant documents: European Community document No. 6476/87, second report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the Commission's White Paper on the completion of the internal market.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I announce that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment standing in the name of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition.

5.10 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mrs. Lynda Chalker): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Papers on developments in the European Community July to December 1986 (Cm. 122) and January to June 1987 (Cm. 205), and European Community Documents COM(87)100 on making a success of the Single European Act, COM(87)101 on the future financing of Community Budget, and Nos. 8248/87 on Budgetary Discipline, 8249/87 on Own Resources, 8251/87 on Structural Funds, and 8087/87 and 8940/87 on amendments to the Financial Regulations, all relating to the future financing negotiations; and endorses the Government's objective of securing effective and binding control of Community expenditure.

The occasion for the debate are the two White Papers on developments in the Community. The Government would have wished to adhere to their normal practice of holding one debate per White Paper, but pressure of other business in the House and the dissolution of Parliament in May followed by the long summer recess intervened to prevent that.

Although it is customary for such debates to take note of the White Papers, I accept and expect that hon. Members will want to focus more on current issues rather than on events six to 12 months ago. In the period since those covered by the White Papers, events of major and lasting importance have been taking place in the Community. These mainly concern the future financing of the Community. I am sure that, just two weeks before the Copenhagen summit, hon. Members will wish to hear about the current negotiations. I shall turn to them in a moment.

I want first, however, to set in its proper perspective Britain's drive to put Community finances on a firm basis with effective control of spending. We regard proper financial control as a necessary condition for the Community's healthy development, but not a sufficient condition. We have also been working to introduce across Europe new attitudes and practical reforms that will benefit the real economy and the lives of ordinary citizens in the United Kingdom.

The Europe of the future will also be an increasingly efficient Europe. Our companies will supply a domestic market of 321 million consumers. With the strength of that home market behind them, British companies will be better equipped to export successfully to the wider world. It will be a truly competitive Europe. Services as well as goods will be provided freely across frontiers and that will be an enterprise Europe. It will also mean better prospects for British companies, more jobs for the people of this country and it will be an opportunity Europe. The opportunities will not just be for a few companies or in a few sectors.

During the British presidency in the second half of last year — the period covered by the first of the White

[Mrs. Lynda Chalker]

Papers — a record number of practical measures to benefit business and the citizen were agreed or adopted. To anyone who doubts that, I commend the paragraphs on the internal market on pages 16-21 in the White Paper covering our presidency. The subjects of the agreements reached range from telecommunication terminal equipment to tractor controls. That may not sound much in itself, but the Community telecommunications market is worth hundreds of millions of pounds. The tractor market is worth over £100 million pounds a year to British exporters alone so it is very important.

The changes being made to open up the internal market may seem small and unglamorous taken one by one, but they represent important advances for the businesses and individuals to whom they apply. For example, liberalisation of financial services will open up a vast range of export opportunities, and ensure a better service to the consumer. Measures such as the recommendation agreed during our presidency on hotel fire safety and the directive that we are shortly to adopt on toy safety will benefit every citizen of this country.

Although all may not yet be soundly effected, our voice is always heard and respected in the many debates to dismantle barriers to trade, for others have watched the growing success of deregulation here at home in Britain.

What we now need to do is to make sure that all concerned at home are aware of the opportunities of the single market and are gearing themselves up to take advantage of them for the benefit of British jobs and business.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South) *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman now.

Regrettably, too few British companies are yet aware of the obligation, now written into the treaty of Rome by the Single European Act, to complete the single market by 31 December 1992.

British companies will have new opportunities, but they will also face very keen competition. All over Europe business men are talking about 1992 and completion of the single market. Their strategists are planning now for the opportunities and challenges which a genuinely free market in goods and services will provide. We must do the same. We need to study the competition, study the markets elsewhere in Europe, and learn how the coming changes will alter the environment in which we work.

We already sell more than half our exports to the Community. The value of those exports has grown faster than our exports to other parts of the world, but we need to do more, much more. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has announced that we will launch a major awareness campaign in the new year. We shall support him in every way.

We are creating the framework for a modern Community where, within a framework of common law, individual enterprise will flourish. But we cannot build a sound Community on unsound financial foundations. That is why the negotiations on future financing matter so much and why we attach so much importance to using them to secure improved spending control.

Mr. Cryer: The Minister has been elaborating on the commercial opportunities that she claims the development of the internal market will produce, but I know that she would not want to omit the dangers that exist. When the Minister notifies the commercial community of the removal of barriers she will also be notifying the arms smugglers, the drugs dealers, people who want to bring animals into the country in breach of our rabies law and people who want to export live animals without proper scrutiny. Will she spend a little time discussing the safeguards that will exist in the internal market to stop such abuse?

Mrs. Chalker: As I have said to the House on previous occasions, it is in the fight against terrorism, against drug smuggling, arms smuggling and, indeed, the fight against rabies and other diseases, that we have always had unity among members of the 12. The frontier controls that are necessary for such matters will be considered by this Government, and by this Government alone, because we reserve the right to protect our citizens in such situations. I am not talking about such frontier controls now. I am talking about the petty controls that represent an additional cost of billions of pounds to industry and prevent us from having easy and open access to other markets in Europe. Such petty controls prevent our business men and those seeking to be entrepreneurs from realising their full potential.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Before leaving the question of the internal market, will my right hon. Friend give her assessment of the varying degrees of enthusiasm that there might be among our colleagues in the Community for the full development of the internal market? Is my right hon. Friend concerned that, in the bargaining that will inevitably take place to achieve the internal market as quickly as possible, we may have to give up things in other areas that are dear to us?

Mrs. Chalker: I do not perceive that as a problem. There are many areas where we co-operate and collaborate for the benefit of British industry. We shall continue to do so, because that is top of our priority list.

I come to the nub of the debate. I wish to concentrate on future financing, which is the issue in the mind of everyone in the House. I remind hon. Members that the present negotiations are taking place in the face of proposals from the Commission for an increase in the Community's own resources of 45 per cent. That is simply not on. There are other elements in those proposals that we cannot accept. We cannot accept the proposed change in the abatement mechanism or the proposed doubling of the resources devoted to the structural funds.

But there are other elements in the Commission's proposals on which we can and are building, especially those for the control of agricultural expenditure. The Commission's proposals embody the important principles of stricter budgetary discipline, stricter budgetary management and mechanisms to achieve that. The negotiation is about those principles and their implementation is not a new task.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend) *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: It is a task which we started in the early part of the decade. I acknowledge that it has been a frustratingly slow process. No one knows that better than the Ministers involved. There have been two principal elements in our quest to achieve stricter budgetary discipline and management. The first was to ensure that Britain's own contribution to the budget was fair. That goal was achieved at Fontainebleau in 1984.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Oh!

Mrs. Chalker: The Fontainebleau abatement mechanism has worked well. By the end of this year we shall have benefited from abatements worth £2,800 million, reducing substantially our net contribution to the Community budget. If anyone, and I mean anyone — the Commission or any other partner — wants to change that mechanism it can be done only by unanimous agreement.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall finish this point and then give way to my hon. Friend who has been muttering all this time.

Any change in the mechanism must be designed to make the system less, and not more, onerous from the United Kingdom's point of view. The Commission's latest proposals, which are the same ones that it put forward nine months ago, do not meet that criterion; far from it. On the Commission's own calculations its proposals could leave the United Kingdom about £700 million worse off over the five years up to 1992. On more realistic assumptions, they would leave the United Kingdom approaching £700 million worse off in 1992 alone. That is simply not on. The Commission has described its proposals as being "grossly equivalent" to the present Fontainebleau system. Gross they may be, but equivalent they certainly are not.

The Government's position is quite straightforward. The Fontainebleau abatement mechanism was the result of years of difficult negotiation. It has proved itself. Any change would need to make the United Kingdom's budget burden less, not more, onerous.

Mr. Taylor: In common with the Minister I was greatly heartened after Fontainebleau when we were told that the new mechanism would greatly reduce our contributions. At that time, our average national contribution was £621 million. Can the Minister tell us—to encourage us all in further efforts—what is her latest estimate for the net contribution for this financial year? How much down is it on £621 million?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend will know, if he has read the Autumn Statement, that it has gone up considerably.

Mr. Taylor: What is the figure?

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend knows, and I am not telling him what he already knows. He is well aware of what appears in the Autumn Statement.

Mr. Taylor: What is the figure?

Mrs. Chalker: I am also aware——

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Some of us on the Conservative Benches are having some difficulty hearing my right hon. Friend because of the consistent yelling of the yobbo tendency.

Mrs. Chalker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) for his gallant intervention.

We are all well aware that the estimates made early in the year have not turned out to be correct, and it is for that very reason that the mechanisms that we have been suggesting for budget discipline and budget management are vital. I do not disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) that the figures are far too high.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: What is the figure?

Mrs. Chalker: The figure in the Autumn Statement—I have not looked it up immediately — was £1,400 million. My hon. Friend knows that figure because he has already written it down.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Chalker: No. I have already given way a number of times.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East should have listened hard to what I said a few moments ago before he intervened. I repeat that the changes that could be contemplated by the United Kingdom would have to make the budget burden less and not more onerous. They would have to be unanimously decided upon and there is no other way of changing the position.

Of greater interest in the Commission's proposals are the ideas for making Community revenue and the way in which it is raised relate more closely to the real prosperity of the contributors. As hon. Members know, the Community raises its revenue in three ways — through levies on agricultural imports into the Community, through duties on other imported goods, and through VAT. Levies and duties are a declining source of revenue as intra-community trade increases and as other tariffs are reduced. That is exactly what has exacerbated the Community's financial problems.

The Commission's proposals would make two changes in the present system. The ceiling would be expressed in terms of GNP and part of the revenue that is now raised solely on the basis of each member state's VAT share of the budget would, instead, reflect the difference between the VAT base and member states' GNP. The effect of the proposal would be that the United Kingdom would contribute to part of the budget, not at our current VAT share of 18 per cent., but at a lower rate reflecting our GNP share, which is 15 per cent.

The House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities recently concluded that these proposals would relate revenue more closely to each member state's ability to pay. They would benefit the United Kingdom, and we are seriously considering them. The Committee also supported the Government's view that agreement could not be reached on these matters until enforceable mechanisms of financial control were in place. With strong financial control in place as a prerequisite of the overall package, it could be possible to consider a GNP-based system, but it would be impossible without that control.

Our central goal is the achievement of binding controls over spending. Runaway agricultural spending has squeezed all other expenditure. It is now accepted by our partners that the operation of the CAP has been of declining benefit to the very farmers it was meant to help. With the competitive subsidies deployed by other major producers, it is having an adverse impact on international trade relations and on markets in developing countries.

[Mrs. Chalker]

In 1983, the Community agreed on the need for reform. Terms such as quotas, guarantee thresholds, co-responsibility levies and guidelines entered the vocabulary. Turning words into reality has been a slow process, as it is bound to be in a democratic Community, but substantial progress has now been made, and those words are now actions.

The fundamental reforms to the beef and milk regimes agreed in December last year were milestones. In the milk sector we now have quotas to limit production. We have a cut-off point for expenditure, so that once production reaches a pre-set level no further money is spent on buying into intervention. That cut-off was triggered for milk earlier this year.

The results are already visible. Butter production was down by more than 13 per cent. in the first half of this year. Skimmed milk powder production was down 17 per cent. We expect Community intervention stocks of butter to fall this year, for the first time since 1981. Milk deliveries are down 4 per cent. The penalties for overproduction are bringing production much closer into line with demand. That is exactly what we have been aiming for. As an article in *The Independent* put it last week:

> "The significant point is that the butter mountain is an old mountain and gradually being eroded . . . For the first time in a decade it is no longer being replenished with fresh butter."

That is an achievement on which we intend to build.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): When the Minister describes positive advances, she should not give the impression that they were solely and entirely due to the United Kingdom, and that no other country had any part in them.

Mrs. Chalker: The hon. Gentleman does the House a disservice. I did not imply that it was solely due to the United Kingdom. None of these aims could have been successful unless other member states had been persuaded to accept them. That is why the democratic process takes so long to achieve. One has to work by persuasion. It is interesting that, by our example, we are persuading many of our partners to follow what has proved a profitable path for us, and we shall continue to do that. The hon. Gentleman said that I should not claim it for Britain. I do not claim it all for Britain.

The regimes agreed last year introduce order and financial discipline into two important areas of production where overspending was recognised as the major problem. They are landmarks because they provide us with models for the reforms that are needed in all commodity regimes, particularly that for cereals, where Community spending has risen from £1 billion in 1984 to more than £3·4 billion this year. That has to stop and we are all determined to stop it.

We have argued, and the Commission now agrees, that we need stabilisers for each agricultural regime. That means that each commodity must have its own control mechanism built in, so that the costs for which the Community budgets are the costs for which it pays; no more, no less. Those control mechanisms will take different forms in each commodity, but they must be agreed in detail as well as in principle, and once agreed they must be capable of automatic implementation. That is why they have to be agreed by Heads of Government, on a lasting and binding basis.

The Commission's proposals that will come before the Heads of Government meeting in Copenhagen embody that concept in a detail and with a rigour which—I say frankly and gladly—is new to Community negotiations and which we warmly welcome. They are being discussed in the Agriculture Council this week. The outcome of that marathon will determine the prospects for success at Copenhagen.

I should like to make a couple of points about other expenditure.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It might be useful to clarify this point before the main debate. The right hon. Lady mentioned the discussions in the Agriculture Council. Is it not a fact that, whatever conclusion it may reach, it will have to pass the rigorous eyes of Foreign Affairs or Treasury Ministers to ensure that those disciplinary measures stand up to what the right hon. Lady wants? Will the tests of the more rigorous legislation be available to the House, and will they be placed before the House so that hon. Members can comment before the Prime Minister goes to Copenhagen?

Mrs. Chalker: I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that I am sure that the Scrutiny Committee's recommendation in that respect will be complied with by the House. I hope that there will be a debate before long on the details mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, but it is not for me to say when it will be. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be glad to correspond with the hon. Gentleman as soon as the decision is taken through the usual channels.

We all know that obligatory expenditure forms the bulk of the Community budget. Spending on agriculture accounts for most of that obligatory expenditure. So agriculture is the most important thing that we have to get right. But we cannot and should not let other expenditure grow out of control. That has been the problem in the past.

The Commission's approach is very simple. It suggests that the structural funds, which include the regional development fund and the social fund, should be doubled. Of course, I understand the wish to see support for less-developed and industrially disadvantaged regions, but, at a time when each national Government in the Community is struggling to control its own national expenditure, as we in Britain have controlled ours, and when the Community is in the throes of trying to put its own finances on a sensible footing, arbitrary and free-standing decisions on individual future financing issues are not feasible. We have to take all the issues together.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Chalker: I shall give way. I apologise for not doing so earlier.

Mr. Griffiths: On the point about doubling the size of the structural funds, does the Minister agree that, with regard to the social fund and the regional development fund, the Commission is asking not for a theoretical amount, but for the money that it needs to satisfy the applications that are already coming in? As regards the completion of the internal market—although I do not think that that will be done by 1992—it is bound to disadvantage the peripheral regions and countries such as the United Kingdom, so it is extremely important that if that is to happen, the regional and social funds should be doubled in size, if not more, to compensate and create new development in regions such as south Wales.

Mrs. Chalker: I fear that, understandably, the hon. Gentleman is putting the cart before the horse. I understand and am sympathetic to the wish to continue to help the less-developed and industrially disadvantaged regions, but first we have to get expenditure under control. Then we can, and we shall, discuss further plans for structural fund spending. In discussing that issue only yesterday with Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, I made it clear that it must be discussed in the light of overall measures of control and that full account must be taken of the industrially disadvantaged and less-developed regions. We shall do that.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): One of the documents that we are debating, entitled "Making a Success of the Single Act", and dated 15 February 1987, states that the Commission is looking forward to assuming fully its initiative-making role and involving the Council and Parliament as equal partners at every stage of the budget procedure. Does my right hon. Friend think that "equal" is the right word, having regard to the fact that if one is talking only of the Council, Commission and Parliament, that excludes by implication any serious investigation by the House into the budget procedure? That must be implicit in those words.

Mrs. Chalker: I do not agree with the Commission's use of the word "equal". It will always be the prerogative of national Governments to take decisions as they affect their own membership of the Community. As my hon. Friend knows, financial decisions are taken by unanimity.

We are seeking, whether on the issue of structural funds or anything else, to make sure that the Community is not just about budgeting — any more than good budget control is the sole goal of national policy. Sound finance is the basis of prosperity, and that prosperity is fundamental to the cohesion of a democratic society. I know that my hon. Friend understands that well. When we say that there can be no agreement to increase the Community's own resources without effective and binding control of Community expenditure, we are not delivering an ultimatum. We are facing up to reality. We are asking the Community to face up to the hard choices that Britain has already faced here at home. In Britain we are now able to hold our head up high because we have restored our economic strength and our national pride. We want to see the rest of the Community doing the same.

The Community is embarking on major trade negotiations in the new GATT round. Its success will be vital to our objective of strengthening the world open trading system, on which our prosperity and employment depend. Not only do we want to see further liberalisation of trade in goods, but we want to extend multilateral rules to such areas as services and intellectual property. In particular, we have a unique opportunity to wind down the competitive support for agriculture, which has distorted world markets and damaged the social fabric of developing countries.

There are, therefore, twin imperatives that require us to tackle the common agricultural policy: first, the inescapable internal logic of reform, driven by growing cost and diminishing returns, and, secondly, the external logic of taking a lead in securing a far-reaching improvement in world trading relations. It is a change which would be as significant for the poorer countries as any debt write-off, and it would be much longer-lasting, which is all-important.

The logic of the external arguments on the GATT and the internal EC arguments on control and reform, which we are deploying, is now accepted. That is a great and important change from the past. The political will to put logic into practice must be made to follow.

I have tried to give the House and, through the House, the public a fair appraisal of the task that we face. We face a difficult negotiation in Copenhagen; it will be difficult but crucial.

The essence of the Community is that it is a democratic organisation. That is its strength. The ideals of Western European democracy are embodied in the Community. That is why I remind hon. Members of the importance of that in the events leading up to the entry of Spain and Portugal.

Hon. Members are perhaps better placed than anybody to appreciate that, because the Community is not a democratic organisation — *[Interruption.]* — because it is a democratic organisation; sorry, not a good slip at all. I shall repeat the sentence so that it is absolutely clear. As hon. Members are perhaps better placed than anybody else to appreciate, because the Community is a democratic organisation, progress is not always as quick as we should like. Nobody in the Community can simply take a decision and push it through. That comes back to the point that I made about persuasion. The Commission cannot push through——

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mrs. Chalker: I shall not give way for a moment, although I know that that will only encourage my hon. Friend to intervene again.

As I have said, other countries have to be won over. That will be done only by persuading them to come over to the clear line that I have outlined to the House.

Mr. Budgen: Can my right hon. Friend explain why all this rhetoric about democracy is important? Is she saying that these decisions are taken by the assembly, which is the only quasi-democratic part of the EEC?

Mrs. Chalker: Certainly, the European Parliament has a role to play in giving its opinion, but my hon. Friend knows only too well that decisions are taken by the Council of Ministers, which is representative of the Governments of the 12.

Mr. Budgen: It is not a democratic structure.

Mrs. Chalker: My hon. Friend and I will never agree on that point, but anyone who is democratically elected forms part of a democratic structure, which is what the European Parliament has been since direct elections began in 1979.

I have had a careful look at all the amendments and in particular at that tabled by the Opposition. It is the type of amendment which brings the House into public contempt. It contains the sort of politics which have been decisively rejected in the past three general elections. I know that I should take comfort from the fact that the Opposition rarely learn from their mistakes — but I do not. The public are concerned about these matters. They expect us to deal with them seriously, constructively and accurately. That is why I must tell Opposition Members that the figure of 17 million in the amendment is incorrect; it should be 15·9 million. I give that information for nothing.

[Mrs. Chalker]

The Opposition's amendment, with its unique combination of invective and inaccuracy, will not commend itself to the public or the House. It is not enough to say that the Community's policies are not working as well as they should. We must come up with detailed, persuasive and workable answers, and that is what we are doing.

I hope that what Opposition Members say in the debate, which will be read in other Community capitals, will help in persuading our partners of the benefits of the reforms that we are seeking for the Community. The reforms are intended to secure binding budgetary discipline and clear budget management, on top of the stabilisers to cut back the excesses of the common agricultural policy. All those are essential if there is to be a major advance in the creation of a single European market, which would greatly benefit this country. We are no less committed to that task than we are to the control of expenditure and the stopping of wasteful subsidy. I hope that we shall have support from all sides of the House for that difficult but possible achievement.

5.43 pm

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"believes that the response of Her Majesty's Government to the crisis in international financial markets has been wholly inadequate, given the danger of increasing the already unacceptable jobless total in the Community of seventeen million; considers that the proposals to deal with the Community's budget shambles would mean the loss of the British rebate in return for no real financial discipline; further believes that Her Majesty's Government's intransigence and obstruction has sabotaged Britain's place in future space and research programmes; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to take a lead at the Copenhagen summit for joint action by the Community to promote mutual growth, trade and jobs, to agree urgent measures to cut food surpluses and to promote industrial joint ventures including aerospace in order to strengthen industrial competitiveness in the European economies."

Notwithstanding the rosy, sunny-side-up picture painted by the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), this is, by any test, a gloomy time for the European Community. I say that with no sense of pleasure or satisfaction, because I, too, am a citizen of Europe, and, like all hon. Members, I represent citizens of Europe. In my constituency one in four are out of work, and we all deserve better from the organisation at this point in the 20th century. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should kindly take their frustrations out on the Minister and leave me alone—I agree with most of what they say.

Mrs. Chalker: I doubt it.

Mr. Robertson: The right hon. Lady is wrong. They will agree more with me than with anything that she said about the facts that are on display this evening.

We have just experienced a dramatic, traumatic collapse in the financial markets of the world and the European states could only gaze on, transfixed and paralysed as that collapse did its enormous damage to the fragile conditions of most economies. Even before that financial Chernobyl the realists were talking about growth in Europe being wholly insufficient to get to grips with Communitywide unemployment of at least 17 million people. The right hon. Lady was disingenuous to give us a statistic of 15·9 million. We know that the Government fiddle the unemployment statistics in this country. What do they do across the European Community? Many authoritative commentators, such as Mr. John Palmer in *The Guardian* the other day, have said that 17 million is only a modest figure for real unemployment in the Community. Now even the optimists realise that the going will get worse before it gets much worse.

The shock waves are still hitting the shores of the 12-nation-strong European Community. It is small wonder that the word "economic" has not been dropped from the European Economic Community. Yet again it is strapped to its usual budget straitjacket, like mental patients in hospitals locking themselves into their wards. The cash is running out, the dollar is falling, agricultural spending is rising out of control, and serious research and technology programmes are being sacrificed on the altar of producing nothing more than an agricultural Tower of Babel.

While all this goes on, the entire attention of the 12 Heads of Government will be riveted on cobbling together yet another temporary, bandaged, inadequate package of half-measures and fudges that will fool no one—least of all Opposition Members. It will not even fool Conservative Members.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the fact that the amendment clearly calls for further Community expenditure, and criticises the Government's attempts to impose financial discipline? Do we take it from that that the hon. Gentleman does not support the principle of my right hon. Friend's approach to the budget—that finance should determine expenditure, rather than expenditure finance?

Mr. Robertson: Speaking as one who was at St. Andrew's university long before the hon. Gentleman brought it into disrepute, I suggest that he tries reading the amendment, in which there is no call for additional expenditure. The Opposition believe that if the savings that we have been calling for for some time had been made—the Government have only now woken up to them—there would have been more than adequate finance to deal with the social programmes that we are discussing. The amendment calls for co-ordinated Government strategies across the board to deal with the problem of recession. The hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood its thrust, but I am not surprised at that.

There is no will to grasp the opportunities and challenges that are urgently before us — in space, research, information technology, energy programmes and transport. In the driving seat of reaction—at the heart of the Luddite forces — is the Prime Minister herself, who goes around abusing her fellow Prime Ministers and Presidents as if they were mere Conservative Cabinet Ministers. She sends the right hon. Member for Wallasey waltzing around European capitals like a demented tourist, only to set the stage for the pantomime dame who will perform her histrionics, deliver her blusters and torpedo the Copenhagen summit, just as she did the Brussels one before it. Then she will fix the front pages, just as she did after Brussels, with her technicolour tantrums, but all the time we know that, as at Brussels, she is ready to sell out again when the crunch comes, just as she did at Fontainebleau three expensive years ago.

I shall now turn to the budget, because that is close to the heart of hon. Members in all parts of the House. It is an endless show that makes "The Mousetrap" look like a first night. In this field, above all others, we shall judge the resolve and intent of the Government, who indulge in fine and noisy rhetoric about reform and financial discipline. We await with above-average expectation the reply to the debate by the Paymaster General, who will be making his first speech since being plucked from the obscurity of these esoteric debates and propelled into the chairmanship of the Conservative party no less. As the right hon. Member for Chingford, (Mr. Tebbit), the Boris Yeltsin of the Tory party, departs to the well-padded Back Benches, we await the new entrant, whose exile to Siberia will not be long delayed if he deals with the Conservative party's finances in the way that he deals with the European Community's budget.

Mr. Forth: Will the hon. Gentleman take effective action to solve the problem of his metaphor mountain and his excessive verbosity, and get on with the debate in hand? We are most anxious to hear some substance in his speech.

Mr. Robertson: It is nice to hear from an hon. Member who is always so sartorially well turned out that he shows up his colleagues, but that is about the only contribution that he usually makes to debates.

There is, of course, no budget for 1988 and it is now long after the point where one should have been put before the European Parliament. Instead, the Community is inexorably sliding towards bankruptcy, and a whole series of black holes loom before it.

The response by the Community is a series of proposals by the European Commission to revamp the whole sinking ship in the hope of avoiding a few more rocks. These proposals will simply mean that British taxpayers will have to shell out a lot more cash in return for nothing at all, and they get nowhere near the heart of the problem. I know that the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) entirely appreciates those sentiments. In addition, the proposals are bound to kill the United Kingdom rebate, about which the Minister, continuing a long tradition, makes so much so often. If the Prime Minister comes back from her Danish blustering, having done a deal on this new GNP-linked scheme, and at the same time having sold the pass on the rebate, that will be nothing less than surrender. I am sure that I carry the whole House with me on that.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): My hon. Friend has talked about rhetoric and bluster. Does he share my concern, as a Member representing a steel constituency, about the current EC proposals for yet more quota cuts in the United Kingdom steel industry? Does he share my worry that, while we hear rhetoric from Ministers about the industry, if there is a chance of a deal that may make a nice cosy arrangement between Britain and the EC about steel production, it might be made at the expense of one of our steel plants, or certainly at the expense of our capacity? Such a deal would undoubtedly undermine the fragile recovery that is taking place in the United Kingdom steel industry.

Mr. Robertson: I represent a steel constituency, and its largest employer is the Ravenscraig steelworks. Therefore, I fully appreciate the point made by my hon. Friend. It is astounding that the Minister talked for 35 minutes in a debate that covers two six-monthly reports and did not say a word about the steel industry, the shipbuilding industry or the other industrial interests that are being prejudiced by the Government's stance in Europe. I certainly underline my hon. Friend's apprehensions. We shall strongly press the Government on these matters.

I was talking about the budget. Our rebate, the great abatement, will next year be worth £1·75 billion if the present system continues. According to the Treasury figures, which we heard again in the debate, the British bill to the Community if these proposals go through will rise by about £800 million to £900 million a year. The Minister invented a new figure when she said £700 million, but her hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) told the House of Lords Select Committee that the figure was in the range of an additional £800 million to £900 million net per year. The Paymaster General went further. He said that the Commission's idea was "wholly unrealistic". We all agree with that, and that is what the Minister seemed to be saying.

The question that is then begged is what is a realistic figure. We are not being told, not that the figure is unacceptable, but that it is unrealistic. Is the realistic increase 10 or 20 per cent.? How far is it short of the 45 per cent. by which we are told the new system will inflate the budget by 1992? Perhaps at the end of the debate the Paymaster General will give us the answer to that question.

Mr. Cash *rose*

Mr. Robertson: I should prefer to continue with my speech, because other hon. Members would like to take part.

The United Kingdom rebate is just as unpopular with the other European countries as is the Prime Minister, and is inextricably tied to the Fontainebleau agreement, which will be thrown out if the idea of the fourth own resource is eventually adopted. On 9 November Lord Brabazon of Tara replied to the House of Lords debate on the financing of the budget. Speaking about the United Kingdom rebate, he said:

"any changes to the Fontainebleau abatement system (which has served us well) must improve our overall position." [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 9 November 1987; Vol. 489, c. 1243.]

That is slightly different from the Minister's formula, which is that the budget burden must be less, not more, onerous. However, that is the formula that the Government are taking. What precisely does it mean? Does it mean that under the new system we shall get a more generous rebate, or does it mean that we shall pay less than we are paying at the moment? What precisely does it mean when it is said that we must improve our overall position? We have a right to know so that we can measure the Prime Minister's success in Copenhagen or, in six months' time, at Hanover, against the criterion that is being laid down.

We shall watch closely, microscopically, the outcome of Copenhagen to spot any new deal with which the Prime Minister emerges. She will be judged according to the colour of the money that she brings home, and not on the colour of the language fed to the press by Mr. Bernard Ingham. We support the Prime Minister in her crusade against the lunacies of the common agricultural policy. We welcome her belated arrival at the door to challenge the basic conditions that have led to this crazy, illogical and wasteful position that once again freezes the institutions of the European Community.

[Mr. Robertson]

As the Minister said, control of the CAP lies at the heart of controlling the budget, and real control is no more likely to come out of Copenhagen than it was to come out of Brussels. Any policy that accounts for nearly 70 per cent. of total Community expenditure will be crucial to solvency, but a policy that takes half the available cash in order to store and destroy food that nobody wants and that nobody can use is plainly berserk. That is all the more so when any small drop in the value of the dollar can automatically drag millions of pounds straight out of European taxpayers' pockets. The Government's crusade for agricultural reform is right and justified, and we fully support it, even though the Government have had eight long, expensive years to do something and only wake up when the real and total disaster looms in on them.

Even as we speak, the farm Ministers are locked in negotiations in Brussels. We wish them fruitful conclusions, but it will not be easy to get agreement. The odds-on certainty is that in Copenhagen the Heads of Government will be asked to bite the bullet and make the decisions—if they are capable of making them. I shall make clear again that what happened at Brussels last time when the Prime Minister torpedoed the 1988 budget, while the night before she sold out on a lucrative deal for farmers, will not fool the people this time.

With 1·5 million tonnes of surplus butter in store, with a million tonnes of dried milk in store, with 16 million tonnes of surplus grain in store — yet on the open market we have to buy from Saudi Arabia to get the right quality of grain — when Mr. Peter Dooley, the Briton who is Deputy Director General of Agriculture in the European Commission says,

> "The problem is now absolutely terrifying, not least because we are now actually holding 80 per cent. of the entire world's stock of butter"

and when small farmers do not even benefit from the great largesse concerned and are leaving in droves to join the dole queues while those who remain are up to their eyes in debt, the time has come to call an end to the madness. We will be watching to see whether the Prime Minister's rhetoric is matched this time by some results.

When one strips away the froth of synthetic outrage at the ongoing craziness of the CAP and all the fancy ideas of holding out for a new rebate deal and genuine budget discipline, one sees that the Government do not have the tiniest clue about how the European Community could help Britain. There is no better illustration of that than in space and research policy. Last Thursday the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster reported to the House the Government's cop-out of the European space project. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, it was a "confession of failure". It was a dismal day for Britain.

In a couple of months' time the Institute of National Affairs will publish a special paper on European future in space. This follows a study by five institutes of international relations in Europe. The report concludes:

> "The extent to which nations or groups of nations are able to explore and exploit space will increasingly determine their standing and influence in the world of tomorrow."

It goes on:

> "A quantitative and qualitative jump is necessary towards a truly collective space policy, if Western Europe is to have anything more than a walk-on part in the world."

It then makes the practical point:

> "Space technologies foster the flexibility and innovation required to create new jobs and promote economic modernisation."

Contrast those sentiments with the sad, bleak words of the Minister last week. No wonder that *The Independent*, which the Minister had the audacity to quote in her speech, concluded in its editorial that the Minister had

> "added rudeness to our reputation for meanness and myopia".

What a knock that decision was for the 300 British companies that are involved in space technology, what a disaster for the remarkable British-invented Hotol project, and what a dismal approach to the challenge of the big thinking that is necessary for the future of our nation.

Sir David Nickson, the president of the CBI, said at the CBI's conference in Glasgow:

> "Sometimes the sheer scale of the investment or the long pay back time means, as the City Industry task force pointed out, a major degree of enterprise not only from us—
>
> that is, industrialists—
>
> but from Government."

The Government must have a role in major projects such as the Airbus, the Channel tunnel and the mega-ventures where no company, not even the largest in Europe, can go it alone. The CBI knows the facts, unlike the Government, and it and future generations have been let down by the foolish Luddites who inhabit the Cabinet.

That penny-pinching short-sightedness is also characterised in the Government's attitude to the European framework research programme. The previous Minister for Information Technology has been loud in his denunciation of the Government's decision to pull out of the space programme, but earlier this year he was the mouthpiece of the Prime Minister when the Government set out to sabotage the European research programme. At the start of the year he derided that programme as being "too extravagant", which is one of the mildest criticisms that he levelled at it. The obstruction and intransigence that he displayed during the months has led to the disbanding of scientific teams, to the abandoning of projects and to a unique chance for the Japanese and the Americans to catch up in an area in which they were behind.

On 23 July, after the Prime Minister sacked the Minister, with shades of Boris Yeltsin once again, she capitulated, as she always does, and agreed to a programme with only a 6 per cent. reduction in the total amount. No wonder that Mr. Amédée Turner, the Conservative leader in the European Parliament——

Mr. Forth: He is not.

Mr. Robertson: He is nearly that. Mr. Amédée Turner, a Conservative Member of the European Parliament and the leading spokesman on research, said that it was

> "equivalent to taking a mouse hostage."

However, the damage was done and a legacy of bitterness has been left behind. Important British interests have once again been subordinated to short-sighted tantrums. We will be watching very carefully what goes on in Copenhagen. We will be watching more than just the budget gyrations, because a lot more than that is at stake, although one may find that difficult to believe after hearing the Minister's speech this evening.

We want to know what will happen about the harmonisation of VAT. The Prime Minister made a number of pledges during the general election campaign about using the veto. She said that the veto would be used to prevent VAT on fuel, food and children's clothing. Apparently that is now a decision that ties even the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his new popular role. What about new building and construction? Will the Government use their veto in the Council of Ministers against any increase in VAT on the important commodities of books and periodicals? What will be done about the harmonisation of excise duty? Will the Government veto any reductions in duties on alcoholic beverages which such harmonisation would mean? So often in the past the tub-thumping has simply been the prelude to a sell out. Will it be any different this time?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) asked, what about the steel and shipbuilding industries? Will the Government put their veto on the line in the Council of Ministers to ensure that, as we have carried a far heavier burden than the vast majority of our Community colleagues, those crucial strategic and employment important industries will be safeguarded from any discussions that take place?

By their very nature, these debates cover a wide and diverse range of subjects, but it all comes back to cash. It is estimated that £2 billion will be squandered by the European Community simply to destroy the surplus food that nobody needs. What about the billions of pounds that we now understand goes missing in the European Community through fraud? If that money were liberated —I do not suggest that the Minister is opposed to this —it would be available for other projects. We want the United Kingdom rebate protected, and we want the taxpayers' contribution to the European black hole limited.

The Prime Minister's task in Copenhagen is to do a lot better than she has done before at summits: to sort out the lunacies of the common agricultural policy, to contribute to programmes that build Britain's future and not unwanted mountains of inedible food and to stand up for Britain's interests without caving in as so often before on essentials, while broadcasting her belligerent impotence. If the right hon. Lady can deliver we will congratulate her, but if she fails the condemnation will not just be from the Opposition. It will be universal, and it will be richly deserved.

6.8 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer: I agree with what the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said about the Government's withdrawal from much of the European scientific research programme, but I agreed with very little else that he said. It was sad to listen to a man of such honesty and integrity delivering a speech of such manifest intellectual dishonesty. I want to commend my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who spoke from the Government Front Bench against a steady background of mumbling from behind her, for the job that she has done. I urge her and other Foreign Office Ministers to adopt the bold and radical approach to the European Community and its problems which they would like to adopt if they were free to do so and which they know to be necessary if Britain is to derive full benefit from its membership of the Community.

The target of a single European market in 1992 is not the kind of vague aspiration towards European union that flourished briefly and died in the 1970s. It is a specific target, with specific stages. The situation today is very different from that in the 1970s. Europe today has a manifest need to defend its own interests, a need that is underlined daily by economic developments, the threat of a world recession after the stock market crash—which Europe could, if it had tried, not merely cushioned itself against, but have helped to avert—and by the course of United States-Soviet discussions on nuclear disarmament, as Europe must be able to defend its own interests and influence the course of East-West relations.

The need for closer European Community co-operation is manifest, as is the possibility of achieving it. The Single European Act, which the Government treated initially with such scepticism, has turned out to be an indispensable tool for the achievement of agreement on pretty well anything in a 12-member Community. Even the Government now accept that—at least I hope they do.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Anthony Meyer: No. My hon. Friend is the parliamentary equivalent of an automatic bird scarer. He goes off with a loud report every five minutes. He will not scare this particular bird.

In 1985, the Government appointed Lord Cockfield as a Commissioner and told him to get on with the job of removing barriers to trade. He is getting on with the job. However, who is raising hands in horror over that? Her Majesty's Government are doing that. Shame on them. Ministers used to be fond of the proverb about not making an omelette without breaking eggs, and heaven knows they use it often enough in other spheres, notably in local government finance and education. However, when it is a matter of altering our excise taxes, the coverage or rates of VAT, or frontier controls — all of which are eventually indispensable changes if we are to achieve a single market by 1992—Ministers scuttle like frightened rabbits to the shelter of their election pledges.

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Anthony Meyer: Do the Government want a single market? If every member state is going to cling to its own method of VAT—Britain and Ireland are the two odd men out here — to its own system of holding up travellers and goods at the frontier and in totality to its own health, hygiene and safety regulations, that may preserve the status quo, but we will never achieve a single market in 1992.

Of course the Government are right in their insistence that the Community must deal with its budget problem and do so properly, not by short-term fudging. Our record on that is outstandingly good. We have managed to keep that problem at the forefront of everyone's attention. However, it is a pity that we have weakened our ability to achieve that vital long-term objective of a just and sensible method of financing the agricultural policy and the Community as a whole by an over-shrill insistence on our budgetary refund and the desire to get our money back. That makes splendid headlines in *The Sun* or the *Daily Express*, but it does nothing to advance our long-term aims. On the contrary, it diminishes our chances of achieving them. That only plays into the hands of opponents of the European Community like some of my hon. Friends who have been so vocal during this debate and it enables hon. Members like the hon. Member for Hamilton to exploit the subject quite cynically.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend is suggesting quite plainly to the House that he would rather that our net

[Mr. Marlow]

contribution was much greater than it is at the moment. How much greater would he like it to be, and what benefits would we get additionally from the Community by having a greater contribution?

Sir Anthony Meyer: My hon. Friend has entirely misunderstood me. I have suggested that if we can achieve a sensible long-term solution to the problem of financing the Community, the likelihood is that that will result in a smaller annual British contribution, because the system will be fairer. However, if each year we triumphantly battle for a maximum refund, we damage our chances of getting a sensible long-term solution.

I am glad that the Government are taking measures to make British industry and British public opinion more aware of the opportunities and the challenge of 1992. However, they are too late, and too little. French industry, once renowned for its sluggishness and its yearnings for protection, is moving rapidly to take advantage of the possibilities opened up by the single market. French public opinion has developed a new enthusiasm for the idea of a united Europe and what that can do to bring more jobs, to protect its citizens against world recession, to influence Soviet and United States policy and, in short, to bring about a renaissance of European influence in the world. The only people who are standing out, the only equivalents to the doubters on the Conservative Benches and to the cynics on the Opposition Benches, are the Communists and the followers of Monsieur Jean Marie Le Pen.

The Government now need to wake up the House and the country. Let them admit that under electoral pressure they made some pretty unwise pledges and let them begin to educate people to the changes that are going to have to come and to come well this side of the next general election if we are to meet the 1992 target. Make no mistake about it, the single market is a vital British objective although it is only one step towards a real European Community which remains, as it has been for 16 years, the principal basis of our foreign, economic, commercial and military policy.

The place to begin that process is in the corridors of government. The Government should consider what happened in the 1970s, when Britain first joined the European Community. Each Government Department was required to set up a unit to assess the implications for that Department of European Community membership. Exactly the same should be happening now. Every Department in Whitehall should have a small but high-powered unit with direct access to the Secretary of State, with the specific task of studying what changes are necessary in the policies and practices of that Department to prepare for the advent of the single market in 1992.

There is no time to lose, and no room for half-measures. There will have to be big and deep changes. The Government have not shrunk from such changes in other areas. Let them show themselves equally bold in matters of even greater consequence.

6.18 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I intend to make only a very brief intervention in what is obviously a wide-ranging debate covering many important matters. I want to confine my remarks to the shipbuilding industry, which is mentioned in one of the documents under consideration this evening.

Debates of this kind on the European Community are inevitably dominated by discussions of the budget and the completely disproportionate amount of Community expenditure devoted to the common agricultural policy. I do not want to comment on that, except to say that, when I listened to the Minister this afternoon, as I have listened to successive Ministers expressing the Government's firm determination to solve the budget problem once and for all, I listened with the most profound scepticism. I do not believe that that will happen this time, any more than it has happened in the past.

I should like to make one or two points about shipbuilding. First, page 22 of the report in the Blue Book covering the period from July 1986 to December 1986 mentions the agreement on the sixth directive on shipbuilding which was signed at the end of December 1986. That agreement lasts for four years. Incidentally, it does not come into the budget because it relates to aids for shipbuilding which are financed by national Governments. My hon. Friends and I, who take a constituency interest in shipbuilding, were extremely disappointed that the maximum limit for aid to shipbuilding agreed in the directive was 28 per cent. Anyone who knows about merchant shipbuilding in this country and the worldwide problems that it faces at the moment will know that that limit will not allow our industry to get the orders that are required, or keep it at its present demoralisingly low level, because most of our capacity has been lost during the past few years. Therefore, we argued that the percentage maximum limit should be considerably more than 28 per cent.

I do not want to go back over that argument, as I understand it, but that agreement was reached only a year ago. Although the directive applies for four years, it does not necessarily apply at the maximum percentage limit for the whole of those four years. As I understand it—I hope that we shall get an answer on this point—the limit is subject to review during the period of the directive. Are discussions taking place at the moment about the limits on aid that are to be allowed under the Community directive? If so, what are the Government doing to increase the limit of 28 per cent? Can we have at least the basic assurance that there is absolutely no question of the limit being reduced, because that would be disastrous? I hope that there is no possibility of that. However, we require some assurances on the level of aid. I should like an assurance from the Government that they are arguing for a higher level than was set in the agreement that was reached in December 1986, because the 28 per cent. limit is obviously inadequate to deal with the crisis facing merchant shipbuilding in this country.

Secondly, we were told that one of the virtues of the sixth directive was that the various aids would be transparent and that there would be no possibility for members of the Community to cheat on the arrangements. However, just a few months ago an incident occurred that affected Govan Shipbuilders in my constituency. Govan Shipbuilders had pretty well signed, sealed and delivered a contract for ferries for Brittany Ferries, but before the contract was finally settled the French Government intervened and the contract went to a French yard. The Irish Commissioner responsible for such matters, Mr. Sutherland, took the view that the French Government had breached the terms of the directive.

I raised this matter during the Third Reading debate on the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Bill on 16

July. The Minister kindly wrote to me afterwards. In a letter dated 5 August, the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry wrote that the British Government were rigorously pursuing the matter and that he would keep the House informed. So far as I am aware, the House has not been kept informed — at least I have no information on it—of what has happened. Whether we like it or not — I dislike it intensely — that order is proceeding in the French yard. We must have an answer to what happened to the objections that were lodged and to the Commissioner's investigations. The House is entitled to know what happened.

My third point is not unrelated to the budget and to what the Minister has said this afternoon about the Government resisting—that was the sense of what the hon. Lady said—any increase in the regional and social funds, not for reasons of merit but simply because the budget is so disproportionately taken up with expenditure on the common agricultural policy at the moment. As I understood it, a few months ago there was, if not a definite Commission proposal, at least some talk — perhaps it had gone beyond that into something more definite — about a package of aid for areas that were suffering from shipyard closures. In July, the Commission mentioned the figure of about £350 million. So far as I am aware, absolutely nothing has come of that. Again, I should like some information from the Minister.

If we are to spend large sums of money in the European Community, I should like it spent on the regional and social funds. I should like money spent on supporting our industry and spent in the regions that are suffering serious unemployment. Unfortunately, that includes my own constituency.

Another example of the way in which the European Community is being completely distorted and its priorities made inappropriate for the real problems that are facing Europe is that we have such an over-emphasis on the CAP, and a disproportionate amount of the budget is spent on it. We should like to see that matter remedied. If it were, money could be spent much more sensibly on the regional and social funds. There is a strong argument for some of that money being directed to areas in Britain and elsewhere that have been decimated by shipbuilding closures during the past few years. I should like the Minister to comment on that also.

6.26 pm

Mr. David Curry (Skipton and Ripon): It is fortunate when inclination and obligation go hand in hand. In the convention in this House that a maiden speaker devotes the first part of his remarks to the record of his predecessor, that coincidence comes happily together.

I have great pleasure in recalling the work in this House and in the constituency of Mr. John Watson, my predecessor in Skipton and Ripon. He was unremitting in his energy, unfailing in his courtesy, and unhesitating in his commitment to the interests of his constituents. He was the spokesman, advocate, sponsor and defender of the constituents of Skipton and Ripon. With those people, who tend to judge a person first by what he is and secondly by what he represents, he had a special empathy. I know now how I will be judged on my time in this House. My constituents will say, "How did he rate against John Watson?" I know that that will be an immensely difficult comparison.

John Watson represented, and I now have the honour of representing, a continent of a constituency. In the east, there is the vale of Mowbray and the rich farmlands of the vale of York, along which so much of British history has marched. In the foothills of the dales there is the great squat bulk of Ripon cathedral and close by is Fountains abbey, which is surely one of the loveliest abbey ruins in Europe, and where there is a special quality of peace and reflection. Going into the centre of the constituency is the great River Wharfe, with its sculpted escarpments and its contours ribbed in stone. The grey of the wind against a tumbled sky shows up with violence against the crystal colours of summer and the gentleness of the changing landscape.

Then the market town of Skipton—confident, self-assured, used to being battered by the ages—giving way to the great spine of the Pennines and the Yorkshire Dales national park. Everywhere one goes, there are the villages: built of stone; built as though they grew out of the landscape; huddled against the elements, but sheltering that especially warm welcome which is so much the hallmark of my part of the world. The Yorkshire constituents, with the reticence and modesty which is their characteristic, believe that they live in one of the most beautiful parts of the country, and I think that they are right.

My constituency is a paradise, but a paradise with problems, including housing. In the dales, it is rare to find a village where more than half the houses are permanently inhabited, with the rest being given over to summer lets or holiday homes. There are problems of planning, because the more farmers are given injunctions to diversify their activities, the more they run headlong into planning restrictions which prevent them from observing those injunctions. Agriculture is especially important in my constituency. There are short growing seasons, long winters and a great deal of bought-in feed. Livestock production is especially difficult. The sheep is the great mainstay of the economy, as it has been from the middle ages. If the sheep disappeared from those hills, the land would become depopulated.

I have chosen a European debate to make my maiden speech not because of any demonstration of Euro-fanaticism, which I understand is frowned upon in the Chamber, but simply because my constituents are vitally affected by the decisions that are taken in Europe.

It is important to review the United Kingdom's three strategic interests in the European Community. The first is the need to develop the political unity which will enable us to stand on our own feet in defence—not because we are preparing against the day when the Americans leave, but because only if we show that we can stand on our own feet will the Americans not leave. Nothing could give a better pretext to those in the United States who wish to take the troops home than the demonstration that Europe is unwilling to assume its share of the burdens. Security and defence are inextricably linked with political unity, which is part and parcel of the European Community.

Britain's second interest is in the creation of the internal market; but I urge the Government to be cautious. It is all very well to have the great internal market. If we do not have a competitive exchange rate to go with it, and if our industry cannot compete in terms of its labour costs, productivity and control of inflation, we will become the

[Mr. David Curry]

victim, not the beneficiary, of the internal market. We must maintain our economy so that the internal market will work.

The debate on full membership of the European monetary system must be seen in that context. One could argue — it is a plausible thesis — that the United Kingdom economy is so vulnerable to structural inflation that we must always have available the possibility of engineering a creeping depreciation of the currency so that we can compete. If we believe in that thesis, it would be wrong to lock ourselves into a mechanism. But one could equally argue that, if the thesis was correct, we need a counter-inflationary strategy. A formal attachment to an exchange rate discipline might perform that function, but those who argue that must demonstrate the link between membership of the exchange rate mechanism and its effective operation on the disciplines being observed in the negotiating forum of the corporate sector.

Once that is established, the way to membership becomes more plausible. The case for our membership has not yet been made out, although during the past few months the relationship between the deutschmark and the pound has been as close as—on occasions closer than—it would have been had we observed the formal mechanisms of the exchange rate discipline. Our hope now is that the Louvre accord will work to help the world out of its financial crisis, although we should not place too many hopes on that new instrument. In the context of a sustained recovery in world financial markets, an agreement on future financing — which would make a contribution to that recovery — the creation of a free capital movement in the Community and signalling the continued priority of our counter-inflation strategy, our full membership must be kept under urgent review.

Another aspect of the internal market is what has become known as the north-south divide in the European Community. We must be realistic enough to recognise that we will not achieve the internal market unless the new members of the EC—those which have fewer riches and which are peripheral to the Community — can see benefits for themselves. The budget is an instrument for a managed resource transfer, which is politically at the heart of the equation of the enlarged Community. But that should not be a pretext for not exercising rigour in supervising the budget. In 1987, 1 billion ecu of expenditure in the non-agricultural sector cannot be spent because the programmes — mainly social — have collapsed. Rigorous supervision is necessary across the spectrum of the European budget.

The third important strategic requirement for the Community is that the internal market should be created in the context of an open world trading economy, not a closed trading economy.

What is the substance of the Copenhagen discussion on future financing, remembering that the Community budget is roughly the size of the amount of money by which President Reagan is reluctant to reduce American public expenditure in the first year? The case for an increase in own resources is inescapable. The fourth resource is satisfactory for the United Kingdom in so far as it relates payments to wealth, which is something for which we have consistently asked in the Community. Even more importantly, if that resource was linked to gross national product, there would be no further cause to increase the Community's resources, short of a major transfer of new competence from national Governments to the Community. I do not envisage such a major transfer —at least not in the forseeable future.

We have set the budget on a stable path, but there are conditions. The first is that we should fix intermediate ceilings of expenditure. If we do not do that, we shall not sustain the pressure for reform. The evidence is that only by applying budgetary pressure will we obtain those reforms, and we should be fools to sacrifice that weapon. We also need a phased clean-out of expenditure commitments in the budget, of which the write-down of agricultural stocks is the most important. We need advanced planning of expenditure to achieve that.

The second condition is that there should be no special reserves. I can think of nothing more dangerous than to inscribe budgetary discipline simultaneously with the bolthole which enables us to evade it. We have seen in the past how dangerous that can be.

The third condition is satisfaction on the United Kingdom abatement, or rebate. The proposed 50 per cent. rebate on agriculture is not a satisfactory solution. The ideal solution would be the GNP formula, plus the Fontainebleau agreement, and I hope that our representatives will aim for that. But we must be realistic enough to realise that the problem with the rebate mechanism is the way in which it is accounted for in the budget. The 2·5 billion ecu rebate in 1988, which is what the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement predicts, is obtained at a charge to the budget, in accountancy terms, of 3·6 billion ecu. The expenditure equivalent formula means that there is 1 billion ecu of dead money in the budget, because of the mechanism of the rebate, not because of the United Kingdom's entitlement to it. The answer is to move towards a uniform and average means of defining VAT, given that that element is likely to remain in the final equation. The second major item at Copenhagen will be Copenhagen. The reforms have been significant already. I invite those right hon. and hon. Members who do not believe that to my constituency, where I will show them the human face of the reforms that have taken place.

There is remorseless pressure for the reform of agriculture. The dollar is one of the major external determinants, and 5 per cent. devaluation of the dollar against the ecu adds 400 million ecu in a full year to the European budget. To a large extent, however, that is not under our control. The world markets are less than buoyant; they are shrinking, and the only world market that appears consistently open is the Soviet Union. That is due to Soviet incompetence in agriculture.

We have an enormous vested interest in continuing Soviet inefficiency. The day that the Soviets get their act right in agriculture — a low level of technology is needed; it is a question of storing and moving their products — there will be a problem for all the world's agricultural producers.

Then there are the GATT talks. Agriculture is now inescapably locked into those talks. The United States may not have very much faith in them, but they are at least useful for the negotiators in fighting off protectionist measures in Congress.

Those elements mean that there is no point in asking whether agriculture will be reformed. It will be reformed by the Community, or by others on behalf of the Community. But, if the status quo cannot continue, external circumstances now determine our fate to far too large an extent. We cannot guarantee both farm incomes and farm employment. We may not be able to guarantee either, in the present circumstances.

What we need in the reforms now being discussed are the automatic mechanisms that arrest budgetary overruns. The House must face facts. If we demand discipline in agricultural spending, and that that discipline should be applied immediately, we must give the Commission the competence to apply it. We cannot claim that there is a problem of law and order, and then refuse to supply the gendarmes to enforce that law and order. It is essential that we recognise that, because it touches upon the competence of national and Community authorities.

There will be some who urge my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to stand firm, because they will rejoice at the disarray that they hope to see as a consequence. But there will be others who have a true belief in the rightness of British membership of the Community, and who will urge her to stand firm for precisely the opposite reason. We believe that those reforms are essential if we are to see a Community under firm control and firm management, which takes political options and supplies the resources to match those options—in other words, a Community in which vision is allied to realism, and imagination is inspired and nourished above all by common sense.

6.42 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): It is a great pleasure to congratulate the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on his maiden speech. The hon. Gentleman described his constituency as a continent. He must come to my constituency some time. I do not claim that it is a continent, but it is certainly larger than Cyprus.

The hon. Gentleman gave us a lyrical, indeed poetic, description of his constituency, which we all appreciated. I know his work and his contribution in the European Parliament. I cannot say that I always agree with him, but he has always fought his corner with intellectual rigour and force, and I am sure that that is exactly what he will do here. Indeed, we have already heard him do so.

The Minister produced some rather pallid excuses for the fact that there has been only one debate on progress within the European Community, rather than two, as there should have been. She said that there had been problems—for example, the election, and the pressure of business in the House. I must say that the idea of "pressure of business in the House", an excuse that the Minister proffered in a voice totally drained of conviction, was the least persuasive argument. After all, the business of the House, as we saw from the lengthy debate on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, is a reflection of the Government's priorities. They determine such matters. In that respect at any rate, I found the Minister's excuses like flat Perrier.

Likewise, not for the first time where Ministers are concerned, I found the right hon. Lady's approach both uninspired and insular. I wish that I could say otherwise, because I think that within the bonds of the brief in which she is bound is a fairly decent person struggling to get out. The Minister has now left the Chamber, so that is the end of that. However, it would be a change if, for once, a Treasury Minister introduced such a debate with a forward looking, constructive speech — not dodging problems, certainly, but at least setting the ideas within positive, co-operative objectives.

The Minister bridled when I suggested that she was implying that any progress that the Community was making was exclusively due to the charm, persuasiveness and foresight of the Conservative Government and their representatives. However, that has repeatedly been the word that we have heard from the Prime Minister, and the Minister has given us an echo of it this afternoon. The lack of emphasis on Community co-operation, the particular stress on rights of individual state action and the Victorian and very shallow references to a recovery of national pride were all part of the pattern of a short, self-righteous speech. We are rather bad at being self-righteous.

If I may say so in the presence of a new Member such as the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon, the Minister's reference to the democratic nature of the elections to the European Parliament made me spit. I am glad that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is seated in front of me, at least makes his demonstration silently.

Mr. Cryer: I can provide an oral demonstration, if the hon. Gentleman wishes.

Sir Russell Johnston: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I do not.

The Minister knows that the non-proportional system maintained uniquely among European Community countries by the British Government gives Conservatives a wholly false, cheating advantage in the European Parliament, and treats non-Conservative voters unjustly and nastily.

Let me return to the basic issue, on which so far everyone has naturally and rightly agreed: the single market and the budget. It is the Government's contention that, until a system of budgetary discipline is in place, no Community resources can be increased. I do not accept that that is a sensible position. I think that the two questions of discipline and resource must be considered together. Budgetary discipline must be imposed and, of course, improved. However, to suggest that in trying to perform that difficult exercise we should ignore the problems referred to by the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), and all the other problems included in the work of the regional and social fund, is silly.

In June, all member states apart from the United Kingdom — as often happens — agreed a statement in Brussels, which said:

> "It is essential that a lasting response be sought to the question of the Community's financial equilibrium, on the one hand, by providing it with appropriate resources, and on the other by subjecting the use of these resources to effective and binding budgetary discipline."

That, I think, is the essence of the matter. I have repeatedly said as much in this Chamber, where we have again and again had to listen to resounding denunciations of the common agricultural policy which suggested, without any accompanying detail, that somehow or other the whole problem of surpluses in store can be swished away almost overnight. That is simply not possible.

It is true also that we are making progress. Paragraph 3.1 of Cm. 205 states:

> "The package is estimated to constitute a reduction in CAP prices (expressed in real terms) of about 2·5 per cent. across the Community taking into account both changes in institutional prices and other adjustments in support arrangements."

The support price of cereals has fallen by 10 per cent. in real terms and the butter mountain—the hon. Member

[Sir Russell Johnston]

for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said that it is the largest such store in the world—is being reduced at long last. It is not realistic, however, to believe that everything can be done overnight.

The British Government are not always in the best position to be hypercritical. They pressed strongly for and obtained a devaluation of the green pound of up to 7 per cent. for some products, and I do not deny that there was an argument for doing so. However, support prices in the United Kingdom have increased by between 5 and 6 per cent., with consequent increases in Community agriculture expenditure. The real argument, which we do not always address, is between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, not between the United Kingdom Government and supposedly spendthrift Europeans.

The Minister referred in passing to *The Independent*, and I was fascinated to read on 14 November a small article which I am sure depressed some of those who like to rush across the Channel. The article stated:

> "Cross-Channel shoppers' food allowances will be drastically curtailed from tomorrow. The restrictions are being introduced in the guise of a simplification of existing personal import concessions. In effect, today is our last chance to bring back up to 1 kilo of delicious hams, saucissions secs, salamis, and charcuterie, or even up to 1 kilo of fresh beef, lamb, poultry".

What is the reason for this? The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food explained that meat or meat products can be introduced to this country only if they are cooked or are in cans or other hermetically sealed containers.

As we are unlikely to be enlightened about the European monetary system, perhaps the Minister will enlighten us about matters that are not so immediately pressing but interesting for those who cross the Channel from time to time. Why are we suddenly concerned about a health hazard? If the danger is so grave, why are citizens of France, Germany and Italy not dying in the streets? If distance is a problem, let it be understood that the distance from Watford to Dundee is greater than that from Watford to Calais. Is it being suggested that there are grave health hazards in sending English hams to Scotland? Or is it that bureaucracy is having its effect? I suspect that my final rhetorical question provides the answer.

I have found the Government's approach to the Community to be depressing and offensive over a long period. They seem to see the Community as a free trade area rather than a community of peoples working together towards a supranational cohesion. It has been the Liberal vision for a long time that the Community is about bringing the people of Europe closer together, enabling Europe to keep up with the other major economic power blocs and protecting the European environment in a way that no national Government would find possible. I do not think that the British Government contribute enough to the furtherance of these objectives.

I shall give some examples. The framework programme is an eminently sensible and cost-effective way of assisting scientific research. That is the way in which I would describe it. It establishes information links between European establishments that are engaged in similar areas of research. However, Britain refused at first to agree to the establishment of the project, thus delaying for a number of weeks the start of a programme that included work on epidemiology, including AIDS, despite it being the Government's policy to ensure that all research on AIDS is adequately funded. The Government's initial refusal had an effect also on work on advanced communications technology.

Another example is radioactive contamination. Again I find the Government's attitude difficult to understand. At the time of the Chernobyl disaster, the European Community was in almost disarray. Perhaps it can be excused in that the Chernobyl disaster was so sudden, apocalyptic and unexpected, but a system of agreeing common standards of permissible radiation levels is needed. The temporary post-Chernobyl agreement expired in October. That agreement has been extended for a short time, but the British Government are pushing for permitted radiation levels that are over eight times higher —that is, more radioactive—than those that led to the existing restrictions on lamb sales in north Wales and Scotland. I do not understand why the Government are taking this position, and I should like an explanation this evening.

The hon. Member for Hamilton referred generally to unemployment, which is referred to in the official Opposition's amendment. The contribution that the Community makes to tackling youth unemployment especially is not insubstantial. For example, the Manpower Services Commission's schemes receive considerable European Community support, although the Government keep very quiet about that. Unfortunately, the Council has failed yet again to agree a proposed action programme for vocational training to combat youth unemployment when it discussed the issue earlier this year. What are the Government doing to press the furtherance of such agreements?

Political co-operation was mentioned during Question Time this afternoon. The Foreign Secretary is rather good at giving the impression that everything in the garden is lovely and that he is sitting in a deckchair admiring it. It was stated clearly this afternoon that we are in favour of co-ordinating co-operation on foreign policy within the European Community. That being so, why do we walk out of UNESCO when no other member of the Community chooses to do so? What are we doing about walking back in again now that Mr. M'Bow has departed?

There is non-participation in space research. I am sure that the Minister has observed the motion that stands in my name and those of others of my colleagues, which states that we

> "regret the refusal of Her Majesty's Government to support any of the three new projects of the European Space Agency, the Ariane 5 Rocket, the Hermes shuttle or the Columbus Space Station, noting that the United Kingdom is the only European Space Agency member country to be playing no part in any of these; and explicitly reject the Government view that Britain should remain a passenger as America and Japan forge ahead in space technology."

When the hon. Member for Hamilton quoted an as yet unpublished report, I noted what I considered to be a most appropriate phrase. I, like the hon. Gentleman, do not want the United Kingdom to have a "walk-on part" in the world. The hon. Gentleman is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench and looking unaccustomedly demure. He is becoming better and better at being rumbustious. His delivery of his alliterative rhetoric — "technicolour tantrums" was quite good—enlivens these debates, and sometimes they certainly need it. The hon. Member for Hamilton did not inspire me, but he certainly did not bore me, which is something. His speech, however, seemed to have only a loose relationship with the amendment that he was supposed to be moving, but that is not so surprising.

Mr. Robertson: Hold on.

Sir Russell Johnston: Hold on to what?

Mr. Robertson: Hold on until the wind-up.

Sir Russell Johnston: More is yet to come.

I must tell the hon. Member for Hamilton that I shall be inviting my hon. Friends to support his amendment. However, that is not because I regard it with much warmth, although I applaud the references to the sabotage of the space and research programmes, the need to promote mutual growth, trade and jobs, the urgent need for measures to cut food surpluses, the need to promote industrial joint ventures including aerospace, and so on. Those are all good points with which I agree.

I do not think that using wild language—I am sad to say that the hon. Member for Hamilton is rather given to wild language these days — such as "shambles" is helpful.

It is peculiar that mention is made of international financial markets, yet there is no reference to the EMS or to the establishment of some financial stability in the European Community. The difficulties of the budget are real and hard to solve.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: How would the hon. Member solve them?

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman asks impossible questions. I have often tried to answer his questions, but have now given up. *[Interruption.]* I have tried to answer the hon. Gentleman several times; perhaps I should write to him.

The speech of the hon. Member for Hamilton, who would like to describe himself as a member of the progressive Left, ignored the problems of rural communities and the particular problems with which they are faced with the shrinkage in CAP expenditure. It was strange that nothing was said about the need to help poorer countries such as Portugal, at the same time as securing proper treatment for our under-privileged areas in the north of England, Wales and the highlands of Scotland from the regional and social funds.

But I must find a way in which to express my deep dissatisfaction with the style, form and approach of the Government.

I began my speech by complaining that we have had one debate too few. Perhaps that remark was wrong, because we tend to have the same kind of debate. However, I should like to put it firmly on the record that Liberals remain completely committed to the European Community and are convinced that only through that Community shall we secure an expanding economic future for our country and an opportunity to express our opinion on world events. With such a Government as we have, that will be slow in coming, but we shall try to make our contribution towards that end.

7.3 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): For many years prior to becoming a Member of Parliament I debated with enthusiasm the European cause all around this country and on the Continent. On occasions that has been with representatives of the Opposition parties and sometimes with friends from the Conservative party.

I have long respected the desire of the House to retain control over events in the European Parliament. Having listened to the debate, I have some qualms about whether the House is fulfilling that role with the commitment that it should. I hope that, over the years that I intend to remain in the House, the standard of debate — as evidenced by the speech of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), which would have defied all translation into whichever language of the Community if it had been made in the European Parliament — will improve as will the attendance. The debate is about what I regard as an essential part of the future policy and status of the United Kingdom.

Prior to becoming a Member of Parliament one aspect that I commended was the alacrity with which the House accepted the passing of the Single European Act. I did not manage to read all of the speeches made at the time, but I am sure that most of them favoured development of the Community, to transform it so that we could look forward to more efficient institutions. That is what is so important about the Community, and it was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) in his excellent maiden speech. It may be patronising for me as a new Member who entered Parliament at the same time as my hon. Friend, but I should like to congratulate him on his speech. He brings to the House a great knowledge of the way that the budget is negotiated in Europe, having been responsible for the Budget Committee and the Agricultural Committee in the European Parliament. One or two Members of the European Parliament have not contributed to the strength and sense of the budget or agriculture debates, but that finger cannot be pointed at Conservative Members of the European Parliament.

A point that I should like to underline from my hon. Friend's speech is the importance of the increased strength of these institutions for increased budgetary control. In a sense, there lies the nub of the question. In the past we have not willed the means to the Community to control budgets, despite wishing that that control was applied. In many cases, we have undermined the institutions that tried to control them.

With regard to the budget, on many occasions the House has discussed whether it should increase own resources, after the Community has already made commitments to increase them. The problem is that to appear within the legal budgetary limits the European Community has often had to do things that I, as a corporate adviser, have advised my clients on innumerable occasions not to do, which is to fudge and fiddle the books.

On many occasions the budget has reclassified items that it should not have reclassified and changed the timing of payments and taken the credit for them, which it should not have done. It has budgetised agricultural stocks, which has given a misleading impression. One can justifiably criticise the European Community for those measures, and I do, but one can also justifiably criticise the Council of Ministers for never anticipating the problems, yet always trying to pretend to their domestic Parliaments — this Parliament is no different in that context — that there is no problem. If we look in *Hansard* at some of the debates of recent years, we see that Ministers have said that budgetary control is within our grasp and that 1 per cent. or 1·4 per cent. of VAT will be sufficient. Most people knew at that time that that would never be the case.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: They will do it again.

Mr. Ian Taylor: If my hon. Friend will allow me I shall demonstrate how it can be avoided.

It is important to point out that the European budget for all 12 member countries, with 321 million people, is about £26 billion. That represents just over half of what our Secretary of State for Social Services administers in any one year. To put it another way, it is 15 per cent. of our national budget. Yet it covers 321 million people throughout the Community. With all the fuss that is made about an attempt to increase own resources, one would have thought that it was dramatic — that it was hundreds of times the size of the British budget or any departmental budget. We have got the matter out of proportion. We have become nit-picking in a way that has stopped us from having a vision of the future. *[Interruption.]* Interventions from a sedentary position are never clear for the record. There was a murmur of dissent from what I said.

I was clearly pointing out that if we persist in nit-picking and trying to demonstrate an attempt to be completely profligate with resources, which, in relative terms, are small, we shall lose the vision of why many of us have spent many years fighting for increased strength of the European Community. We believe that the vision of the future, which the internal market and the prospects for 1992 could bring us if we stick to the Cockfield timetable, is more than well worth fighting for. In many cases, it justifies an increased contribution from members of the Community.

Mr. Cryer: Would the hon. Gentleman take the same attitude to local authorities, for example, if, in the past three years, we had spent £4·3 billion more on local authorities than we had received back in services provided? Would he say that we should wave that amount to one side and examine the vision of the future? Does he agree that the Government look rather more scrupulously at local authorities than at the Common Market?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman chose a bad example. The profligacy of Labour councils makes the organisation of European Community budgets look efficient and parsimonious. [AN HON. MEMBER: "They hit their targets every time."] They have hit their overspending targets, without any question.

Many hon. Members have said that agriculture has been the main problem. Over the years, there has been no doubt that agriculture has been out of control. It is beneficial for the European Community that agricultural production is in surplus. Back in the 1950s, when one started to take an interest in the matter, many hon. Members were worried about the opposite effect; that is, of famine and shortage. We must now tackle the problem of how to deal with surpluses. The Government have taken a proper lead in that respect.

However, there is absolutely no doubt that the only way in which to deal with the problem is to give increasing powers to the Commission and the European Parliament to trigger automatic stabilisers and reinforce a reduction in quota impositions on cereals, which are still at high levels. I refer to what has happened to milk powder and butter. Last week, *The Independent* stated that, on a year-on-year basis, the flow into surplus stores has been reduced to a trickle. The Milk Marketing Board is one of the largest employers in my constituency. In many cases, the problems that it thought it would face in regard to quotas are no longer quite as apparent as it first feared. The systems have at least brought that section of the agricultural surpluses within some control and have at least given us the prospect of trying to marry supply and demand. Those measures must not——

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I have given way once. I shall carry on and make my point.

If we can apply the same sort of discipline to other products — I know that there will be shouts from the agricultural community—we may bring back supply and demand to other products and at last give European Community institutions a chance to apply the automatic stabilisers that will relieve the future problem.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend explain how stabilisers will solve the financial problem if we retain export rebates for items that are not taken into intervention? We must bear in mind that the EEC currently spends £185 millon a week on export rebates, but only £17 million a week on storage. How will it solve the financial problem if we retain export rebates?

Mr. Ian Taylor: The financial problem will be dealt with if the system of rebates gets more attention in the negotiations in Copenhagen. I hope that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is dealing with that aspect. My hon. Friend must realise that unless we bring in automatic stabilisers and attack the problem in terms of various commodities and examine how they can be cut off when they run into surplus, we will never get the agricultural budget under control. It is essential to bring it under control. Therefore, I strongly support the Government's line in the current talks and those which will inevitably take place in Copenhagen.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Taylor: No, I shall not give way. I have just given way. I should like to continue my remarks.

If we can bring in budgetary control, the future of the Community will require us to examine a wider horizon. We must accept that more resources are required. As I said, the proportion of member countries' budgets that is devoted to the Community through own resources is extremely low. Incidentally, far from being expanded at a massive rate, taken in terms of total GNP, the European Community's budget has been relatively static. If we can develop more resources, we can start to tackle problems other than agriculture, as many people would like us to do, such as the social, employment and regional policies. Therefore, we shall be able to fulfil the requirements of the Single European Act and also those of 1992 targets.

The matter is important. It is not inherently wasteful for resources to be subscribed to and then distributed by the European Community. In assessing which resources should be submitted, there will inevitably and desirably be some transfer of wealth within the European Community. That will strengthen the Community. That is a political objective. The 321 million people within the Community will be better served if the whole Community is strengthened and regional disparities are gradually reduced.

In an age when the super powers are taking decisions over our heads and when we have to sit and wait for President Reagan eventually to make up his mind about what attack he will make upon the United States deficit, it is important that Europe puts its own house in order, and is seen to do so, and makes a strong European Community contribution to world political and economic debates.

I have mentioned the need to control the past, but if we are to look with some vision to the future we must consider the basis on which such extra resources should be raised once control of the existing budget system is introduced. The Delors proposal shows one of the best moves forward that the Community can consider. There may be discussion about whether it moves too quickly, and there may be consideration about whether the total estimate of 1·4 per cent. of GNP is too ambitious a target, but for the first time it relates to greater fairness by not retaining some variety and pot-pourri of structures related to notional VAT rates. I commend the fairness of the proposals to the House. When the Prime Minister goes to Copenhagen, if she can achieve——

Mr. Win Griffiths: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we should perhaps extend the principle of the community charge to the Community to produce the money to fund the European Community?

Mr. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman repeat his point?

Mr. Griffiths: I was wondering whether the wonderful British poll tax device to help finance local government might not be taken by the hon. Gentleman as a means of financing the Community.

Mr. Taylor: I could not believe my ears. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has a sense of humour, but I am not sure how relevant it is in this context.

Mr. Curry: It would not come through in translation.

Mr. Taylor: No, my hon. Friend is right.

If we note the package contained in the Delors proposals, the Government should press to find out how the proposals can be introduced in stages. The Delors package relates to an advance budget, three years ahead. That is exactly the point that I raised earlier. In the past, we have reacted to something that has already happened. I believe — and I make this point seriously — that we should have more resources and therefore that we should anticipate what the resources are likely to be in the future. We should take a three-year view. We should look forward, as opposed to being reactive. We are already under great pressure. We have to contend with what is called the cost of the past which might also be described as a historic budget deficit. Let us see how we can plan for the future and what is likely to occur. The 1984 settlement has been undermined to an extent by the fact that it did not allow for currency movements such as have affected the ecu-dollar rate in recent years, thus causing considerable problems.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon referred to the European monetary system. In attempting to get budgetary discipline imposed on our colleagues in the Community—some of whom have already accepted the argument and some of whom have not—we should show our own European credentials openly and strongly rather than talking about it in guarded terms. We are not full members of the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system. In recent years we have made slightly more positive noises about it, but said that we would wait until the time was ripe. When the time appeared to be ripe, the ground rules were changed for some reason. If we are to go to the Copenhagen summit hoping to make a major impact and take a major step forward, we should show our true European credentials. In my previous profession, I talked to many business men and I believe that the strength and discipline that full membership of the European monetary system would give would be more than welcome in Britain.

One can always ask about the sterling-deutschmark rate, but recently we have been behaving as though we were EMS members. Our monetary policy is increasingly tied to circumstances in Germany. Other members of the Community are increasingly making concessions that we have demanded on freeing capital movements and yet we ourselves have yet to make the final commitment. I know that there will be arguments against it, but there are overwhelming political reasons and good sound reasons of economic discipline why we should declare our membership. We need an objective peg by which to maintain our anti-inflationary policies and to provide a greater sense of exchange rate stability. If the Government made that gesture and committed themselves, they would be much more likely to achieve the essential controls of the existing budget system and to provide a strong platform for solid growth of the European Community, for which I very much hope.

7.22 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I agree with a good deal of what the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) said at the beginning of his remarks and congratulate him on his approach. However, I could not agree with the rest of his speech and when I come to my remarks about the Cockfield package I hope to show why.

First, let me comment on the hon. Gentleman's dismissal of just £26 billion — not £26 million, but £26,000 million. That sum may be equivalent to our own social security budget. It may be just 12 to 13 per cent. of our VAT take, although that is quite a lot for a Chancellor to deal with. Our current contribution to the EEC, including customs duties of more than £1,000 million, now amounts to £4,000 million. Statistically the hon. Gentleman may be right, but the matter looks rather different when one considers it in terms of what this country would do with that money were this House in control of it.

This afternoon we are exercising the power of scrutiny, but I am not sure that we are doing very much more than that. The power of scrutiny can be defined as the power to be aware both of the factors and of their context, and as having the power to influence through that knowledge. If one has real power, one has the power to change and, in this context, the power to approve or disapprove. I am afraid that the House no longer has that power. I do not know how long ago the Government last disapproved a Commission document or when the Opposition last succeeded in doing so. It would be instructive for hon. Members to look in the history books to find out when it was. Only this week I received a letter from a prominent Member of the European Parliament referring to the activities of this House in relation to EEC matters as but a "rubber stamp". Whether we are more than that depends a great deal on the activities and integrity of Conservative Members.

On 21 October I asked the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, who is not here now, about the Copenhagen summit and the powers of the Council of

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Ministers, or the European Council as we now have to call it. I asked whether the decisions would commit this country even if further regulations were promulgated. The right hon. Lady said:

> "The Copenhagen meeting of leaders of European Community countries will be no different from any other European Council meeting. We shall proceed exactly as we have previously, under the Single European Act, which now binds us all together."—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1987; Vol. 120, c. 708.]

I do not know whether the right hon. Lady was speaking Eurospeak, or newspeak, or some other kind of speak, but the remarks seem inaccurate. The Single European Act came into operation only on 1 July. The Copenhagen meeting will be the first meeting of Heads of Government under that Act.

I agree with the hon. Member for Esher that the fact that we are operating under that Act makes this debate, the process of decision-making, the nature of the package and its linkage with the European institutions to which the hon. Gentleman referred a very different matter. That is why I am surprised that the Single European Act and its significance are not dealt with in the two White Papers that we are considering. Only eight lines of these important White Papers refer to the Single European Act, and most of those eight relate to dates. In that respect the Government are off beam in their report about developments in the Community.

In our commitment to the Single European Act there is a commitment to European union. There is the wish for a single European market by 1992, which is frequently referred to by Conservative Members. There is the system of majority voting in the Council for a wide range of harmonisation. There is the power of the European Parliament, now officially named that, to amend legislation. Indeed, with the approval of the Commission, it is almost certain that the European Parliament will amend legislation in a way that we in this House cannot. There is the prospect of increased expenditure—up to 45 per cent. more in real terms — by 1992. There is a commitment to the doubling of the structural funds, much of which must go to the southern members of the EEC, and there is now the attempt at budgetary discipline. I was grateful to the Minister when she said that we would have another debate on the outcome of the Agriculture Ministers' meeting and possibly of the Finance Ministers' and Foreign Ministers' meetings before the meeting in Copenhagen.

One issue that I did not list under the effects of the Single European Act and building towards its success, as outlined in Cm. 101, is the possible United Kingdom rebate. I say "possible" because, under the terms of the proposal from the Commission, we will get it in 1988. In answer to a question, the right hon. Lady said that we would get something because there is a unanimous requirement that it goes on after Fontainebleau. The Treasury Minister may be in a better position to answer.

From what basis does that so-called unanimity spring? I had understood that after Fontainebleau the rebate mechanism would disappear after the end of the 1·4 per cent. ceiling. If there is agreement in Copenhagen, that ceiling will end. I can only conclude that the unanimity to which the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office referred was our power of requiring unanimity over an increase in the budget as such, and that it is the linkage of that that provides us with the power to try to renegotiate a United Kingdom rebate. It is to the nature of that rebate that I wish to address my remarks.

In the 17th report of the Scrutiny Committee, Session 1986-87, referring to new own resources, we say:

> "These resources would be subject to a ceiling set at 1·4 per cent. of the Community's GNP until at least 1992. The Commission also proposes replacement of the existing Fontainebleau abatement system by a 50 per cent. refund of the burden to the United Kingdom arising from the CAP."

That is the mechanism on the table. The reference to 50 per cent. of the burden is taken from the Commission's proposals. I interpret that as a refund of half the difference between our CAP share and our CAP income.

That may look all right in figures, but there is a quotation in another report which shows that the situation is not as rosy as Conservative Members may think. When the Minister quoted figures, I believe that she was quoting the calculation on the GNP formula, but in relation to our own rebate the position is different. In its 19th report in the 1986-87 Session the Scrutiny Committee said:

> "The EM"—

that is the explanatory memorandum—

> "also notes a Commission estimate that under the proposed new corrective system the United Kingdom would have received a compensatory payment in respect of 1987 of 1,016 million ecu (£701 million). This compares to a forecast in the Treasury's Public Expenditure White Paper of an abatement of £1,623 million in respect of 1987 over the existing Fontainebleau abatement system. The abatement would therefore have been £922 million less if the new mechanism had been in operation."

This is the abatement. We are not talking about the GNP own resources formula. The abatement plays a large part in our net payments. In 1986, out of a payment of £4,493 million, we received only £2,219 million, with a net payment of £2,274 million. That was reduced by a rebate of £1,701 million, giving a final figure for the net contribution of £573 million. Therefore, the gearing of that final figure to the United Kingdom rebate was 3:1. The nature of our rebate mechanism and the likelihood of us getting a large sum are crucial.

I remind Conservative Members that if the agricultural problem is dealt with effectively, the disequilibrium between our contribution to the CAP and our receipts will get smaller. So far as I can see, and the Treasury Minister will agree or disagree when he replies, the rebate that we receive will also get smaller. Considered in that light, the prospects of the rebate system as proposed by the Commission are not at all bright.

I look upon that as an objective calculation that might have been made by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service if it had had an opportunity to have a go at it. I am glad to see here the Chairman of that Committee in the last Parliament — the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). I think that before the election the Select Committee did some quick work on it.

What about the increase in contributions? We will have that only if the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer get their discipline. They may or may not get it, but let us assume that they do. The Minister of State told us this afternoon that if they get the discipline we will not agree to 1·4 per cent. GNP related and that we will not go up to a 44 per cent. increase. Perhaps they will reduce that figure to 1·2 or 1 per cent. and we will hear from the media that the Prime Minister has had a great victory because she has reduced the proposed increase. But out of that increase there is to be a doubling of the structural fund. Again the Minister has said that we do not want a doubling of the structural fund and that that is too much. The Government will have to give something. Even if discipline is achieved there will have to be some increase, if only to pay the deficit in the 1987 budget.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): The hon. Gentleman is knowledgeable on these matters. Can he tell me why the figure of 1·4 per cent. of GNP has been selected, since that seems relevant to the argument that he is making?

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for asking that question. It must be addressed to the Minister, or perhaps to the Commission. The figure of 1·4 per cent. rings various bells. At the moment it is 1·4 per cent. of the harmonised VAT. Someone may have thought, "Let us put up the same figure because it will sound the same even if the income is half as much again." It is a possibility—I put it no higher than that—as a statistical sleight of hand so that someone reading the *Financial Times* will see 1·4 per cent. and will not realise that it is related to GNP rather than to VAT. I hesitate to make an accusation against the gentlemen of the Commission, but it might have been better had they chosen another figure. If they wanted a bigger sum, 1·5 per cent. might have given them the ceiling that they wanted. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for pointing out the similarity.

I turn to the Cockfield package and the single European market. Although it is not part of the Copenhagen package, that is the context in which the single European market is placed. Here I take up with alacrity the view and vision of the hon. Member for Esher. What he and other Conservative Members, particularly the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and indeed the Minister, seemed to be saying, was, "Let us get this great market by 1992 and not only will there be a cornucopia of prosperity throughout Europe, but somehow international brotherly love and all that goes with the positive parts of the EEC will automatically flow with it". They may not have put it in exactly those words, but that at least is the implication.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I certainly did not put it in those words. I am not as poetic or as inaccurate as the hon. Gentleman. Does he agree that it is estimated that about 8 per cent. of the cost of all goods traded within the Community is represented currently by internal customs barriers?

Mr. Spearing: That may well be, but I shall tell the hon. Gentleman why I think he is being obsessively optimistic about the result of the single European market. Perhaps he will consult some of his business friends, because, although customs are a nuisance and sometimes difficult, there are many other factors in selling abroad that are important to them.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the social benefit that would flow from the great single market. On the Order Paper there is a little paragraph which says:

> "European Community Document No. 6476/87, Second Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the Commission's White Paper on the completion of the Internal Market is relevant,"

to our debate, and I have it here. It is a report on the Cockfield package, the harmonising directives, that will come up shortly. If the hon. Gentleman refers to annex 3, which is about documents yet to be presented, he will see the delights of VAT on passenger transport. Both newspaper articles and hon. Members have drawn attention to the prospects of VAT on articles of clothing, food and newspapers. Those may be delights for Conservative Members, but they are not delights for us. We know that such impositions are socially regressive and cannot be a tool of social policy, as even progressive Tory Members have understood in the past 50 years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The hon. Gentleman should not put words into my mouth. I did not refer specifically to tax approximation, but I am sure that ingenuity will enable us to retain the Prime Minister's pledges and still get close to the Cockfield measures. That ingenuity will be apparent in a few weeks' time.

Mr. Spearing: I recommend that the hon. Gentleman consults *Hansard*, as I would take the matter further. The measures in the Cockfield package are socially regressive and the House, if left to itself, would never have conceived them.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if we are to achieve this great internal market and get rid of internal customs it is vital to harmonise VAT in Europe? If we do not do that, customs duties will continue to upset the business men of whom my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) spoke.

Mr. Spearing: I fear that the hon. Gentleman is right. This brings me to the Prime Minister's policy during the election campaign. She was put in a corner on the question of VAT by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and she got out of it very neatly. She said, "Oh, I cannot imagine the House of Commons ever passing legislation to put VAT on children's shoes." The right hon. Lady is right, but I have news for her and for the House. The Barber Budget of 1971 did that very thing. Opposition Members tabled an amendment to exempt that item, but the Prime Minister voted it down. The matter might come before the European Court. Perhaps the House would not vote for such a proposal, but the European Court may impose it on us.

We are awaiting, on 2 December, a preliminary view of the European Court's decision on whether we have to put VAT on new buildings, water and industrial fuels. To judge from Lord Cockfield's package, domestic fuels will not be far behind.

I shall end my speech as I started, by emphasising the importance of scrutiny and power. Following the debate and scrutiny of the documents, we may be a little more aware of what is happening but I doubt whether we have much influence. I do not think that the House can change the document. We are unable to disapprove it because power has flowed away. I hope that no more power will flow from this House.

7.44 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): These debates tend to be rather depressing, not just because the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) insists on speaking, but for other reasons as well. However, one thing has made this debate different and that has been the delightful maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry).

[Mr. Teddy Taylor]

I am glad to reveal that he is my representative at the European assembly, as he represents Southend. Today he spoke with great determination and honesty and those are qualities he has shown in his activities as a representative at the European assembly. I am sure that we all look forward to hearing his future contributions, especially bearing in mind his long experience of European matters. That speech cheered us up. However, the debate has been depressing because, sadly, the official speech from the Government showed that, once again, we are approaching the issue of Europe in terms of slogans and daydreams.

We heard from my right hon. Friend the Minister of State about the great opportunities that Europe provides for jobs. Why on earth do the Government not consider what is really happening? It is a sad fact that the Common Market is awash with unemployment. I challenge the Minister who is to reply to name any part of the world that has a higher rate of unemployment than the Common Market, with the exception of Tibet and Ethiopia where special circumstances exist. The Common Market's growth rate is low, the unemployment is appalling and the situation is extremely serious.

We have heard about the wonderful opportunities for trade and how Britain will benefit immensely. Again, I appeal to the Minister to consider what is happening. Before we joined the Common Market we always had a surplus in our manufacturing trade with that market, but since then we have had a growing deficit and it is now more than £10,000 million. It is not a small problem and indeed, in the long term, it could wreck Britain's recovery once our oil exports go down and our invisible exports no longer grow.

We have heard again about the wonderful opportunities of the internal market as though, somehow, there are now in existence massive tariff trade barriers that will be swept away if that internal market is achieved. The Minister must be aware that, in 1973, we were given free trade. The fact that free trade has not developed has been partly because of illegal, non-tariff barriers—a problem which, unfortunately, the Common Market has been unable to resolve—and partly because we have retained certain national characteristics.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) is concerned about business men who find that their costs are increased because they must stop at frontiers where their goods are examined in various ways. The only way in which it is possible to achieve the internal market which Lord Cockfield has discussed and which would enable goods to move more freely between Britain and Germany in the same way as they move between London and Glasgow would be to have complete uniformity of VAT, complete uniformity of excise duties and no statistics taken on trade between countries.

Mr. Ian Taylor: It is now established that we will probably move towards tax approximation as opposed to harmonisation and exactitude. That gives room for the freedom to make certain national movements within the barriers.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I hope that my hon. Friend does not believe that he is the only one who has read the proposals. We know exactly what is meant by approximation. It means two rates of VAT. Does it not mean the taxation of food? Does it not mean the taxation of children's clothes? It is abundantly clear that all the member states, with the exception of two, operate in such a way.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend must not try to twist what I have said or what the Commission has said. They are matters for debate and——

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it right that an hon. Member who has already spoken at considerable length should repeatedly interrupt everybody else's speech and possibly keep out other speakers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): It is a matter for whoever has the Floor to decide whether he will allow interventions. However, this gives me the opportunity to remind the House that there are quite a number of hon. Members still wishing to speak from both sides of the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: I am sure that the Government will accept that it is simply not possible to have the kind of free movement of goods between one country and another that has been suggested unless there is harmonisation of taxation and excise duties, and unless trade statistics between countries are not taken. The Cockfield package is not about moving great trade barriers because that was already guaranteed in the treaty of Rome. The Cockfield package is simply concerned with harmonisation and the introduction of measures such as the mutual recognition of firearms certificates that we discussed in the House recently. I suggest that to remove all the restrictions on firearms would be unrealistic on security grounds.

We have been told that the contribution position has improved because of Fontainebleau. In the Autumn Statement the Government's figures show that this year there will be a net contribution of £1,400 million. That is the highest figure I can remember and it is only part of the story. On top of that sum, many payments have been switched, some legally, some illegally, from the EEC to member states.

I wish that we would stop kidding ourselves and face reality. We should start putting forward positive suggestions instead of slogans such as reforming the CAP. The fact is that, once again, the Common Market is bankrupt, as it was in 1984. It is bankrupt because it has wildly overspent its legal budget. That is not a new situation. In 1984 when the Government said that they wanted binding controls on spending they were promised such controls and they were part of the agreement. We were told that the controls and restrictions were binding on the Council. When several of my hon. Friends suggested that such controls would not be binding, Ministers repeated the assurance that they were indeed binding.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher has a great interest in these matters and I believe that he described the Delors package as a sensible proposal. I suggest to him that the problem with the last binding proposal was that there was a clause that said that, while there would be restraint, if at any time Ministers, by a majority, took the view that there were exceptional circumstances they could increase spending by any amount they liked. I draw my hon. Friend's attention specifically to what is contained in the Delors proposals. It is there in black and white. In COM (87) 430 of the Delors package, it says:

> "The budgetary effects of exceptional circumstances shall be cancelled out within a three year period. If any overruns have not been offset by the end of this period the Commission and the Council shall assess the situation and decide how to deal with such overruns."

If the Government and my hon. Friend the Member for Esher believe that the Delors package has given us spending controls, are they willing, in any circumstances, to agree to an exceptional circumstances clause? If they are, we can forget all about budgetary control and budgetary restraints; they simply will not happen.

I do not question the strength of Government statements on overspending. I do not question the strength of what they have said about the scandals of agricultural spending. However, I hope that they appreciate that there are some outside this House who are beginning to wonder whether strong words are enough. Indeed, in 1984, we heard terribly strong language—the most frightful things were said about the CAP and terrible things were said about overspending. We had wonderful speeches from virtually every Minister saying how the scandals of agricultural waste had to stop. However, when the crunch came, we handed over a 40 per cent. increase in the VAT payment in exchange for a control package that proved to be utterly worthless.

If the Government are truly concerned about overspending, why on earth have they sat round in the Council while commitments have been made that will inevitably lead to overspending? I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell me why the Government have accepted the introduction of this wonderful new Common Market principle that will get round legal limits called the "metric year." Many things have gone metric since we joined the EEC. Now, the financial year in the Common Market has gone metric. The Common Market has achieved that by asking for money one month in advance and paying out one month late. Where were the protests when that device was introduced—a device that was devised simply to get round legal spending limits that we were told were sacrosanct?

We know that the only body that really watches Common Market spending is the Court of Auditors which constantly sends out reports—which no one bothers about—saying that money is being wasted. The Minister is aware of a recent occasion when it said that the device to curb spending by switching the responsibility for butter dumping on member states was, in its words, unlawful and against the treaty of Rome. It sent a report to the Council, saying that it was unlawful. What happened at that time? Where was the voice of Britain that is concerned about overspending? The Minister is aware that the Council unanimously agreed to set the report aside and not discuss it.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend. He is talking about some of the devices—legal and illegal—that have been used by the Community to extend its expenditure and sources of finance. I know that my hon. Friend is aware of most things, but is he aware that if there are differing levels of VAT between Community countries, as we develop along the lines that he described, that difference in VAT will be held as a Community resource? We are faced with a 1·4 per cent. GNP assessment, and our existing taxes to the Community, so it has up its sleeve another source of revenue which will be used to develop those policies.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right, as usual. Again we will be told that if we adopt the new plan, our gross contribution will not be as great as before, and the rebates will be cleared. Again there will be an Autumn Statement saying the Government are terribly sorry but they got their sums wrong. It is not a matter of pennies. The latest estimate in January, which was itself an increase, said that this year's figure was £900 million. The revised Autumn Statement gave us £1,400 million. I suggest that an increase of that size goes far beyond a miscalculation by the splendid Treasury officials who usually take their responsibilities very seriously.

We shall probably hear slogans to justify a further movement. Last time it was quotas. Because we have quotas, we are told, agricultural spending is under control. What has happened since quotas? Production remains at 20 per cent. above the demand within the Community. Farmers have been paid substantial sums of money to go out of milk production. What has happened to the land? It has been switched from milk to other areas of production where there are chronic surpluses. That is why the so-called reduction in the butter mountain has been accompanied, as the Minister knows, by an increase in the beef mountain and the need to export beef at rock-bottom prices. The latest example is that we have sold massive amounts of beef to Brazil at 11p per lb which comes back to us as corned beef.

We were told that quotas would reduce spending. Why then, this year, despite the achievements of December 1984, are we spending £185 million per week on dumping? We are asked "What do millions matter?" Hon. Members may remember Bob Geldof who worked his guts out holding concerts all over the world to raise £100 million for the world's poor. That was a wonderful effort, and I applaud it. How would Bob Geldof feel, having raised £100 million, to know that that amount is spent by the Community every four days on dumping cheap food to destroy the world markets?

That policy is crazy. It is also an evil policy, as by dumping cheap food on the world market we destroy the prosperity of the Third world. Because food is dumped at low prices those countries do not get a decent price for their food, and the world price of food has never been so low. In addition, we spend £17 million a week on storage. Is there not some way in which we in the House of Commons can commemorate the fact that last year, for the first time in history, the Common Market managed to employ men and machines to destroy 1 million tonnes of food and fruit? That is quite an achievement, and I hope that Europeans are as ashamed of that as they should be.

Where has the progress been? Milk quotas are selling at a high price. People have now moved out of milk production and are producing other things, so that the quotas, which were a salvation last time round, have proved to be a fraud.

The new slogan is not quotas but stabilisers. Somehow, if we have stabilisers, our problems will disappear. After we take a certain amount of food into intervention, we shall not take any more. I know that the Minister is speaking on behalf of the Government and that she is an honest person. Surely she must know that the major expenditure in the Common Market is not on storage but on dumping. It is on providing massive amounts of money to export food cheaply on to the world market. If we have stabilisers, and food is not taken into intervention, will we stop export rebates for that food going abroad? The

[Mr. Taylor]

answer is no. The massive expenditure will continue. The only way in which we can solve that problem is by reducing production. That is the only thing on which we have no proposals.

We should like to know the view of the Government about other things that are happening. I am glad to say that I got a good result in the general election, as most Conservative Members did. The one point on which we were challenged constantly by the Labour party was the question, "Will you put VAT on various items?" We said, "No, don't worry. If any such proposals come before the Council of Ministers, we shall use our veto."

That was, as Sir Robert Armstrong, our splendid Secretary to the Cabinet would say, being economical with the facts. The real danger to VAT comes not from the Council of Ministers, but from the Commission going to the European Court. Will the Minister tell us, the country and our party what the blazes will happen if, in January, we lose the current case of levying VAT on house building, construction, electricity and gas for industry, water and sewerage for industry, protective clothing and footwear and news services? Will we use the veto? But we have no right to use the veto — it cannot be used against the European Court. I hope that hon. Members who are interested in these matters will look at the real danger of the Commission exploiting that fact, having found that way of forcing us to charge VAT if it wins its case, despite the views of the House of Commons or anyone else.

In the Single European Act a commitment was made by the Government to harmonise VAT and excise duties in so far as it was necessary to complete the internal market. The Government said, "Don't worry about this. We have unanimity." I should like to ask the Minister, with his legal knowledge and that of his Department, to suppose that in 1992 the Commission takes the view that we have not submitted proposals for uniformity that conform to the commitment in that clause. Is it not possible that, not under the sixth directive, but under the Single European Act, the Commission could just as readily go to the court and say that we have not carried out our obligations? I fear that we are well on the way to having our taxes determined not by the House of Commons but by the European Court.

Mr. Marlow: Is it not true that, whatever the European Court decides, the House of Commons will vote it down and it will not apply?

Mr. Taylor: I know that my hon. Friend is an intelligent person. He may have been asking that question rather simplistically to draw attention to a point. He will be aware from his long experience that it has been proved time and again that European decisions, laws and rules take precedence over the decisions of the House of Commons and, indeed, of the Government.

I have asked two specific questions of the Minister. One was about exceptional circumstances, which was important, and I hope that I shall get an answer. The second was about VAT. I hope that the Minister will also answer my final question. Does he agree that it is rubbish for us to say continually, "No more cash" — bearing in mind that the Community is bankrupt — unless we put forward a specific proposal that would reduce its spending? Unless we are prepared to put forward proposals that would lead to the reduction of spending, it is almost wrong — I could go further than that — for us to say to the Common Market that it is wildly overspending, wasting money and throwing it away, and that it must stop.

I appreciate that we cannot force the Common Market to do anything. We can only make proposals, but if in December at Copenhagen we say, "No more cash," and leave it at that, we know that six months later, as happened in December 1984, eventually we shall go along with it because the money has been spent and the commitments have been made. The only way in which we can say justifiably, "No more money," is if, at the same time, we present a proposal and say how it should be done.

There is no way in which the reform of the CAP will be agreed by all member states. There is no proposal that will not hit one country harder than another. We know the strength of agriculture lobbies. We could contain the spending by proposing repatriation of agriculture policies to member states, which would take away the burden of agriculture from the EEC. We could let each member state try to resolve its agriculture problems within its own national frontiers. Some people will say that if one takes away the only common policy that the Common Market has, one is giving a vote of no confidence to the Common Market. Therefore, could we not simply say that our proposal is that every year the Council of Ministers should declare a percentage reduction in agriculture production for every commodity to bring our demand and supply into stability? For example, we might say that wheat production should go down by 20 per cent. and sugar production should go down by 15 per cent. Every member state would have to implement that proposal nationally.

The difficult decisions that have to be made could be made far more easily by member states. We must get rid of surplus production. No present proposal achieves that. If we do not tell the Community how we think its spending should be cut, some member states might wonder whether we mean business when we say, "No more spending."

8.7 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): For the past two years, it has been unusual for right hon. and hon. Members on the Unionist Bench to pay tribute to the Conservative party. I find myself in the rare position of having to applaud it in two respects. First, I pay tribute to the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry). I have known him for some nine years as a colleague in Strasbourg. He spoke with great expertise today. I did not agree with much of what he said, but he spoke with a background of great knowledge and understanding of the workings of the Community and his presence here will be a great addition to European debates in the House. The hon. Gentleman is a distinguished former chairman of the Agriculture Committee of the European Parliament, and was also rapporteur of the EC budget in the European Parliament. He has a great store of knowledge.

I should also like to pay tribute to the Government themselves because in the debate we are, after all, referring to the past year, during which period Her Majesty's Government were president of the European Community. They served the nation well in those six months, in their regular appearances at the three institutions — the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. They were regularly at all the committee meetings of the European Parliament. I should especially like to pay tribute to the Minister of State, who was there almost every week batting for the United Kingdom and showing the rest of Europe that the United Kingdom was keen in its interest in developing Europe.

However, debates on the European Community often seem to be about discipline. The word "discipline" seems to be repeated in every other sentence. I thought that, in the debate following the Fontainebleau agreement, we were assured that the matters of the United Kingdom rebate and the own resources for the European Community were settled and there would not be many problems for the United Kingdom or the European budget in the foreseeable future. Tonight, within three years of that event, we are recognising what some of us said was inevitable—that the European budget would be out of control, and that the United Kingdom's contribution to the European budget would have to be increased.

Why has the European budget gone out of control? One of the reasons is not under our control or that of the European Community—the factor of the declining value of the American dollar. So long as the United States dollar declines, the finances of the European Community will be adversely affected. The second major factor is the continuing expenditure on agriculture. The Community has made some efforts on beef and milk, but we urge the Government to bring as much pressure as possible to bear on the Council of Ministers urgently to make a decision to curtail grain production in the Community.

Will the Paymaster General let us know whether the Government have had any change of position on the proposal for an oils and fats tax? If not, we need to know what the Government's alternative proposals are to curtail the production of oil. Olive oil is looming as the next major threat to the European budget and to agriculture expenditure in the Community. Especially in Spain, the production of olive oil is increasing daily, and we need proposals to bring it under control.

Of course, the Community is now changing its system of own resources. As hon. Members have already said, there will now be a fourth basis to finance the budget: the introduction of a system based on the gross national product of each member nation. It is not possible at this stage for the Government to say whether that will mean an increase in the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European budget. We do not yet know the final details, but I suspect—I want to hear the Minister's opinion on this—that the reason why we are leaving the system under which the 1·4 per cent. VAT was the main own resources contributor and introducing a new factor is that that will bring about an increase in the percentage contribution that the United Kingdom makes to the Community's total budget. It is not the total amount that counts, but the percentage that each nation contributes to the Community's budget. That is why the Community is changing the system now. Once again, we shall find ourselves caught in the trap, contributing an increasing share of the European budget.

I was surprised that the right hon Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) never mentioned the European monetary system. I notice that, in the first six-monthly report, that subject is dismissed in two lines, and in the second report it is dismissed in five. On neither occasion is any reference made to the United Kingdom's membership of the exchange rate mechanism. Not every hon. Member agrees that the United Kingdom should join the European monetary system; not everyone agrees that that is good for the United Kingdom.

It is all very well for Conservative Members to believe confidently that, as there is a Conservative Government now, exchange rates will be reasonably static. However, we shall not always have a Conservative Government who will keep exchange rates static. There might be a period when there was massive public expenditure and a run on the pound. If that happened, and the United Kingdom was a member of the European monetary system and had to hold the value of the pound sterling, there would be only one way of achieving that—by increasing interest rates.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: You can change the value.

Mr. Taylor: Yes, but not every week — only in periods.

So the objective must be to retain the value of the pound sterling. The only way to do that is by increasing interest rates. I understand that people who are involved in industry and the export business want a static value for the pound sterling; but many others who are in employment, business, and commerce, who are not exporting but are employing people, and who have overdrafts at the bank, might be caught if interest rates went up because of our membership of the EMS. That would be bad news for many people in the United Kingdom.

Apart from economic matters, I want to deal briefly with some of the political issues that are not mentioned in the reports. During their presidency of the European community, the Government initiated the normalisation of relations between the Community and Turkey. There has certainly been an improvement in Turkish human rights and democracy. It is hard to imagine a Europe without Turkey, which has been part of European history — although, at times, not with us. Luckily for England, Turkey is even in the European football competition.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: And Miss World.

Mr. Taylor: Indeed. More recently, Turkey has been president of the assembly of the Council of Europe. It has played a major role in NATO for many years, and I welcome the fact that the United Kingdom's presidency initiated the normalisation of relations with Turkey. I hope that they continue to improve and that Turkey will join the rest of Europe in the Community in the foreseeable future.

This is not to say that we should avoid other countries. There has been too much silence on the issue of Norway. Europe would benefit by having Norway in the Community.

We have had an association agreement with Cyprus. Clause 5 of that agreement specifically states that both communities in Cyprus must benefit from their relations with the EEC. The agreement was initiated before the coup in Cyprus, the subsequent arrival of Turkish troops and the consequent division of that island—a tragedy that has existed since 1974. Therefore, much of the terminology of the agreement is no longer relevant to the island.

Only this year, the Government agreed with the rest of the Community to have a customs union between the European Community and Cyprus. Can the Paymaster General explain how the Community can have a customs union with Cyprus when there is not even a customs union in the island? There is no trade between the south and the north—there is a total barrier. So how can the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots benefit in the way in

[Mr. Taylor]

which the original association agreement said that they must? One group should not benefit at the expense of the other.

A subject that has been on the horizon — rather dangerously — for the past six months is Gibraltar. Only last week, about 80 per cent. of the population took part in a major demonstration against an offical from Her Majesty's Government who was visiting Gibraltar. The issue has been raised in the present proposals for airline flights in Europe. Spain has lodged an objection because the Gibraltar airfield is involved. It seems to me that the Government let down the United Kingdom at the time when Spain was negotiating membership of the European Community. The Foreign Office did not have the foresight to see that Gibraltar would be a sensitive problem and did not ensure that Spain's terms of membership would not allow it to raise the constitutional problem of Gibraltar in the EEC.

Let us remember that Gibraltar has been a member of the Community since 1973 — long before Spain, which was then a dictatorship, joined. At the first opportunity, Spain objected to Gibraltar being included in the new proposals for flights in Europe. One proposal that the Government are apparently making to resolve this EC dispute is that the airfields should be used jointly by Spain and the United Kingdom, although not controlled by both countries. There are parallels for that. At the Basle-Mulhouse airport passengers can go from the arrival lounge into France through the door at one end, and by the door at the other end they can go into Switzerland. The system there works happily because the two countries recognise each other and there is no constitutional problem.

Gibraltar is different, because one country is claiming jurisdiction over it against the wishes of the people there. Therefore, it would be wrong to enter into an arrangement similar to the one that operates on the French-Swiss border while there is this constitutional difficulty. Certainly it would be bad for the people of Gibraltar, who would misunderstand such an arrangement and would suspect that it was the first sign of the United Kingdom yielding on the question of their constitutional position. Of course it is not unknown for the Government to change their position on the constitution of other territories friendly to Her Majesty's Government.

I should like briefly to refer to one or two matters about my own Province of Northern Ireland. I underline as strongly as I can the thrust of the speech about shipbuilding by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan). The shipbuilding industry in the United Kingdom, and, indeed, in Europe, is under great threat. It has declined greatly and there is much unemployment in the shipbuilding regions of Britain. We are worried about the fact that the European Community reduced the allowable grant to 28 per cent. We in the shipbuilding areas feel that European shipbuilding is facing unfair competition from the far east — from Korea, Taiwan and Japan.

While investigations are being carried out into the hidden support that is given to far eastern shipyards, it is unfair to cripple European shipyards. We ask the Government to ensure that there is no further reduction in the foreseeable future, until a full inquiry is carried out into the hidden subsidies given to far eastern shipyards. Our Merchant Navy has already been reduced too much and it is important that we maintain our shipbuilding industry so that, when fair play exists, our yards can compete on equal terms.

On the matter of agricultural prices, I ask the Government to look carefully at the problems on the Irish border between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Too often, when agricultural prices——

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have been quite tolerant about a range of issues from Turkey joining the Common Market to customs facilities at Gibraltar. Do we have to get the Northern Ireland border question into this debate, which is supposed to be about the EEC budget?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: A wide range of topics is in order on the series of papers that we are discussing, and I am sure that the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) will resist the temptation to go more than incidentally down the road that he is now on.

Mr. Taylor: I am afraid that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) does not understand what I am speaking about. Monetary compensatory amounts are a vital issue in the European Community and on the Irish border they operate very badly for the United Kingdom. I am not talking about terrorism or anything like that—far from it. I am talking about unfair competition, in that the MCAs are operated in such a way that cattle and other animals move from plants in Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland. As a result, workers in Belfast lose their jobs because of a European Community system. I shall not go into the matter in detail, but I must tell the Government that too often when MCAs are being renegotiated each year they forget about this problem on the Irish border, and overnight many thousands of people are thrown out of jobs. I ask the Government not to ignore this matter, because there is a feeling in Dublin that the Irish Goverment get away with murder every year when this matter is discussed.

During the last six months, the Dublin Government took a decision to restrict the movement of shoppers from the Republic of Ireland to the United Kingdom. That was done without notifying the EC, and in this debate the Minister did not mention it. In their April Budget, the Irish Government ruled that such shoppers had to spend 48 hours in the United Kingdom. The EC Commission has advised the Irish Government that this is contrary to European Community law and that if the Irish Government proceed further they could be brought to the European Court in Luxembourg. However, that would take several years, and in the meantime shops and communities along the border are being severely hit by this budgetary decision.

It is not only hitting shops and business men but is unfair, because the balance of trade in the island of Ireland is in favour of the Republic. Therefore, there was no necessity for this decision and I ask the Government to do all they can to bring pressure to bear on the Irish Government to reverse their decision and not to let it drag on for another two years until it reaches the court in Luxembourg.

Hon. Members have spoken about VAT on things such as food and children's clothes. Given that the internal market will come about in 1992, it is a logical conclusion that at some stage there will be standardisation of VAT rates throughout the Community. While the Government may now say that they will not allow VAT on food and on children's clothes, in the long term they will have no choice in the matter. That is because, as soon as we get uniform rates, they will have to be applied. There is a decision pending on new building, and the Government will eventually have to give in if the court rules against them. The same thing will happen about VAT on food. Even if the Government and this Parliament vote against it, the European Court can overrule us and impose it. That is the reality of what the Common Market is all about. We have to abide by the rules.

The Ulster Unionists believe in co-operation within Europe and believe that it is important to have a market of 320 million people. However, we do not think that, in order to have that market, it is necessary for the House and Parliament to surrender powers drip by drip, day by day, to another institution. That is what is happening and the more powers we give to the European Parliament and the Community the fewer powers we will have in this Parliament, and at the end of the day we will have to abide by the decisions of the European Court. For that reason, I and my hon. Friends will vote against the Government.

8.27 pm

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): I begin by expressing my appreciation to the members of the Select Committee on European Legislation chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Undoubtedly, the vast mass of papers that we are debating was carefully analysed by the Committee in some of its reports. That is a great advantage to the House. The hon. Member was kind enough to speak about the Select Committee on the Treasury that operated in the previous Parliament. It is a matter of great regret that that Committee has not yet been established in this Parliament. The evidence taken by that Committee in the last Parliament was illuminating, particularly at the time of the Fontainebleau agreement, and the evidence that it took about value added tax was important.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Paymaster General, who I am glad to see on the Front Bench, will agree that many of the matters before us cannot be clarified in a debate such as this. That requires prolonged examination of Ministers, because it enables a Committee to get to the bottom of the matter. It can then provide the House with the information that it needs if it is to do its job properly. Therefore, in this debate we are under something of a handicap.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and a number of other hon. Members talked about value added tax. The Treasury Select Committee in the previous Parliament took the view that harmonisation of value added tax was not necessary to secure an effective unified market. That is something of an over-simplification, but in broad terms that is the conclusion that we reached. If we are to go down the route of harmonisation—I think that there is a distinction, which the right hon. Member for Strangford blurred, between those items that may be covered by the court case and the broader issue that is not covered by the present case, where we shall still have a veto —we ought to harmonise on the British basis.

I am not totally unprejudiced in saying that, because I had the somewhat thankless task of steering the original VAT legislation through the House. It was made somewhat easier by the fact that we abolished selective employment tax and purchase tax at the same time. None the less, what we devised was a system with a single positive rate and with a zero rating for the most sensitive items. That is a sensible way of proceeding.

I feel bound to add that, throughout that period, I was advised that that was a sensible way of proceeding by Mr. Cockfield, as he then was, because he was then my senior outside adviser in the Treasury. What a falling off it is; the arguments that he put forward then were, and remain, convincing. Why he is now going back to double rates and all that sort of rubbish, I cannot imagine. It has been a basic principle of Conservative tax philosophy that one should tax people on their income as appropriate, but then allow them to spend it as they see fit without gross distortions by multiple tax rates and all the sorts of things we got rid of when we abolished purchase tax.

I hope that the members of the Commission, on reflection, will come to the conclusion that, if it is necessary to harmonise—I do not accept that it is—we should harmonise on a sensible basis, with a zero rating for those items that are most sensitive. The calculation of the VAT contribution is not relevant—it never was—because that has always been on a notional basis that made allowance for the fact that rates and zero ratings were in existence.

Other hon. Members have spoken about own resources. I do not doubt for one moment the good intentions of the Prime Minister, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office or my hon. Friend the Paymaster General who is to close the debate this evening. I am sure that we all understand the need for effective budgetary discipline, but we also need to recall that, when the House agreed to increase the limit from 1 per cent. of VAT to 1·4 per cent. of VAT, it clearly did so on the understanding that it would be in exchange for effective budgetary discipline. It would be quite absurd if we now agreed to a further increase in own resources to get effective budgetary discipline. We have already paid that price.

I am sad that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was mistaken in her view that, because a number of other countries—Germany in particular, and France—had also become net contributors, that would be the most effective discipline that we could think of. It has not happened and it will not happen now unless we stand firm. It is tremendously important that we should do so.

I hope that the Minister, when replying to the debate, will clear up the mystery that I raised with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) in my intervention. We all know that the 1·4 per cent. of VAT was increased from 1 per cent. of VAT, so why on earth are we talking about 1·4 per cent. of gross national product, except that that is the number that we first thought of—or, more accurately, the number that we last thought of? I cannot see why it should suddenly be 1·4 per cent. of GNP. What is clear is that it will be a massive increase in own resources. After all those various adjustments are made, even if our contributions reflect a sort of refurbished rebate system, the absolute amount will still go up substantially. I have yet to hear why the resources going to the Community should go up. We received no real answer why the proportion went up from 1 per cent. to 1·4 per cent. of VAT. We have a proposal for a huge increase in resources, but we have had no explanation why that should be so.

I do not think that any hon. Member who took part in the debate on the increase from 1 per cent. to 1·4 per cent.,

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when we were told that the whole thing would be reviewed by the Commission, thought that it would come up with the sort of extravagant proposal that it has come up with. One can say that it might soon be up to 1·6 or 1·8 per cent. We did not expect an increase of the sort proposed, with a totally different system related to gross national product.

I fear that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office is deluding herself. She said a number of clear things about the fact that what is proposed is not acceptable, but she did not indicate what I believe to be the sensible answer, that there should be no increase at all in own resources. I believe that she is deluding herself in thinking that, because we are making some improvements in agriculture, that somehow represents effective control.

In such negotiations, the problem is that, if one thinks that one can get a better deal than that first put forward, one thinks that that is success. That is not true. With all the various manoeuvres and devices on the agricultural side—I hope that the Minister will tell me if I am wrong—at the end of the day there is no device for preventing the Community from spending money that it does not have. That has been the constant problem—that one puts a limit on own resources but one does not put a limit on how much the Community can spend because, particularly on agriculture, it is open-ended.

The detail of the proposals is spelt out in the annex to the Select Committee's report:

> "The agricultural allocation shall be respected each year. However, if the allocation is exceeded in the course of a financial year, the overrun shall be offset by equivalent savings over the following two years."

We have heard that argument before. If there is an overspend and it is possible to claw it back, why can we not claw back the overspend that we already have? We have not heard how that is to be done. It is interesting that in the next paragraph we find that, if there is an underspend, it does not suddenly come back the other way:

> "If an annual allocation is not fully used, the margin available may be drawn on in a subsequent financial year."

Whether it is needed or not, it goes into the next year. Frankly, by no stretch of the imagination is that effective financial discipline.

It is recognised that much of the problem in agriculture results from changes in the exchange rate between the ecu and the dollar. That really means a degree of protection and special treatment for agriculture. However, we do not give that special treatment to the British shoe industry, the soap industry or any other industry. They do not suddenly find special provisions to protect them from changes in the exchange rate. Therefore, why should we say that, whatever happens to the exchange rate, it will affect every industry except agriculture? The Government believe in the market mechanism and the way in which prices reflect events and bring supply and demand into balance. Therefore, it seems to me that the proposal is inconsistent with the philosophy that the Conservative party ought to adopt.

It will be immensely difficult for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to go to the summit and say no as she did at the last summit, subject to some abuse. It is not too difficult to go to that sort of summit, even if one is the only person sticking out for a certain thing, to say no. However, it is difficult, if one is outnumbered, to say no at subsequent summits. The debate is important today because I think that the House must reinforce the Prime Minister in her determination to get effective budgetary discipline, I hope with no increase in own resources, because, as I have already said, we have already paid the price for effective budgetary discipline. We should not be saying that, as a guarantee, there should be yet more resources and a massive increase of the kind put forward in the proposals.

I hope, therefore, that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, having been disappointed by the outcome of the Fontainebleau agreement—which came as no surprise to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, but was a surprise, regrettably, to the Government—will appreciate the lesson that is to be learned and strike the matter at a fundamental level and produce an alternative proposal which will give us effective budgetary discipline without an increase in resources to the Community. That should be balanced against the many other claims on resources in this country which must be met from our financial resources. It is very important to bear that in mind.

8.40 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): It is a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins). The House has been indebted to the work of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee over the years, and for the enlightenment that it has given us on many of these complex matters. The sooner that that Select Committee is re-established and able to examine some of the issues that we have debated tonight, the better.

The Common Market is again in a financial mess, and again in crisis. Once again to use the words of the Scrutiny Committee, it is on the "brink of bankruptcy". The cost of the common agricultural policy has again increased and again yet more money is being demanded from us. So what's new? It was ever thus, except that it has now got worse. The Common Market demands more money every year. That is the nature of the beast. It was predictable and was predicted. I predicted in 1984 at the time of Fontainebleau that this would happen. We all remember the ballyhoo at the time and the great victory that we were told had been achieved and would solve the problem because it would impose budget discipline. Of course, that was not so. Fontainebleau has proved a complete and utter failure in every way.

The cost of the CAP has gone further out of control. Since Fontainebleau, Britain's net payments position has become worse. We are paying more now; indeed we are paying twice as much this year as we were then. Fontainebleau was an utter disaster. Of course, there was the famous clause which stated that account should be taken of "exceptional, or aberrant circumstances". However, the whole of the EEC is an aberrant circumstance. It was obvious that such circumstances would occur every year, and that has happened. It is in the nature of the CAP that it cannot be controlled. The CAP is demand led and open-ended and no one knows what it will cost each year until the end of that year. It depends on all manner of intangibles—for example, the weather and the strength of the dollar. Previously, when we imported food from the world market, a cheap dollar meant cheap food and we benefited. Now, a cheap dollar increases our costs because it costs us more to dump the food surpluses on the world market.

That is a crazy system and very much against the British interest and damaging to us. The truth is—and unless we grasp this simple fact we will never get anywhere—the CAP cannot be reformed; it can only be scrapped. It is impossible to impose budget discipline on the CAP. People have been chattering for years about that but all to no avail. Each year the costs go up and they are rising again this year. To talk of a thorough reform of CAP is chasing a rainbow and a chimera.

The Heads of State at Fontainebleau did not understand that. They did not understand that the EEC budget is not really a budget at all. The right hon. Member for Worthing was an excellent Treasury Minister and he will understand that in the United Kingdom the Treasury and the Chancellor decide the Budget and they tell the Departments what they can spend. That is the position with which we are familiar. When we use the word "budget", we understand what we are talking about. However, it is not like that in the EEC. There are several ministerial councils and they, particularly the Council of Agriculture Ministers, decide what they are going to do and spend. All the obligations are laid end to end and the Finance Ministers come along and I understand that they take about 30 minutes or so to agree to foot the bill. What they fancifully call a budget is really an estimate. It is a guess at what it will all cost. So-called "budget discipline" is a meaningless phrase.

The EEC budget is not a disciplinary measure. Apparently the Heads of State thought that if a figure was included in the budget, that meant something. However, that was in no way legally enforceable. Indeed, it works exactly the other way round in the EEC; it is the intervention payments which are legally enforceable. They are automatic and they take priority. If they are not paid, the producers can take their Ministers to court.

The Finance Ministers in the EEC are powerless to impose discipline. Often the Finance Ministers have no idea and are not consulted on what the Agriculture Council decides. Their sole role is to pick up the tab on our behalf. The only way to alter that is to scrap the market regulations of the CAP. Every time that that is mentioned, we are told that they are sacrosanct, they are the ark of the covenant and they are what allegedly holds the EEC together. However, unless they are scrapped, we shall never get budget discipline. Of course, we should scrap them.

Why not scrap intervention altogether? Why should not producers produce for consumers, demand and markets? Why should they produce for something called "intervention"? Why should we not have a healthy dose of market forces? Why should we not have some free trade and not this rigid protection? Recently——

Sir Russell Johnston: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Leighton: Not at the moment.

Recently, in the crisis over the sale of BP, the House had a discussion about underwriters. Controversially the Government have underwritten the underwriters. However, we do that all the time in the CAP. The state underwrites the whole crazy shooting match. Basically, whatever is produced, whether it is needed or not, it is underwritten by the taxpayer. It is not even as if that incredible largesse goes to the farmers. Conservative Members who represent farmers are aware that most farmers are becoming worse off. Some 50 per cent. of the money goes uselessly on storage costs, export subsidies and the depreciation of stocks. Depreciation this year costs 1·5 million ecu. Vast sums are wasted to pay for past stocks while the system piles up even bigger stocks, especially, as we have heard tonight, in cereals. There is no way forward by further chatter about the reform of the CAP. If we do not learn that experience shows us that that has failed, we will not learn anything.

I believe that if other countries want that system, that is their business. However, if we are serious about ending the appalling waste of our money, we must extricate ourselves from the crazy system and return our agriculture to the jurisdiction of this House.

It has always been common ground that money which can be better spent at the national level should be spent there. Can anyone claim that the vast amount spent on agriculture is spent more effectively in the EEC than it could be at home? Can anyone say that we could not devise a better system than the CAP? The only rational policy is to repatriate agriculture to Westminster. That is the only realistic approach if we are serious. All else is doomed to failure and disappointment.

What is the Government's policy? They say that they will not pay more until effective budget control is established. However, as the right hon. Member for Worthing explained, that is exactly what they told us in 1984. They were kidded that that was going to happen. Therefore, they increased our VAT contribution by 40 per cent. from 1 per cent. to 1·4 per cent. However, although we paid, we did not get what we paid for. We did not get the budget discipline.

Now we are offering to pay again, but should we pay twice for the same thing—and, I would wager, still not get it? In addition, if the CAP were really reformed, and financial discipline imposed, it would not need extra money. Why encourage the monster by throwing more money at it? That is self-defeating. If we continue to throw more money at it, that will be a guarantee of further slippage and failure. Surely we know that any extra money would simply disappear down the black hole of the CAP. We should not waste an extra penny.

I turn to what is happening now and to the Commission's proposals in the documents that we are considering. The Commission has performed extraordinary contortions in its attempts to balance the books. The Scrutiny Committee stated:

> "It has sunk into a morass of budgetary malpractices".

It has indulged in prodigious creative accountancy that would have left a British company or local authority in court. Incidentally, it has incurred the condemnation of the European Court of Auditors. The Commission has invented something called a "negative reserve." It has changed the system of agricultural payments from payments in advance to payments two months in arrears because it ran out of money. The effect of that is to save two months' payments, which means that this year's budget will pay for only 10 months, not for 12. The Commission has postponed until the following year payments to member states for the cost of collecting customs duties. That conjuring trick is a way of taking money from the future.

The Commission has resorted to regular intergovernmental agreements to raise extra money outside the official budget. That has had the effect of Britain paying partly for its own rebate. By those tricks the Commission

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has sought to balance the books. It has used methods to which no auditor would have agreed. To pay for this year's excesses the EEC would have needed 1·7 per cent. of VAT and not the 1·4 per cent. that was agreed at Fontainbleau.

What of the future? The Commission's proposals are outlined in Cmnd. (87)100 and Cmnd. (87)101, the so-called Delors package. The main ingredient is more money, lots more money, and lots more money from Britain. Incidentally, the House should be reminded that at the moment nine countries pay nothing in net terms. It is a funny club in which only three members pay anything and in which we are the second biggest payer, even after our rebates. I studied the Paymaster General's evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee and commend him on it. He is appropriately described as the "paymaster" because he is the paymaster of Europe. We are the second biggest payer. Most countries do not pay anything. However, the Paymaster General went along and coughed up vast amounts of our money. I should like to ask him why we pay anything at all because, after all, we are one of the poorer countries. Why should we not be a net beneficiary like the other nine? But no, according to the documents, lots more money is demanded from Britain.

Let us consider Cmnd. (87) 101 which proposes not only more money but new taxes. Elements of a country's GDP that are not subject to VAT are to be taxed. There is also to be another entirely new tax, as yet unspecified. There is to be an end to the 10 per cent. refund which is the cost of collecting duties and levies. The Commission also wants to change the way in which our rebate is calculated. As the Paymaster General knows, the Treasury gave evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee which calculated that that would give us only half of what we get now, so our rebate would be cut in half.

The next point is most significant and was raised by the right hon. Member for Worthing. The Commission wants to substitute for 1·4 per cent. of VAT 1·4 per cent. of GNP. If one reads that quickly, one might think that it is the same. However, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office told the House of Lords Select Committee that that would be equivalent to 2·25 per cent. of VAT, compared with the present 1·4 per cent. That is an increase of roughly 50 per cent.

The Treasury also told the House of Lords Select Committee — again I must commend the Paymaster General for the full and frank way in which he answered questions — that the proposed change would leave this country about £900 million worse off. Knowing the Common Market as we do, we know that, with a little slippage, about £1 billion more would be required from this country. That is the proposition before us and that is the amount that the Prime Minister has been asked to pay when she goes to Copenhagen.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry has recently explained to the House why he would not commit us to paying another £200 million to the European space project, although we should have got something back from that. He said that that sum of money was equivalent to 12 National Health Service hospitals and that it was as much as we spend on text-books for all our secondary schools. He asked how we could consider spending that £200 million. In that case, what are we to say about this colossal and stupendous sum of £1 billion? We cannot possibly contemplate throwing that money down the drain.

On agriculture, the Commission documents state that the plans would reduce agricultural spending as a percentage of the budget, not by reducing agricultural spending — that would increase — but by doubling expenditure on everything else. Agriculture is saying, "If all of you race forward faster than I do, it will look as if I am falling back." That is the only way in which there would be a reduction on agriculture spending as a percentage of the budget. I am sure that the Paymaster General would agree that that would be an extremely expensive conjuring trick.

The only possible attitude that this House and the Government can take is "not a single penny more" — not a single pfennig or centime — nothing. We want a reduction, not an increase. We do not want to pour more money down that black hole. We have had enough and it is time to call a halt. What action will the Government take? We have had posturing and position-taking, but are the Government prepared to take the right action?

When the Prime Minister returned from the last summit, I caused some consternation on the Opposition Benches by saying that I gave the Prime Minister eight out of 10. I said that she had lost two points. The first was because she had returned from the summit at Fontainebleau saying that she had solved the problem. She had not and she lost a point for that. She lost the second point because, after the initial bluster that we normally get, the Prime Minister usually gives way. She is normally kidded. I said then that the Prime Minister could retrieve that point if she resisted and stuck to what she was saying, and carried out the general views that have been expressed in the House from both Front and Back Benches and said, "Not another penny." I hope that that is what we get. If the Prime Minister comes back having done that, I shall give her 10 out of 10.

Of course, we want co-operation with the European nations, but we will never get it satisfactorily on the basis of the treaty of Rome. It will have to be changed, but in the interim, at Copenhagen, we must say no to more money for the Common Market.

8.[illegible] pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Opposition speeches in debates on the European Community seem to vary. Some Opposition Members dislike the European Community altogether. Some do not like spending in some areas, but want more in others. They are keen on Community spending on the social and regional funds. A third category of Opposition Members like Community spending, but want to repatriate it. They want the same amount of Community spending to be organised and controlled by Whitehall. A fourth category would like some areas of Community spending to be abolished and given over to market forces. It is perhaps a unique tribute to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) that he embodies all four elements.

Debates on the EC are often criticised as being predictable. But they are predictable, by their nature, because they deal with the six-monthly White Papers and are held at odd times during the year. On this occasion, more than 12 months have elapsed since the beginning of the period covered by the first six-monthly White Paper that we are debating tonight. The debates bear no relation to the decision-making processes of the Community. I should like those who are in charge of our procedures—the Scrutiny Committee, for example—to give some more thought to the matter. Perhaps instead of having post facto debates on the six-monthly White Papers we should relate such reviews of Community activities to the European Council and debate what is on the Council agenda. Perhaps we should debate such matters before the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary attend European Council meetings. Indeed, we could debate them after the event, just as we debate the Autumn Statement after it has been made. Perhaps we should have these debates on a more fixed agenda.

The most predictable thing of all is the attitude of the Opposition, which contains the four strands that I mentioned. Conservative Members are entitled to comment on the policy of the Opposition Front Bench. For four or five years we have had to put up with the problem that if the Prime Minister does reasonably well at a European Council, the Opposition say that she has not done well enough. If she does very well, they are still disappointed and will nit-pick with the small print.

That is how we should consider the speech of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). He talked about penny-pinching short-sightedness. Indeed, he entertained us with many such phrases. He did not talk about the internal market and the huge opportunities for our great industrial companies in that market of 300 million people. He used the words "penny-pinching short-sightedness" in terms of European space policy. He said that we should spend more in Geneva — which is outside the Community — on our subscription to a bunch of European scientists.

I tried to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the inconsistency of his amendment. It bemoans the lack of budgetary discipline in the Community, which was a fair point for him to make — indeed, many of my hon. Friends made similar points during the speech of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office — but he went on to call for additional Community spending on many different things: joint action on this, that and the other; joint ventures on steel and shipbuilding.

It is time that the Opposition set out their policy on the European Community budget. It is not enough to say, "We will watch what happens when the Prime Minister goes to Copenhagen." The play is the thing with the Opposition. They are perennial spectators in the Community debate, but they will have to come up with a policy on the Community budget. Either the hon. Member for Hamilton believes—as I suggested he should—that finance determines expenditure, or he believes that expenditure should determine finance. Of course, he believes the former at home when he is arguing in domestic terms and trying to win an election—we noted his visit to Darlington during the general election campaign—but he believes the latter when he is talking about the United States. I feel that it is time the Opposition decided whether they are at home or abroad when it comes to the European Community. Are they playing here, or are they playing away?

If Opposition Members believe in budgetary discipline in the United States, they should believe in budgetary discipline in the Community. Some of them do. Some of them clearly believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is right. The hon. Member for Hamilton clearly believes that my right hon. Friend is right to go on fighting her corner and arguing that further resources should not be released until we have effective controls over budget discipline. Other Opposition Members, however, do not believe that. The hon. Gentleman's hon. Friends continue to argue for increased expenditure for social and regional purposes, but he will have to sort that out with them.

The hon. Gentleman gave us only one indication of Labour's budgetary policy. He implied — in answer, I think, to my intervention — that he was satisfied with the present level of expenditure, but would like to reform the agricultural policy to reallocate some of that expenditure to other areas. If that is not the hon. Gentleman's policy, I hope that he will be given an opportunity to intervene and correct me. He seemed to imply that he was happy with the present ceiling on Community expenditure and simply wanted to reallocate that expenditure.

Mr. Robertson: If it will help to truncate the hon. Gentleman's speech, which keeps laboriously going over the same ground, let me make it clear that I said nothing of the sort. I am saying that there is plenty of scope within the existing European budget, or with a lower ceiling, to accommodate many desirable developments in the areas that I have identified. That can easily be achieved with the discipline of which we are all in favour, and which I advocated in my speech.

Mr. Fallon: I take it from the hon. Gentleman's intervention that he wants a lower level of Community expenditure than we have at present, and, therefore, a much lower level than the Commission is proposing. However, he has not told us how he would make it possible to increase expenditure where he wishes to increase it. He has simply uttered the platitude that he wants the agricultural policy to be reformed. He has not said whether he is prepared to support the various policies for which we have been arguing with the Commission, and now with some of the other member states—not all of them led by Centre-right Governments—for continuing restraints on price, for stabilisers in areas that are subject to over-production and for further measures to take agricultural land out of production altogether. The hon. Gentleman has given us no indication of the extent to which he supports Her Majesty's Government in the achievement of those policies.

There will be a final speech from the Opposition Front Bench. The Opposition spokesman will therefore have an opportunity to set out that budget policy and to explain exactly what savings will be necessary, under all the necessary budgetary headings, to reduce the present level of Community spending. That would be a service to the House if the hon. Member for Hamilton is to continue to contribute the same old line in these European Community debates.

Let me refer briefly to a second aspect — the opportunities presented by the creation of the internal market. These are points, not for the Opposition Front Bench, but for my hon. Friends. I congratulate my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office on the awareness campaign that is being launched next year, but the more that we enjoin British industry to wake up to the nearness of the opportunity of a single large internal European market, the more there is an obligation on the

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Government to continue to deal with the structural problems of the state sector — the other side of the European market.

First, there is an obligation to continue to make competition policy at European level increasingly compatible with competition policy at domestic level. It is not enough to say that partitions within the Community market are being dismantled. Equally, it is not enough to say that one can go to the courts, because the courts of the member states award differing amounts in damages for infractions of the internal market and apply different procedures.

Secondly, it is not enough to reach an agreement on the transparency of financial relations. For example, there are the various subsidies that member states give to the shipbuilding and steel industries. We must ensure that there is more than transparency. There must be an agreement between member states equally to reduce these subsidies.

Finally, as our privatisation programme proceeds well ahead of those of the other member states, various derogations from the treaty, in telecommunications, transport and energy, begin to be ended. With the opening up of the internal market, competition policy in the three areas to which I have referred must begin to be applied as fully in the member states that have not yet privatised as it is in those that have.

9.12 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I listened to the Minister of State's speech with a good deal of interest. She gave the impression that she was living in a fairy-tale world. She talked, as her fellow Ministers have done in the past, about the new budgetary discipline of the Common Market. The last attempt at budgetary discipline failed completely and the Common Market finds itself in yet another crisis. That is why it is asking for more money. Why should we believe on this occasion that there will be budgetary discipline? The Common Market wants more money and the Minister has given us no evidence that there has been real and radical change. Her speech consisted of empty platitudes.

We know that the storehouses are full of food and becoming ever fuller, but the Minister claimed that their intake is slowing down. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) explained that the greatest cause of the "disappearance" of food is its destruction or its dumping in various parts of the Third world instead of being directed to the storehouses.

It has been said that quotas represent development in the dairy industry. However, with the introduction of quotas, butter stocks in the United Kingdom increased from 205,208 tonnes in January 1986 to 252,289 in December 1986. During the quota period, there was an increase of 50,000 tonnes over 12 months in the United Kingdom alone. If the Commission is anxious to demonstrate that it is well disciplined, it is reasonable to expect that it will make strenuous efforts to get rid of food stocks, especially when there has been an outcry throughout the world in response to the obscenity of the Common Market having massive food stocks.

Throughout the year, the EEC has on average a stock of 10 million tonnes of cereals, and it would be possible to dispose of at least a proportion of those cereals to various areas of the world where people are starving in their thousands. Ethiopia is only one example. Instead, the Commission buys cereals on the open market, although there are suitable cereals in store throughout the Common Market for this purpose, for conveying to the starving of the world. This is an absurdity. The Commission has not demonstrated its competence in pursuing such a policy.

The Commission has no plans for phasing out stocks. I ask the Minister to tell us how long it will be before we see the disappearance of the 218,000 tonnes of butter in intervention stores in the United Kingdom, as at 30 June. How long will it be before the 13,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder, the 57,000 tonnes of beef and the 2,266,209 tonnes of cereal, which were all in stock in the United Kingdom, disappear? Perhaps the Minister will tell us how long, during this period of discipline, it will take for the 23,000-tonne tobacco mountain that it has managed to acquire to be phased out. We know that these stocks might vary by 1 or 2 per cent., but they are an integral part of the common agricultural policy.

The Minister described the internal market as a new step forward. The Common Market represents only a small proportion of Europe. It is misleading and mischievous for people to keep referring to Europe as though it is the Common Market. It is arrogant to suppose that countries that are not in the Common Market do not have a valid life and identity of their own.

Around the Common Market and the internal market, which is so supported by the Minister, a barrier will cut us off from countries in Europe that are not members of the Community. As one of the documents points out, the European free trade area has managed to reach a trading agreement with the Common Market, so there is life outside the Common Market. The commonly propagated notion that trading relations would be impossible if we were to withdraw from the Common Market is denied by evidence in a Government document.

I maintain that membership of the Common Market has been a burden and a millstone around our neck. It has cost us hundreds of thousands of jobs. The internal market will not increase safety from terrorism, the shifting trade in arms or the increase in drug trafficking. Surely it makes sense to have half a dozen barriers to scrutinise potential drug trafficking rather than one single barrier over which a drug smuggler can leap to achieve complete freedom of movement within the 12 member states.

Rabies and other diseases were mentioned. Once the internal market is complete—which will allegedly be by 1992, although mercifully that seems doubtful — a certificate will accompany an animal saying that it is rabies-free, and that will have to be accepted. As to the scrutiny of live animals that are exported for slaughter —a matter of great concern—we have heard assurance after assurance in the House about scrutiny, but time after time the RSPCA has demonstrated that no standards are adopted universally throughout the Common Market. If the customs barriers are removed, where will the checks and examinations take place? It is an illusion that the drive towards the internal market will not be accompanied by harmonisation of VAT. It will be so accompanied, and the Minister knows that full well.

As to our membership of the Common Market, we have a £10 million deficit in manufactured goods. How do the Government explain that away? What will they do to remedy that imbalance, which in the Government's term of office has cost us about 2 million jobs in manufacturing industry?

Labour Members have been talking about getting money back from the Common Market. It is crazy for us to be continuing supplicants when our local authorities spend thousands of pounds on going to Brussels to plead with the Commission to get some of our money back. Since 1984, our net contribution has been £4·4 billion. I should have thought that that was a very important sum, but apparently the Euro-fanatics do not mind spending such an amount of money.

The hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) graphically demonstrated that point. He does not mind all sorts of money going to the Common Market. He said that we should have a greater vision and spend even more money. Yet the self-same hon. Member would attempt to batten down the local authorities that are seeking money because they are starved of resources to provide housing facilities for the mentally handicapped, social services, and a whole range of other services that local authorities provide. They are being denied that money. Over the past three years, we have spent £4·4 billion on mostly propping up the Common Market and the bureaucracy that goes with it.

As several of my hon. Friends have clearly and graphically pointed out, the proposals mean a massive increase in our contribution to the Common Market. Year after year, they have been fiddling the budget. The Common Market is running out of money, and it is now coming back to us for a massive increase in own resources to prop up the miserable millstone around our neck. It is time that we clearly said no. I fear that the Prime Minister will not do that.

9.20 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I congratulate the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on a felicitous maiden speech. It reflected the fact that he has been the Conservative spokesman in the European Parliament, especially in terms of its philosophy of standing on one's own feet and relying on the internal market, but being cautious about exchange rates. I may have time or occasion to refer to some of those points later.

I am glad to dissociate myself and Opposition Members from the arguments of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has just closed "Dod's Parliamentary Companion". It may be worth referring to it, because the listed interests of the right hon. Member for Strangford are extensive. It states that his special interests are:

> "Irish Politics, EEC, Regional and Agricultural Policies, Turkey, Cyprus, Asia and Gibraltar."

We got the lot in one speech tonight. As for his would-be welcome for Turkey as a member of the European Community—I am not sure whether this comes in the European rather than the Asian part of his interests—he would open a revolving door. Any self-respecting Government in Greece would be likely to leave the Community on that occasion, but let us leave that point for the time being.

As for the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon), it is amazing that in any other respect Conservative Members condemn trying to solve problems by spending public money, yet when it comes to the EEC and the Community budget they not only throw money at the problems, but are prepared to pile it high. The essence of the answer that he wants is economic growth in the European Community. He is quite able to grasp and accept the point that we need growth in the Community as a whole and in Community GDP. We shall need at least an additional one point of GDP in next two years, rising to a 2·5 per cent. increase in GDP growth in the Community in the early 1990s just to offset a world recession and its effects on trade if there is a cut in the United States budget deficit. If we had such growth, any share less than 1·4 per cent. of GDP would mean an increase in real resources. That is the key point.

That is the budget that we need — not simply a budget that is spent by the Commission, but a budget that is jointly spent by member Governments in the Community so that we can counter the deepening recession in the world economy, preserve jobs and defend and extend employment. The overall world economic situation is severe, not only in United States' budget terms, but in wealth-effect terms — lower spending, slower growth and, if we are not careful, beggar-my-neighbour deflation of trade, with increased pressure for protection.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman dissociate himself from the comments of the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), who clearly believes in market forces determining how resources should be spread throughout Europe? The hon. Gentleman argued that market forces should determine how agricultural resources are spread. Should that apply also to steel, coal, the motor car industry and other industries?

Mr. Holland: It is my eternal loss that I was not in the Chamber during the few moments in which my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) spoke. When I want to learn his views on the market versus intervention, I shall gain them from him rather than from the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick).

The plain facts are these:

> "the Community has sunk into a morass of budgetary malpractices needed to conceal or postpone the real financial implications of Community policies. Thus, the budgetary effect of the unprecedented build up of agricultural stocks has been disguised by gross over-valuation of the stocks; actual budgetary deficits have been carried forward and only covered belatedly by ad hoc solutions; and Community commitments have been allowed to accumulate without proper financial provision".

That view, which is our view, was expressed in those terms by the Commission itself. That shows how dire is the present financial crisis in the Community.

Knee-deep as it is in the mud of the common agricultural policy, there are those who think that the Community can be freed at one bound, and that bound is towards the internal market. On what reasoning and on what economic rationale is that argument based? We know the old argument for the internal market in terms of internal economies of scale and increased efficiency, but that was bypassed years ago. It was the argument of the 1950s. It cannot be the argument of the 1980s and 1990s. Those who argue for recourse to the internal market should tell that to the Japanese, with 75 million consumers. What does the internal market mean to them? The whole world is their market, both by sales over tariffs and by

[Mr. Holland]

foreign direct investment behind tariffs. We do not need a single internal market in the Community to achieve efficiency.

In the argument about whether we need to harmonise VAT rates in different countries, it seems to have been overlooked that the United States, which is a vast internal market — no one has claimed that the United States has blocked entrepreneurship, efficiency or initiative — has different local state taxes. It does not have harmonised rates. It even has different corporation taxes, which is why Delaware can boom despite the fact that it has no natural advantages to help it to compete with stronger areas. There is a case for a differentiated fiscal policy as a stimulus to attract industry to various regions. The case for harmonising VAT alone is not adequate.

The argument about economies of scale has been rendered completely outdated by flexible automation. One used to need massive plant — the old Fordist model — to achieve economies of scale. That is not the case any more. Flexible automation and computer-aided production have made entry to markets much easier in technical terms. However, in market terms, that entry is blocked by big business, and it is blocked for the small firm in the European Community as much as it is anywhere else.

I was very amused when the Minister opened the debate by saying that the internal markets would result in

> "more jobs . . . the opportunities will not just be for a few companies or in a few sectors."

I was very entertained by that. Is it really the case? On what basis? The reality is that the share of the top 100 European companies in the EEC Ten — before the accession of Spain and Portugal — increased from just over a fifth to one third of the Community's gross domestic product from 1963. Big business has been winning in the competition stakes in the European Community.

The Minister said that we were talking not just about "a few companies". In fact, the top companies are doing very well. It may be of interest to the Minister, if not to the House, to recognise that the share of Community gross domestic product now commanded by 10 firms — I repeat, just 10 firms — is equal to the entire agricultural output of the European Community. We pay a lot of attention to agriculture. Why, then, do we not pay attention to the fact that the internal market increases concentration, centralisation, unequal competition and barriers to entry to the small firms that are supposed to flourish in such larger market areas? The Minister's claim that not just a few companies will benefit is contradicted by the facts.

The right hon. Lady says that there will be more jobs. Let us consider what the big firms have done on jobs since 1969. *[Interruption.]* The Minister says that there will be more jobs in the future — the future then will be a contradiction of the past — and there will be a great qualitative change in the internal market, reducing the minuscule barriers to the free movement of goods which serve some social purpose. But there will be no such change. Concentration and centralisation will continue apace. The weak will go to the wall and the big will benefit.

Let us consider jobs. Since 1969 the profits of the top 100 companies now accounting for so major a share of community GDP have gone up by nearly three and a half times, by 340 per cent., but their employment has gone up by only 16 per cent. It is clear what will benefit from the internal market. It will be the profit rating of bigger business, not the creation of jobs.

On the internal market, I was sorry not to hear the Minister refer to the transparency provision in the Community, which is covered in articles 85 and 86 of the Rome treaty. We want more transparency. Data such as I have just cited are not published by the European Community. If we were to put together the studies of the Commission's competition division, they would cover the Floor of the House. But the competition division gets information at national, not at Community, level, so companies such as IBM are counted 12 times in the concentration studies of the Community. The figures that I have given are the result of assiduous private academic research and not of the Commission's publication.

I hope that the Paymaster General will be able to assure us that the Government are concerned about competition and transparency and that they would welcome the sponsorship by the Commission of studies on the share of big business in the Community and what it is doing. For inasmuch as the profits of big business are high, its industrial investment is not high. We do not have evidence that those profits are being translated into innovative, pace-making investment of the kind that has made Japan a world leader.

There is no joint European industrial strategy. It has been blocked since 1967 by the Commission. For example, the French were concerned, and the President was very concerned, that there were double taxation penalties on mergers of companies in the European market. The French proposed to the Commission that the double penalties should be suspended — an obvious common-sense pragmatic measure. The Commission, with its federalist vision of the world, said, "Thanks for telling us that you would like European mergers to compete with American and other firms, but the tax must be paid to Brussels and not to your national treasuries." Since the Government had been losing tax in the first place by paying double tax on mergers, this was hardly attractive to the French.

So instead of pragmatic, international joint action for new industrial initiatives, we got a federalist fantasy which has meant that since 1967 not only does the Community not have a common industrial policy, or CIP, to match the CAP, but it has not even managed to define a common industrial statute. We know the fate of the Vredeling proposals for more openness and more transparency. What has happened is that on the lowest common denominator basis of Community decision-making those have fallen off the edge of the table.

Let us take the question of the Community budget. To get a European industrial strategy and joint ventures in Europe the Community should not only be spending its own budget; we also need an expansion of budgets by member states through their own industrial policies. The Community has a role to play by sponsoring such interfaces and making it possible by doing its own studies in research and its own input. But it is only on an international basis that such joint ventures will occur, as they have already occurred between Japanese and European firms.

The same applies to the Europe of the regions. Spending money is not the only way to get resources into the regions. Some of us, including myself, some 20 years ago studied regional policy in the Community. We found that regional incentives did not sufficiently attract firms to southern Italy or northern England. We got that evidence again from the Select Committee on Expenditure in 1972. Firms went to those areas if they needed more labour, and now they do not need more labour because unemployment is high. In Europe we need a networking of the regional, public enterprise agencies, such as we have in this country in the Greater London enterprise board, the West Midlands enterprise board and the Lancashire enterprise board.

I recently attended a conference in Catalonia of 150 people, including local authority officials, concerned with such networking of regional enterprises in Emiglia Romagna, the German Länder, the British regions and Greece. This is a Europe of the regions, built by the people in the regions with public money guaranteeing their share of investment in joint ventures on a regional basis, rather than all their money being spent by Brussels. We do not have to go to Community level to network for a new Europe of the regions. The funds do not have to go to the top—to Brussels—to come down again. It can be done at the base, provided that we change the way in which we think about the Community and do not always try to pass all spending through the eye of the needle in Brussels.

The same applies to agriculture. We have been talking tonight about production quotas to limit budget spending on agriculture. There is an alternative, which is called bringing prices down. We can afford to bring prices down. When the treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, one quarter of the Community's working population were engaged in agriculture. It is now less than 10 per cent. and, for the Community of 10, it is now about 7·5 per cent, so a major rural constituency has changed to an overwhelmingly urban constituency.

We should bring prices down. It is possible to combine the best of price reduction with deficiency payments systems and quotas, but that should be done for smaller firms and for peasant farmers, especially when the average age of farmers is 55 years or more. There is a strong case for the social and regional funds supporting such agriculture within certain production limits on environmental and social grounds, but we now have major agriculture combines, as reflected in the concentration figures that I gave earlier. From those figures, we can see the dominance of agribusinesses in the Community, making monopoly profits out of the CAP. They are ripping off the consumer, and the Community should deal with them. We need not spend another penny on the food budget if we bring prices down.

In one of its background documents the Community admits that it has failed to provide the proper financial depreciation of the book value of stocks and that it is in dire distress in terms of budget spending. Community document 87 (101) Final states:

> "all these factors imply that the Community must engage itself in medium term planning and more effective management. Planning is needed to obtain the desired level of management of expenditure policy, because management does not make sense without medium term policy objectives".

Opposition Members agree with that. The Community needs planning for expenditure on agriculture, industry and the regions and to expand jobs. The Community needs to follow what was well established in 1964 by the then Vice-President Robert Marjolin. As Vice-President of the Community, he set up the medium-term economic committee. There was no reference to it in the treaty of Rome. I once asked Marjolin what justification he got for it in the treaty of Rome. He replied that he could not remember and said, "We looked around for a while and found some clause which more or less fitted at the time."

There is a supra-nationalist vision that integration goes through various stages of a free trade area, a customs union, an internal market or the common market, economic union, monetary union — God knows this is not five steps on stairs. It is a downward running escalator and we are going backwards rather than forwards. If so, why do we not get back to where Marjolin was and set up that very pragmatic, medium-term economic policy committee as a powerhouse inside the Community, so that we are not simply reliant on Community summits? Heaven knows that much is wrong with Community summits. It is well known that summiteers are glad to be seen going to the top for a photo call. They get photographed, make their statements, come down and nothing has changed since they went up. That is what is wrong with the kind of photo call summitry that is presently taking place in the Community.

If we restored the medium-term economic policy committee on the Marjolin basis, we could have decision-making that did not have to be majority or minority because it aimed for a consensus on the recovery of mutual spending, trade and beneficial policies that affected those in the less-developed regions as well as those in the declining areas. What is wrong with majority voting in the Community is that, so long as it binds the minority, the Community will always move at the pace of the slowest. So long as the Community must be unanimous or bind the minority, little progress will be made.

We need a new kind of majority voting, whereby if certain countries want to go for expansion they should do so and be aided by the Community, but if others do not want to they do not have to go along, although they would benefit from the recovery programme anyway. We need to co-operate rather than integrate policies. With a deepening international economic crisis, such co-operation rather than integration should now be on the Government's agenda.

9.40 pm

The Paymaster General (Mr. Peter Brooke): There are maiden speeches to which one looks forward because of the ability of the hon. Member to speak to the subject for which he patiently waits; that was the case with the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry). He spoke with charm, vigour, relevance and knowledge — all four characteristics which are of a particular utility and advantage to our debates on these matters and are not always universal in them. I welcome the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) to the Dispatch Box and I look forward to meeting him on future occasions.

This has been a good debate, at times fiercely argued, but always interesting and closely reasoned. The Government's broad approach to the future financing negotiations is well known. We are clear that there must be agreement on effective budget discipline on agricultural and other expenditure before the question of raising the own resources ceiling can be addressed sensibly. We continue to hope that Heads of Government will be able to reach a satisfactory agreement at Copenhagen in December. Some progress has already been made in the preparatory discussions, but much remains to be done.

[Mr. Peter Brooke]

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) spoke of my right hon. Friend in terms of the froth of synthetic outrage. I must say that there is an aphorism about glasshouses that applies to those remarks coming from that hon. Gentleman's lips. He referred to a temporary bandaged package of fudges, and that seemed to me to be an eloquent account of Labour party policy on a wide variety of subjects. He said that, in future, Government policy would be subject to microscopic examination. That will be a change with regard to these matters because, prior to the election, the Labour party took no interest in them. It may be that the arrival of the hon. Member for Vauxhall has stimulated competition on the Opposition Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Hamilton said that this is a gloomy time for the European Commission. I must tell him that, in every report that the Commission has issued on economic matters this year, it has revised upwards the economic growth of this country — although I acknowledge it has revised downwards the economic growth of the Community as a whole.

The hon. Member for Hamilton asked about the discrepancy between the £700 million quoted by my right hon. Friend and the £800 million to £900 million that I quoted in evidence to the House of Lords. Taken altogether we estimate that the proposals put forward by the Commission could increase our net contribution by some £800 million to £900 million, at today's prices, in 1992 alone. The extra cost of the new correction mechanism and structural own resources would be between £600 million and £700 million. The increase in the size of the budget would account for the rest.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) introduced UNESCO, which has nothing to do with this debate, although I realise it is the cathedral of the Liberal party. The hon. Member for Hamilton made a reference — as does the amendment — to space. He introduced the European Space Agency, but it is neither a project nor an institution of the European Community. I hasten to say that we on the Conservative Benches will continue to be interested in value for money from public expenditure.

The hon. Member for Hamilton raised a series of matters relating to the harmonisation of VAT. However, the microscopic examination that he has promised did not lead to his understanding the cases before the European Court, whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) rightly said that no veto can be applied.

The hon. Member for Hamilton also raised the issue of excise duties. The Commission's proposals were made available in August 1987; they were presented by Lord Cockfield to the ECOFIN Council earlier this week. We have fundamental difficulties with the Commission's approach. We have misgivings about the implications of its excise duty proposals and we shall be ready to enter discussions with our Community partners about the role of appropriate tax measures in the completion of the internal market. We are not alone in finding difficulties in those proposals. The hon. Gentlemen said that the United Kingdom rebate should be protected. One would not think from his words that that rebate had been secured by this Government, and not by a Labour Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) spoke about the Government's good record in keeping pressure on the budget to the forefront. However, he expressed distress about the rebate. The deterioration in the figures relating to our contributions, to which some of my hon. Friends referred, seems to be a justification for us to maintain our emphasis upon it. I agree with the emphasis on 1992. Hon. Members will be aware of the new steps being taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to alert the country to these issues.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) asked me three specific questions about shipbuilding. The first was about the limits on aid, and possible cuts in the aid ceiling below 28 per cent. The aid ceiling is subject to annual review, and the negotations about next year's ceiling have not begun. The Government are considering our position, but we shall resist any attempt to reduce the ceiling below 28 per cent. The right hon. Gentleman asked about Brittany Ferries, and the French bid. The Commission has not completed its investigation, but we shall continue to press vigorously for the matter to be taken up, and we will keep the House informed. I shall do as was suggested, and draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of Trade and Industry to the right hon. Gentleman's comments.

As to the programme for shipbuilding areas that are in decline, negotiations are currently taking place at Brussels about a Community programme, under the regional fund, for areas affected by the decline in shipbuilding. It is now called "Renaval". The regions of the United Kingdom affected by the restructuring of the shipbuilding industry can expect to benefit considerably from that programme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon asked specific questions about the United Kingdom abatement. I am glad that he supports the Government's line that the Commission's proposal is unacceptable. He suggested financing the abatement outside the own resources ceiling. That would have the advantage of avoiding the fluctuations, currently caused by the abatement, in the money available for spending programmes. We would welcome that sensible improvement.

We accept the need to provide Community help for poorer regions. However, we must distinguish Spain and Portugal, and countries such as Greece and Ireland which already receive massive handouts from the Community. In 1986 Greece's receipts from the Community were 4·8 per cent. of GNP, and Ireland's were 7·1 per cent. The United Kingdom's receipts were only 0·7 per cent. of GNP.

Mr. Budgen: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Brooke: No; I have too much to get through.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber balanced discipline and resources. He was longer on asservation than he was on tactical counsel. His speech was in the general Liberal tradition of running with the hounds and apologising to the hare when they caught up. He asked a specific question about ham imports. We have rigorous controls on the commercial import of meat and meat products as part of our policy of avoiding the introduction of diseases. The changes to the so-called personal concessions for the import of meat products simplify the rules and help to avoid the inadvertent introduction of serious diseases. Only fully-cooked products and those in cans or hermetically sealed containers up to a total of 1 kg can be brought in.

The hon. Gentleman described the Liberal vision of Europe and demonstrated his weight of effort in its pursuit by confessing that he did not have the stamina to answer the questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East, a process which I greatly enjoy. The hon. Gentleman's stamina on behalf of Europe quite clearly was not equal to that of my hon. Friend.

I welcome the new voice of my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) in our debate. He made a thoughtful speech, which will bear further study. He remarked on the absolute size of our contributions and said that the budget was not that large. The Government must be concerned about the size of the budget. Our net payments to Community institutions this year are expected to be £1·4 billion, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said. That is not a negligible sum. There must also be continuing concern about waste.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) asked me several questions about the United Kingdom abatement. If I understood him correctly, he drew attention to the fact that the Commission's proposal would compensate the United Kingdom only in respect of its net budgetary burden on agriculture spending. That is one of the unsatisfactory aspects of the Commission's proposals. Our net contribution before abatement is high, and it is right that we should continue to be compensated in respect of our burden on all spending allocated to member states. The proposed compensation rate of 50 per cent. is unacceptable, and we shall insist that any change to the Fontainebleau abatement is for the better.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether unanimity is needed on changes to the abatement or the ceiling. The answer is that it is needed on both. The abatement mechanism, the system of own resources and the ceiling are all contained in the own resources decision, which has treaty status and can be amended only after unanimous agreement of the Council and subsequent approval by national Parliaments, including, of course, the House.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the figure of 1·4 per cent. of GNP. That seemed to be a question for the Commission rather than for me, but I shall come back to it in the context of my remarks about the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins).

The hon. Member for Newham, South attributed to his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) attention to certain aspects of Lord Cockfield's package. That is intruding on private grief, in terms of the right hon. Gentleman's leadership of the Labour party's tax campaign during the election, but I shall not dwell on that subject.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East said that unemployment was high in Europe. The major reason why unemployment levels in Europe have remained stubbornly higher than in the United States or Japan is that the European market, unlike the other major trading blocs, is not yet a single unified market with all the economic advantages and economies of scale that such a market brings. The Government support the internal market because it will be good for jobs in this country and, indeed, throughout the Community. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's remarks about the trade balance, but the changes in our trade with the Community are more or less in line with the changes in our trade with the rest of the world.

My hon. Friend asked me a specific question about exceptional circumstances. In our view, the guideline limit must be an effective constrant on expenditure. We are not convinced of the necessity for provision to be made for exceptional circumstances. There is a serious danger that such a provision, unless it is tightly defined, would undermine the budget discipline agreement.

I cannot predict what precise conclusion the European Council will reach on that or any other matter, but I assure my hon. Friend that the Government would much prefer to have no exceptional circumstances clause. We shall not settle for anything that we regard as unsatisfactory.

My hon. Friend asked about butter stocks and the Court of Auditors. I share his respect for that court. We have discussed that subject before in parliamentary questions. The Government believe that in that instance the Community was right to regard it as an exceptional circumstance, as a basis for its agreement.

My hon. Friend criticised the fact that we were using stabilisers as a new solution to the agriculture problem. The Commission joins us in proposing stabilisers. The evidence so far is that they are working. With regard to general agriculture expenditure, I cannot improve on the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at the Lord Mayor's banquet earlier this week:

> "Agriculture cannot be a no-go area for common sense, where the laws of supply and demand cease to apply."

Effective control of agricultural spending in Europe is vital to the future of the Community, allied to a drive to ensure that agricultural subsidies throughout the developed world are reduced. We are determined to achieve that end.

My hon. Friend asked me some questions about the VAT court cases. In the words of Queen Victoria during the Boer war, we do not believe in the possibility of defeat. However, given that we live in an uncertain world, if the court came down against us on the matter on which the hon. Member for Hamilton believes that we can exercise a veto—my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East knows better—we would honour the treaty, study the judgment and frame our next actions accordingly. However, at present that is a wholly hypothetical result, as we have long had every intention of winning.

My hon. Friend specifically asked me whether the matter could be taken further by the court. The current infraction proceedings concern the interpretation of existing VAT law, and are therefore quite separate from our obligations under the Single European Act. The challenge relates only to a small proportion of total zero rating, which the Commission maintains is not for clearly defined social purposes and the benefit of the final consumer. The Commission would be hard put to challenge on such grounds our zero rates for food and gas and electricity and so on supplied to domestic consumers.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) raised the issue of shipbuilding, to which I have already responded. He was complimentary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker). He also raised the issue of the tax on oils and fats. In the spring, we opposed the Commission's proposals for such a tax, and we would oppose any new proposal for one. The United Kingdom has suggested that a better alternative for restraining expenditure in this sector is a flat-rate aid, subject to a maximum guaranteed quantity of production.

The right hon. Member for Strangford is, of course, familiar with the islands of Cyprus and Ireland. The

[Mr. Brooke]

protocol on the customs union between the Community and Cyprus was signed on 19 October. It is an integral part of the association agreement, article 5 of which rules out discrimination between nationals or companies of Cyprus. Upon signature, the Danish presidency reaffirmed that the protocol will apply to the whole population of Cyprus.

Thanks to my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the United Kingdom—including Northern Ireland — has done better in the current year on MCAs than has Ireland, notably in beef. The Government took up with the Commission the border issue to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. It has now taken the first steps to bringing legal proceedings against the Irish Government, on the grounds that their unilateral measure is incompatible with European Community law. If the right hon. Gentleman will excuse me, I shall deal with the matter of Gibraltar outside the debate.

Finally, the issue of the 1·4 per cent. and the GNP definition was raised. That is really a question for the Commission rather than the Government, but, contrary to the views of the right hon. Member for Strangford, a GNP basis would be more favourable to Britain than the present VAT method, because of our relative shares of GNP and VAT.

I can tell my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing that I could advance a whole series of reasons why the Commission might want to change the ceiling—but those are questions for the Commission and not for us.

Mr. Higgins: There must be some reason why it chose the figure of 1·4 per cent.

Mr. Brooke: The simple answer is that the Commission has produced a five-year spending plan, including a doubling of expenditure on the structural funds, and argues that own resources of 1·4 per cent. of GNP are required to finance that. That is not a good argument; the Commission's detailed plans need only 1·3 per cent.

I can tell the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) that the stocks — on an August to September, year-to-year basis — are now falling and are lower than they were a year ago. As regards his question about rabies, the agreements that have already been reached allow the Government to maintain their own controls in these areas.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall discussed various aspects of the internal market. As far as the British Government are concerned, the areas identified by the Brussels Council as immediate priorities are public purchasing, insurance, liberalisation of capital movements, freedom of establishment for the professions, and progress on technical harmonisation and standards.

We have heard pleas from all parts of the House for the interests of British taxpayers and consumers to be adequately protected. The Government will defend those interests and in that spirit I ask all hon. Members to support the motion and to reject the Opposition amendment, which, in several parts, is irrelevant to the debate or a travesty or both.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 157, Noes 233.

Division No. 74] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashdown, Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & [illegible]sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Darling, Alastair
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hinchliffe, David
Holland, Stuart
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kilfedder, James
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Wallace, James
Walley, Ms Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Alun Michael.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Atkinson, David
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Curry, David
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Papers on developments in the European Community July to December 1986 (Cm. 122) and January to June 1987 (Cm. 205), and European Community Documents COM(87)100 on making a success of the Single European Act, COM(87)101 on the future financing of Community Budget, and Nos. 8248/87 on Budgetary Discipline, 8249/87 on Own Resources, 8251/87 on Structural Funds, and 8087/87 and 8940/87 on amendments to the Financial Regulations, all relating to the future financing negotiations; and endorses the Government's objective of securing effective and binding control of Community expenditure.

Family Credit

10.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move,

That the draft Family Credit (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 3rd November, be approved.

The regulations represent a further key element in the new income-related benefit structure which is to come into effect from next April.

As the House will already be aware, family credit is a new benefit for working families with children. It will replace family income supplement, which has, over the years, brought valuable help to low-income working families. However, FIS was introduced in 1971, originally on a temporary basis, and has served its purpose. What we now need for the late 1980s and beyond is a new benefit which is part of a coherent structure of income-related benefits, designed to achieve a more rational approach to the assessment and delivery of benefits to people in and out of work. Family credit, together with the family premium in income support, represents a major improvement in the help to low-income families with children.

The draft regulations contain the detailed rules for the new scheme, and build upon the framework set out in part II of the Social Security Act 1986. The Act provides that awards should normally last for 26 weeks rather than the 52 in FIS. That will make family credit more responsive to changes of circumstances and will, for example, mean that extra amounts following the birth of a new child, or following a benefit uprating, can be paid more quickly.

One major improvement of the reforms is that, for the first time, the provisions of the three income-related benefits — income support, housing benefit and family credit — will be properly aligned. For example, the child rates in family credit are derived directly from the income support children's rates and the family credit threshold is aligned with the income support married couple rate. All three benefits will apply a common approach to the treatment of capital. All will be based on net earnings and, wherever possible, other detailed rules are applied consistently across the benefits.

One advantage of closer alignment of rules and rates is to ensure that there will in future be far greater consistency in the treatment of people whether they are in or out of work. So, for example, the draft regulations stipulate that the claimant or partner must be in remunerative work to qualify, and that work is defined as 24 hours a week or more. Income support uses the same definition and excludes people from that benefit if the hours worked are above that level. So the two schemes are complementary, which will be a significant improvement on the present position where FIS and supplementary benefit can overlap in this area.

Part III of the regulations, which deals with circumstances in which persons can be treated as members of the claimant's family, is very much in line with the provisions for income support and housing benefit. Family credit, like FIS, is paid only where there is a dependent child. For that purpose, the regulations also include a young person, defined as a person aged 16 to 19, who is still receiving full-time, non-advanced education.

Most of the rules relating to the family's income and capital in part IV of the regulations are the same as those in income support. I shall therefore confine myself to pointing out where the family credit rules differ from those for the other two benefits. The differences arise from the need to arrive at what is a normal income, because of the fixed nature of family credit once awarded. This is, of course, particularly relevant in the case of earnings, and the regulations provide detailed rules about the period over which earnings should be looked at to establish normality. They also provide that, in the case of a person who has just started a new job, we can ask the employer to forecast what the wages will be and to make an award on the strength of that, rather than waiting until a pattern of actual earnings has been established. This will be of particular help to those leaving unemployment and taking up work.

Family credit is payable to the self-employed as well as to those working for an employer. For the self-employed, the regulations provide for the income from the business to be determined simply by reference to the cash flow of receipts and expenditure during the six months before the claim. This will be simpler and more straightforward than requiring the production of commercial accounts. The new proposals for assessing the income of the self-employed were the subject of consultation with several representative organisations and were generally welcomed as providing a more straightforward procedure than the present arrangements in FIS.

Finally, on earnings, I remind the House that we shall have regard to earnings after deduction of tax and national insurance, and also after one half of any contribution to an occupational or personal pension scheme. Assessment on the basis of net wages ends the worst effect of the poverty trap—the absurd position where an increase in gross earnings can lead to a reduction in overall income because of the knock-on effect on benefits.

At present, about 70,000 families are in that position. What is more, by replacing benefits with extra cash for working families, we are ending the cliff edges which can leave a family significantly worse off when its income takes it just above the cut-off level for free school meals and milk. These are significant improvements. We also believe that, after next April, only a tiny number of families with children would be worse off working than out of work and on benefit.

That brings us to part V and to the calculation of the amount of entitlement. Each family has a maximum credit, made up of an adult credit and a credit for each child depending on his age. Those credits are set out in schedule 4. The maximum credit is payable in full where the family's income is less than the threshold: this will be £51.45, the same as the income support rate for couples. Where the income is more than the threshold, a percentage of the excess is deducted from the maximum credit and the balance remaining is the amount payable. Regulation 48 lays down that this percentage taper shall be 70 per cent. —unchanged from the 1985 White Paper proposals.

The children's rates in family credit are based on those in income support, but take account of the rate of child benefit. That ensures alignment with income support and also means that any change in the rate of child benefit would not affect the net position of those receiving family credit.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): In arriving at those complex arrangements about taking people beyond the threshold of the poverty trap, did the Minister take into account how the poll tax will disrupt all his calculations? By forcing poor people to pay a minimum of 20 per cent. of the poll tax, any marginal benefits will be cancelled out and more. The Minister will have to do all his sums again.

Mr. Portillo: People will be much better placed if they live in an area where the authority imposes reasonable rates.

The extra amount that we are putting into family credit is much more important for low-paid families and a higher rate of child benefit would be of no net value to them.

The child rates also include a cash element in place of the free school meals and free milk which are available to FIS families now. That cash element is £2·55 for each child and reflects the latest information, from a recent survey of local education authorities, about the charge for a fixed price school meal. The average worked out at 65·6p a day. Given that the cash is paid in every week of the year, not just in term time, the £2·55 is slightly more than the amount shown by the average charge. The cash element is the same for all ages of children and is especially generous to families with young children below school age, who at present receive only free milk, worth about £1·82.

Take-up of free school meals by families receiving FIS has never been more than about 70 per cent. Family credit will now put money into the hands of all family credit mothers, including those whose children, for whatever reason, have not been taking advantage of free school meals.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The Minister said that the claiming of free school dinners has never been above 70 per cent., but for family credit he claims only a 60 per cent. take-up. If a 70 per cent. take-up is so poor, why is this scheme so good?

Mr. Portillo: I did not say that it was poor. I said that, whereas 70 per cent. of those claiming FIS take free school meals, 100 per cent. of people claiming family credit will get the cash. That is the important difference.

Mr. Field: But the Minister says that only 60 per cent. of those who are eligible will claim; his phrase was "only 70 per cent.", which is slightly dismissive. Yet he advocates this measure because it will have a 60 per cent. take-up.

Mr. Portillo: I was not in the least dismissive. I was pointing out the advantage of 100 per cent. of those people taking school meals——

Mr. Field: But it is only 60 per cent.

Mr. Portillo: It is 100 per cent. of the 60 per cent., but under family credit the take-up of the money is estimated to be 70 per cent. That is the advantage.

We estimate that many more children—up to 100,000 more—will benefit from the extra cash, compared with the numbers receiving free school meals from FIS and local discretionary schemes combined. A further 100,000 under-fives will benefit from the cash, compared with the number receiving free milk under the FIS passport and the low-income schemes. I should, perhaps, add that there will be no changes in the entitlement to free school meals or welfare milk for the most vulnerable families of all, those receiving income support.

Part VI of the regulations deals with the very few instances in which family credit has regard to changes of circumstances during the period of an award—death, and certain circumstances in which a family breaks up and a new claim is made for family credit or income support.

No doubt the House will wish to know what all this means in terms of the number of people who will benefit, and how much they will receive. Virtually all family credit recipients will receive more—often substantially more—from family credit than they would have from FIS, if it continued.

Mr. Wilson: Is that before or after the poll tax?

Mr. Portillo: For example, a single parent with two children aged 12 and 14 and earning around half average earnings—£90 net, or £110 gross—would receive family credit of over £27, compared with FIS of under £5. A couple with children the same age and earnings of around £103, or about £130 gross would receive no FIS, but will now stand to receive family credit of over £18. A family with three older children and earnings of £110 net, or £140 gross, will now receive £23 family credit compared with nothing from FIS.

Mr. Field: If they claim.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman keeps returning to that point, but we are directing the benefit to twice as many families as have been taking up FIS. We think that the take-up will be higher, but, even if it is not, it will go to many more families than FIS. I should have thought that it would be welcomed for that reason, and was not something at which the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) or his hon. Friends would carp.

Mr. Field: Where do the Government get their confidence that the take-up rate will be higher? Where did the figure of 60 per cent. come from?

Mr. Portillo: The figure is based on the fact that, as a more generous benefit, family credit will be more widely available. If it is more widely available, more people will know about it. There will be more talk about it at workplaces, and there will be a publicity campaign to launch it.

I admit to the hon. Gentleman that we have to guess what the take-up will be, but I think that it is reasonable to assume a fairly modest increase from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. of families, and from 60 per cent. to 70 per cent. of expenditure.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby South): Why?

Mr. Portillo: Time will tell. In a year's time, we shall argue about facts rather than theories, but I consider that quite a reasonable assumption.

Overall, we expect that over twice as many families should receive family credit as received FIS: about 470,000 instead of 200,000. We shall be looking for significant improvement in take-up. We shall have a major publicity drive, and the fact that it will be more worth while to claim the credit will also be helpful. Apart from ensuring that help reaches those for whom it is intended, we are anxious to ensure that family credit plays its full role in improving work incentives, and encouraging people to take available jobs.

Finally, I should like to remind the House of a point covered not in these regulations but in the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations which the House

[Mr. Portillo]

approved last week: that family credit will normally be paid to the mother. That is important as background to our decision not to uprate child benefit in April 1988. Family credit will cost £220 million more than FIS. By not uprating that child benefit, we save £120 million net. We are putting an extra £220 million into the hands of almost half a million mothers. By contrast, a general increase in child benefit would have cost much less, but would have spread the money far more thinly across millions of mothers, most of whom are clearly not those in the greatest need.

Family credit is a bigger scheme than FIS, and I believe that I can say confidently that it is a better scheme. It encourages breadwinners with families to stay in work, and stimulates those out of work to look for work without the fear of losing more than they might gain. It puts more money towards families who need it most. For those reasons, I commend the draft regulations to the House.

10.29 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): It is not the Opposition's intention to erect artificially high standards by which to judge the family credit scheme. The standards that the Government have set for themselves will do very nicely, thank you. We shall judge by the standards that they have set and by the fulsome compliments that they have paid themselves over the past few months when referring to the generosity and scope of the scheme. I must concede that the scheme is the nearest thing to a success that the Government have drawn from the most fundamental reform for 40 years, the most fundamental since the Beveridge report. I suppose that it could be said that it is the jewel in the crown of the Government's package of reforms. It is the one area in which there are a few more gainers than losers.

What even a keen observer might not discern at first glance from the ecstasies that we have heard from the Government over recent weeks is that there will be about 270,000 losers as a result of these proposals. About 130,000 single parents and 140,000 couples in full-time work, with children and claiming family income supplement and/or housing benefit will lose from the overall package of changes. The observer might not discern also that a good deal of the generosity for which Ministers have praised themselves so highly in recent weeks will be at the expense of families with children. Thirdly, the Government claim that they are being far more generous in the overall payment of family credit as opposed to FIS, the benefit which is being replaced, because the take-up will be significantly higher than that of FIS. This issue has been taken up by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) in several interventions.

We hope that the take-up of family credit will be higher than that of FIS. Whatever doubts we may have, and we have many, about the Government's overall strategy, and whatever reservations we may have about whether they are reducing dependence on benefits while their policy is so heavily dependent on making resources available primarily through family credit to low-income families in work, we must all hope for the maximum possible take-up. It is difficult, however, to determine on what basis that hope should be assessed. The Minister has said — this has been said by the Government ever since the family credit scheme was first proposed — that it is expected that take-up will be at least 60 per cent. The take-up of FIS is about 50 per cent., so the Government can be pressed over and over again to justify their claim that the take-up of family credit will be substantially higher than that of FIS. Ministers seem to find the distinction between justification and repetition a fine one that eludes them.

There was a time, in the bold early days, when the Government were determined to pay family credit through the pay packet, and there were echoes of that in the Minister's speech this evening. When responding to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, he replied in terms that were used when family credit was intended to be paid through the pay packet. I think that in those days it was only the Monday Club that supported that proposal. It was not even supported by the Institute of Directors and the few other organisations that the Government were able to drum up express agreement with from time to time. Finally, the Government were forced to drop the proposal to pay family credit through the pay packet. They accepted that it would continue to be paid to mothers.

It was at that time that the Government claimed that the take-up of family credit would be higher than that of FIS because it would be paid through the employer and the pay packet. Everyone else said that it would lead to a reduced take-up. Whether it was the Government or others who were right, it seems that there is no argument for increased take-up. No further argument and no alternative justification has been advanced for a higher take-up, and the figure remains at at least 60 per cent. It should be said, however, that in the uprating statement the Secretary of State implied that take-up might rise to as high as 70 per cent. I am not sure whether the Secretary of State misunderstood the figures that he was given. The Government have put forward no justification for this measure, as the Minister demonstrated tonight.

In the hope that some new form of words had been devised, I tabled a question to the Secretary of State. I must commend the person who drafted the reply: if family credit is the jewel in the crown in the Government's package of reforms, this is a gem of a parliamentary answer:

> "The assumption reflects that used in the technical annex to the White Paper 'Reform of Social Security'. Because family credit is a more generous benefit than family income supplement and will go to many more families, we expect it to become much better known." — [*Official Report*, 5 November 1987; Vol. 121, c. *867*.]

That is a circular argument. I ask the Government why it will go to more families and they say, because it will go to many more families. That is a gem of a parliamentary reply, but an argument it ain't.

I remind the Minister, who spoke about how we will have to view the scheme in the light of experience—it is on experience that we should occasionally draw — that when family income supplement was introduced, levels of take-up were predicted as high as 85 or 90 per cent. Certainly, I remember the figure of 85 per cent. being predicted by the then Secretary of State, and my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) assures me that the Secretary of State said that if take-up were only 85 per cent. the scheme would be a failure, and that he was confidently expecting 90 per cent. As the level of take-up is currently about 50 per cent., perhaps we can expect take-up of family credit to be about 35 per cent.

Whatever the upturn in the take-up of family credit, it is noteworthy that even on the Government's wildest claims it will be less than the take-up of the benefits that are being raided to divert resources into family credit. Take-up of child benefit is almost 100 per cent. Take-up of free school meals, whatever it may be among families drawing family income supplement, is running generally at about 66 to 75 per cent.

One of the most inexplicable of the unexplained changes that the Government have made—no argument has been advanced to justify it — has been the withdrawal of the right of local authorities to supply free school meals to low-income families who are not necessarily to draw them as a right. It is a mean debarring that will rule out schemes presently run by two thirds of local authorities in Britain, presumably because the Government feel that it is something from which low-income families in their areas will benefit. About 500,000 children not on supplementary benefit, according to the latest available figures, receive free school meals. Ministers have argued that those on family credit will get some compensation, but nevertheless there are 300,000 children not currently on family income supplement getting free school meals, and it seems unlikely that they are all in families that will qualify for family credit, even if they are in families who will claim it. In addition, the right to welfare milk is abolished in the present Social Security Bill.

The Government have justified freezing child benefit by their claim that the increased resources — about £120 million, according to Government figures — that would have been needed to increase child benefit are required for family credit. I noticed that the Minister advanced a slightly different argument — that apart from that argument, which I presume he supports, it is all right to freeze child benefit because it is paid to the mother and the money is going into family credit, which is also paid to the mother. How would the Minister have justified it if the Government had got away with their original proposal and paid the benefit through the employer? No doubt the Minister would have discovered some other ingenious justification.

If one adds the £175 million a year that the Government saved the last time they froze child benefit a couple of years ago to the £120 million that they are saving now, families with children have probably provided all the extra money that the Government claim to be putting at the disposal of the family credit scheme.

The Secretary of State said in the uprating statement —the Minister echoed it in opening the debate—that an increase in child benefit would not have helped children in families on benefit. Families on family credit are, at best, merely being compensated for the loss of an increase in child benefit. They are not receiving extra money, because child benefit was not increased over and above the amount that they would have received had it been inflation-proofed. Families entitled to family credit but not claiming it will enjoy only the loss and not the compensation.

I do not intend to dwell on the value of child benefit as a useful benefit as opposed to the means-tested and targeted approach to family poverty implied by family credit, but I am sure that the House will be aware that it has been estimated that the freezing of child benefit alone has pushed 10,000 more families into dependency on benefit. That has been done by a Government and a Secretary of State who claim that they want to reduce dependence on benefit.

The Minister referred to the depth of the poverty trap that can exist with family income supplement. Indeed, the Government are reducing the worst of the depth of the poverty trap by the better rates at which family credit will be paid. But if we look in a little more detail at the impact of the rates, in particular the impact of the rates taken in conjunction with other changes that the Government are making, we shall see that, although they have removed the situation in which a rise in gross income could lead to an actual fall in net income, to someone facing a marginal tax rate of over 100 per cent., unfortunately, they have greatly increased the number of those with high marginal tax rates

In most cases, the number of those with high marginal tax rates are facing far higher rates than the maximum rate paid by the richest taxpayers, whom the Government loudly and often deplore. Also, the rates at which marginal tax will be paid by such families are considerably higher than those that were paid in the past under the family income supplement by those who are not actually subject to the highest rate of over 100 per cent.

Under the Government's proposals, a two-child, low-paid family on family credit alone faces a marginal tax rate of 81 per cent. That means that they will lose 81p of every £1 of increase in income. If they get housing benefit also, the tax rate is increased to 85p in the £1, even for an owner-occupier who gets only rate rebate. For a family in exactly the same circumstances, on family credit and receiving not only rate rebate but rent rebate because they are in rented property and not in their own home, the marginal tax rate —the rate of withdrawal—rises to 98 per cent. They lose 98p of every £1 increase that they receive. Such a family may not be as grateful as the Minister seems to expect for the 3p or so in the £1 saved from the worst rates of withdrawal under the old scheme.

The Minister gave us two or three interesting examples. Unfortunately, I was not able to write quickly enough to take down all the details of the examples that he quoted, but they compare with some of the examples that I have been given. It is an interesting comparison.

On the figures that I have, a single parent earning £90 gross, with two children of nine and 12, and drawing housing benefit, will gain £15·38 from the change from family income supplement to family credit. The Minister explained to the House what a generous Government they are to be giving such a person such a great increase. He gave an example of somebody with slightly older children, and drawing family credit of about £27. That is a lot of money. It is extremely unfortunate that, owing to the package of changes that the Government are putting before us, that single parent, who will gain £15·38 from the change to family credit, will lose £15·40 from the changes in housing benefit. That is a net reduction in income of 2p. Perhaps Conservative Members will not consider that figure significant, but it is not quite the same as the glowing picture that the Minister painted.

A family on £110 gross, with average rent, rates, water rates and so on, will gain £12 to £13 on family credit, compared with what they would get today on family income supplement. What a pity that, when housing benefit is taken into account, after meeting their housing costs, they will face a net loss in income of £5·89 a week.

In another place, the Government acknowledged that, indeed, such problems might arise. They said, "What a pity it is. It does not affect the fact that it is a terribly generous scheme, but it is inevitable." Rubbish. There is

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

nothing inevitable about making changes in a scheme that will give a substantial improvement in the income that is paid to people at work directly as between family credit and family income supplement, and taking it back on housing benefit. The proposal was not cast on tablets of stone. It did not come down from the Mount with Moses. It is a choice that the Government have made to save far more — hundreds of millions of pounds — on housing benefit. At the same time, they want substantial credit and pats on the back from the House because of what they are doing, through family credit, for low-income families in work. If the family credit taper had been less harsh — and the savings from housing benefit less substantial — the poverty trap could have been more substantially reduced, or perhaps even eliminated.

We shall not vote against the regulations at the end of the debate because for once there will actually be more gainers than losers. However, I remind the Government of the comments made consistently — whenever the regulations have been described and whenever the family credit scheme has been discussed or assessed — by every commentator from the Select Committee on Social Services to Conservative Back Benchers and Conservative party organisations. Whether the Government can claim family credit to be a success even in their terms will depend heavily on whether the take-up of the scheme for once meets expectation. I remind the Minister how much he and his Government have reduced their expectations since the family income supplement scheme was introduced.

We welcome improvements for those families who will get more money from the scheme. However, we deeply deplore the loss to the many families who are being conned by the Government and told how generous they are being — at the expense of child benefit — to low-paid families in work. Those families will find, that they are no better off — or, indeed that they are substantially worse off — as a result of the regulations.

10.47 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): It would be churlish of me not to admit that family credit will do something to eliminate poverty for low-income families with children. That is why alliance Members have always regarded family credit as one of the more acceptable provisions of the Social Security Act 1986. My greatest worry about family credit is the Government's complacency over the take-up rate. When they introduced the idea of family credit the then Secretary of State proudly announced that it would have an estimated take-up rate of 60 per cent. As I understand that the take-up rate for family income supplement is about 40 per cent., I concede that the increase would be a great improvement.

However, I am far from convinced that family credit will reach that estimated figure and, having heard the Minister's remarks, I am even more keen to find out how the Government reached the figure. I am sure that it was not plucked out of thin air.

I am sure that the whole House will be concerned about the plight of the 40 per cent. who, according to estimates, will not claim their entitlement to family credit for several reasons. Of course, many who fall into that category will not claim it because they feel, wrongly, that there is a stigma attached to claiming benefits. It would help enormously if there were less talk of scroungers in relation to those who claim benefit. Those entitled to claim benefits are getting what is legally theirs and there is no shame in that.

What steps do the Government intend to take to improve the take-up rate of family credit and benefits in general? It seems that there is plenty of money to be found to provide wall-to-wall coverage explaining how to take part in the Government's major share issues. If millions of pounds are available to help individuals to improve their position by making small investments, the Government must be prepared to show the same enthusiasm for helping those on low incomes, and, indeed, those who depend on benefits. The obvious answer would be to spend a reasonable amount on advertising to explain the changes in social security next year and to explain who is entitled to claim.

Perhaps the Minister could tell the House how much he intends to spend on advertising. All too often, that job is left in the hands of organisations such as the citizens advice bureaux. The groups do a fine job, but their resources are already stretched to their limits and they have many responsibilities. One way in which the Government could help would be by providing the CABs with extra resources to help them to cope with the massive increase in the number of people who wish to know their entitlements. Last year the CABs dealt with 1·25 million inquiries on social security alone.

Groups that have the job of explaining these difficult rules should have the clear support of the Government.

There is anxiety that the Local Government Bill may affect the ability of local authorities to launch campaigns to explain what benefits people are entitled to. The concern is that the clause dealing with political campaigns may be so wide that it will make a take-up campaign illegal. I should be grateful if the Minister could assure me that that will not be so. If not, will he tell the Secretary of State for the Environment what a harmful proposal it could be?

When the Secretary of State told the House of his highly unpopular decision to freeze child benefit, he attempted to defend the indefensible by directing more money to income support and a further £220 million to family credit. The arguments about the merits of universal benefits and the demerits of means-testing have been made many times in the House in recent weeks and I shall not repeat them. If the Government are determined to divert resources to means-tested benefits it would be fairer if the poorer families such as those on family credit were given a respectable increase rather than merely compensation.

10.50 pm

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to pay tribute to the initiator of the benefit that has led to family credit. It was my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Joseph who established family income supplement. It was a remarkable recognition of the plight of many thousands of families who were in greater poverty in work than they would have been if dependent on social security benefits. It was a recognition of that position, which offends all our basic instincts, that led my right hon. and noble Friend to introduce that benefit. In the debate on the modification of family income supplement into family credit and the way in which it was financed I do not think that sufficient recognition was given to this point.

Nor do I think that we have sufficiently recognised that one major improvement is that family credit gives greater benefit to older children. For many years teenage children, who are much more costly than younger children, were not catered for adequately by the social security system. I am glad that this has been dealt with in the development of family income supplement into family credit.

I appreciate the points made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State that the benefit will be more responsive and that there will be greater simplification. The use of net wages will lead to greater justice, and fewer families will be better off out of work than in work. It would be churlish not to acknowledge all those important points.

At the same time, I have reservations about the justification for diverting child benefit increase money to family credit. It is the misfortune of children that the way the tax and social security system recognises their existence is regarded as a cost by the Treasury. It is the fortune of house owners that mortgage interest relief is not regarded in the same way. I feel more strongly about the arguments for diverting mortgage interest relief payments into housing benefit than I do about changing child benefit into family credit payments. It is not of major importance at the moment, but the whole system needs fundamental assessment and investigation before we move any further.

Those are only minor points compared with the need to point out sufficiently that the regulations, by improving and developing the family credit system, make for much greater benefits for those impoverished families in work. I warmly welcome the regulations.

10.55 pm

Mr. Portillo: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate. First may I say how much I appreciated the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) it was the model of an ungrudging speech. I know how strongly my hon. Friend feels about child benefit, yet she was generous enough to pay tribute, none the less, to what we have done under the family credit draft regulations.

I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) did not adopt the same spirit. The hon. Lady was rather grudging in her welcome, despite the fact that the regulations will bring a tremendous advantage to a large number of families. I found it confusing that the hon. Lady should argue that, because the take-up of the benefit is less than 100 per cent., we should spend the £120 million more wisely by raising child benefit and spreading it thinly over both those in need and those not in need.

I appreciate the argument that the hon. Members for Derby, South and for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) have made about take-up. We all wish that take-up could be higher. Granted that we intend to do everything we can to make it higher, I do not see that there is a conclusive argument for saying that it would be better to give 4p a day per child in child benefit to families who do or do not need that benefit—or rather, only to those who do not need it because that money would not affect those on income support or family credit. It is a weak argument.

I was not sure in the end whether the hon. Member for Derby, South was saying that she thought that FIS had been a good or bad benefit. She quoted the argument that if there had been less than an 85 per cent. take-up it would be judged a failure. I cannot imagine that she believes that it has been a failure, as it is self-evident that it has provided a great deal of help to working families. If the Labour Government had thought it a failure, doubtless they would have scrapped the benefit. As family credit is bringing more relief to more families, I cannot believe that the hon. Lady does not, in her heart of hearts, believe that it is a move in the right direction.

Mr. Frank Field: Let us leave the 10p spreading thinly and the rest of it as a good debating point. Will the hon. Gentleman respond to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South? We were given some figures that presented some massive increases in income for families claiming the new benefit. My hon. Friend thought that perhaps the Minister had misled the House unintentionally or did not understand the interaction with housing benefit. Were the figures that he gave us those reached after the clawback of other changes in social security benefit?

Mr. Portillo: No, they were not.

Mr. Field: Ah.

Mr. Portillo: The percentage of families on family credit who are receiving housing benefit is about 20 per cent. The percentage who are receiving both a rate rebate and a rent rebate or rent allowance is about 4 per cent. I am perfectly prepared to admit to the hon. Gentleman that the credit that some people gain is, to some extent, clawed back. The extremely high marginal rates of withdrawal that have been quoted apply to 4 per cent. of families. In fact, 80 per cent. of families are outside housing benefit altogether; that is partly an achievement of the family credit system.

One of the problems that the Opposition appear to have all the time is their inability to welcome anything that produces a large number of gainers if an extremely small minority of people will gain less.

Mrs. Beckett: The figures that I have show that there is only a marginal proportion of gainers to losers—perhaps a few tens of thousands. According to the figures that I have been given, there are a substantial number of losers.

If the Minister is correct, only a tiny percentage of people may face marginal tax rates of 98p in the pound. If that proportion is so tiny, and the Government are being so generous, it is a pity that they could not have put in just that teeny-weeny bit of extra money so that that did not happen. I had a feeling that I would be told that I had been grudging, but the Government congratulate themselves so heartily that I thought that anything further from me would be superfluous.

Mr. Portillo: I take the hon. Lady's point. On take-up, the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) asked how much money we would spend on advertising family credit. It will be £3 million, or perhaps a little more. He also asked whether we would support the attempts of citizens' advice bureaux to publicise the benefit. The Government also already provide substantial support for their excellent work. A sum of £7 million springs to mind, but I would want to check that. We recognise their excellent work. The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Local Government Bill would affect local authorities' ability to promote take-up campaigns. I shall happily refer that question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I am sure that he will want to consider the matter carefully.

[Mr. Portillo]

We have had a short and interesting debate. The lateness of the hour and the lack of whole-hearted onslaught by the Opposition tends to show that the Government are providing a benefit which will be of great value to working families and redress many of the problems which hon. Members on both sides of the House take seriously — those facing people in work or those thinking of going back into work. The draft regulations provide real improvements. For that reason, I commend them warmly to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Family Credit (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 3rd November, be approved.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. —*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

Committee tomorrow.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

BATTERY HENS

That the draft Welfare of Battery Hens Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 6th July, be approved.

WELFARE OF CALVES

That the draft Welfare of Calves Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 15th July, be approved.

Question agreed to.

Rebecca Field

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Alan Howarth.]*

11.1 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for coming to the House tonight to grapple with a difficult problem about which I feel strongly and which has been running on for far too long already.

The problem is similar to one I raised in the House almost exactly six years ago, which involved an untoward incident which affected my then constituent, Mr. David Woodhouse, who, distressingly has made no recovery. The problem revolves around the birth, three years ago last Wednesday, of Rebecca Field at the Hereford county hospital, as a consequence of which she is partially paralysed and totally dependent on artificial ventilation.

I want to pay tribute to the courage and determination of Rebecca's parents, who have set out to give her the best life they possibly can on very limited means. They have spared themselves no effort. I should like to take this opportunity to thank all the agencies, such as social services, who have contributed in such a variety of ways to improve the quality of life for the Field family. There have been financial contributions to establish a trust fund, and the Ben Hardwick fund has helped towards specialist family transport. There has been a community effort to get the family on a normal keel.

There still remains, however, a fundamental and unsolved problem — the unsatisfactory investigation of what happened in that "untoward incident". I believe that it is perfectly understandable that there should be acute frustration in the Field family at the present state of affairs. In the Woodhouse case, the problem was cracked, if not broken, by the setting up of a sort of eminent persons group, who sifted through the evidence and formulated an opinion of what had gone wrong. In that case, it was sufficient to facilitate the start of legal proceedings by the family, but it is worth observing that the patient was, and is, in no position to disagree with the findings. My hon. Friend the Minister will appreciate that there is a difference in the Field case.

I shall recap the events. The birth took place on 11 November 1984. As a consequence of what happened at the birth, the experienced midwifery sister saw fit to put her objections in writing and make a report to the hospital administration — an extraordinary move, which was brought about by her distress. I believe that the staff midwife also submitted a report, although I do not know how that came about.

I presume that some form of preliminary investigation was done, because the eminent persons group investigation was set up, including among its members Professor Turnbull and Dr. Joan Andrews — both eminent members of their profession of gynaecology. They reported on 15 April 1985. The difference between the Woodhouse case and this one is that Woodhouse is in no position to express an opinion, whereas Mr. and Mrs. Field certainly are. They cannot reconcile themselves to the uncomfortable analyses and conclusions of the report, even though it contains severe criticisms.

It is worth while reiterating that the Fields were not the original complainants. Perfectly reasonable questions have still not been addressed. Is it not a reasonable assumption, for example, that the registrar — the locum — got into difficulties during the delivery? Was the registrar perhaps negligent in not seeking assistance from the duty consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist; and was the registrar negligent in, apparently, not having considered the caesarian section option when it became apparent that a forceps delivery was indicated? To what extent did the non-executed order to perform an episiotomy constitute negligence or professional incompetence?

The Turnbull-Andrews report mentions what appears to be a misleading curriculum vitae for the locum registrar. To what extent was the health authority negligent in failing to note or take account of that? In the words of the report, the authority

> "did not really make it clear that she had not held a formal Registrar's post."

What is more, no references were available or taken up. To what extent was the health authority negligent about the way in which it staffed its obstetrics and gynaecology unit in the hospital? All those questions are unresolved, and need resolving.

There are disturbing references in the report to differences of opinion about how gentle the delivery was. The mother was physically hauled down the bed three times by the force exerted during the forceps delivery and had to be held back by her husband — he is no slight figure himself — and two nurses. It is not surprising, therefore, that the parents attach little credibility to findings that the delivery was gentle.

The parents do not identify themselves with the description of events during the crucial part of the delivery. It bears no resemblance to their traumatic experience. It is disturbing that the conclusions about the registrar's handling of the delivery should use the words "unsatisfactory enough" — that surely means that the delivery was not handled satisfactorily. I can understand the family's frustration at being stymied in their quest for compensation, which would enable them to lead a life that is as near normal as possible.

The Fields retained the services of a solicitor at an early stage, and, through the offices of legal aid, were able to seek expert medical opinion. In this they appear to have been hampered by their inability to furnish the independent expert whose advice they sought with all the paperwork relating to the case — medical records, case notes, reports and submissions by the staff midwife, the midwifery sister, the junior doctor, the paediatrician and the senior house officer.

I exclude the registrar from the list, as professional incompetence or negligence might lie with her — among others. To my knowledge, only rather incomplete case notes have been furnished, and I am bothered about the position of the obstetrician in Manchester, who interviewed the Fields and discussed the Turnbull-Andrews report with them. As a result of scrutinising the rather inadequate case notes, he told the Fields that he felt unable to continue to give them advice. That was their one opportunity torpedoed.

Persistence with the Law Society has resulted in that society being impressed by the Fields' situation, which I believe has been buttressed by a submission, from recollection, by the midwifery sister. The Fields are now at the point where they have been facilitated to take out writs but not to serve them. Therefore, the matter is not yet sub judice. However, they cannot go ahead without medical evidence and at present there appears to be no easy way of getting it. Therein lies the log jam.

In the wider context, it seems quite clear that the eminent persons' group approach to this sort of problem has been less than fully satisfactory. Where there is a genuinely held difference of opinion among the lay people involved, it will always be difficult to find professional people who perhaps feel strong enough to take on people as powerful in their professions as those who are appointed to eminent persons groups. Therefore, it is possible that medical evidence will not be easy to find at any time.

In an excellent private Member's Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) brought forward the Hospital Complaints Procedure Act 1985. However, I have found that this does not fit the bill; besides, it does not really relate to this sort of case and has not yet been brought into force. There is on the Order Paper early-day motion 256, which calls for a Royal Commission to look into medical accidents. However, that is a lengthy attempt to put forward solutions that may not necessarily help in this instance because such a commission would be set up long after the event. As far as I am aware, no progress has been made on the new DHSS guidelines on untoward incidents.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will be sympathetic to the plight of this family. We are now no nearer to knowing how Rebecca came to be damaged, but severely damaged she undoubtedly is, and doubts about negligence, wherever it occurred, have clearly not been dispelled. To deal with this, we need to be able to reopen the inquiry, so that all the documents can be examined and witnesses cross-examined. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to instruct the health authority to make available to the Fields all the papers from the start to the present time.

I think that the Fields are totally financing the ventilator and its maintenance, upon which Rebecca depends entirely for her existence. I understand that about 100 other people in Britain also depend on 100 per cent. ventilation, but in each of those cases the cost is fully borne by the National Health Service. Can my hon. Friend tell me if there is any reason why the Field family should be any different or whether I have got this wrong? I should certainly welcome advice on this matter. I know that my hon. Friend will be moved by this tragic event that happened to a decent family in a nice part of the world. I hope that she will be able to help.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mrs. Edwina Currie): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on his success in the ballot and I am grateful to him for bringing the sad case of Rebecca Field before the House. All hon. Members will sympathise with the family who have been involved in what should have been a joyous event but which turned out to be a most tragic incident.

Mrs. Field was admitted to Hereford county hospital for the birth of her third baby, and on Sunday 11 November 1984 she was transferred to the labour ward. Her progress was monitored throughout the day. By the early evening, it had become clear that Mrs. Field was becoming increasingly distressed and tired. Medical staff were informed and asked to assess Mrs. Field for assistance with the delivery. On delivery the baby, a little girl called Rebecca, appeared to experience breathing

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

difficulties and she was immediately incubated and placed on a Resuscitaire machine. Within 25 minutes of delivery, Rebecca had been transferred to the special care baby unit so that she could be placed on a ventilator. Since then, Rebecca's breathing has been maintained by mechanical ventilation. It appears that the spinal cord was broken and as a result she is paralysed from the neck down, although she appears to be mentally normal. I understand that she may have a normal life expectancy.

I have listened carefully to the points made by my hon. Friend and applaud the way that he has made them. I have also read the reports of the independent consultant and the district health authority, and the statements of the midwifery staff and others. Through my advisers, I have been in contact with the regional health authority both yesterday and today. Therefore, perhaps he will allow me to comment briefly on some of the points that he made.

Most complaints are investigated and dealt with by officers of the district health authority, in this case Hereford. This is a long-established procedure that has been followed in thousands of cases. Complaints relating to the clinical aspects of a patient's treatment may be referred, under a more recent procedure — circular HC(81)5 — to the regional medical officer, in this case the West Midlands regional health authority. If the RMO considers it appropriate, he may appoint two consultants from another region to investigate and report to him about matters of clinical judgment. The RMO was following established procedures. The procedure is not normally considered appropriate if legal action is contemplated. I understand that, as my hon. Friend said, as of today no writs have been issued.

Unusually in this case, the regional medical officer's action was a response to concerns expressed not originally by the family but by staff present at the birth. Thus, both the district health authority and the regional health authority are involved. The purpose of such inquiries is to establish facts and to ensure that account is taken of lessons learned. They are not substitutes for court action.

Two reports have been produced by the regional and district health authorities. The first report was produced by Mr. Key, who was then district administrator, for the chairman of the health authority. The purpose of the report was to enable the chairman of the DHA to decide what further action should be taken. The report was copied also to the regional medical officer and to the regional health authority chairman, and, as a report of an untoward incident, was considered by the district health authority. At that stage no formal complaint had been received from Rebecca's parents. I understand that no formal complaint has ever been received from them.

Nevertheless, it was considered appropriate that a further inquiry should be held. The regional medical officer commissioned the inquiry under the circular that I mentioned and invited two independent experts — Professor Turnbull of the Nuffield department of obstetrics and gynaecology and Miss Joan Andrews, consultant obstetrician from St. David's hospital, Cardiff — to conduct it. Both those consultants are eminent authorities and I have no doubt about their impartiality or ability.

The report was completed by April 1985 and sent to the regional medical officer, and from there to Mr. Key. Copies were also made available to the family. Subsequently, the medical records have also been made available to the family's legal adviser. Therefore, I make two points. First of all, I understand that documents have not been withheld. If my hon. Friend was to tell me that anything has been withheld, if it is within my power I shall endeavour to ensure that it is made available.

Mr. Shepherd: I confirm that the report made by the midwifery sister and the staff midwife have been made available to the family's legal adviser, together with a copy of the interim report made by Mr. Key to the chairman of the health authority.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend did not mention whether Professor Turnbull's report has been made available. If it has not been, I will ensure that it is, as it should have been.

Mr. Shepherd: It has been made available, although I understand that was done unofficially, so as to help the family at the time.

Mrs. Currie: Officially or unofficially, I am glad to hear that it has been made available.

My second point is that there have already been two inquiries — the one by the district health authority and the one by the regional medical officer under the circular. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand if I resist any temptation to ask for a third. I have looked at a copy of the report and in my view it provides a comprehensive review of the unfortunate incident surrounding the birth of Rebecca Field. The regional medical officer has found the report to be

"first-class, comprehensive and a model of its kind."

All the documents were available to Professor Turnbull and Miss Andrews. All the staff concerned were interviewed and were helpful, and there were no barriers to an efficient inquiry.

A number of recommendations were made and changes have been introduced both in practice and procedures. The regional medical officer is satisfied that the district's response to the recommendations is satisfactory, and so are my medical and legal advisers. While possible legal action is being contemplated, my hon. Friend will understand if I am cautious in what I say about the details of the matter. We should also be sensitive that we are talking about a handicapped little girl and her future.

Nevertheless, it is open to Mrs. Field's legal advisers to consider how the report can be used and to seek further independent advice if that seems appropriate. In advising the House tonight, I want to put it on record that I and the health authorities concerned have every sympathy with Mr. and Mrs. Field and with Rebecca. Regardless of the outcome of any possible court action, the district health authority has always been prepared to provide all the care that Rebecca needs in hospital. There she would have 24-hour attention and the necessary equipment. Understandably, Rebecca's parents prefer to have her at home. That means that the DHA cannot provide precisely the same level of care around the clock without lessening the service for others in need.

Regardless, therefore, of the circumstances surrounding Rebecca's birth, we have a dilemma about the delivery of services to that child and her family which has been going on now for two and half years since Rebecca came home. I understand the difficulties on both sides, especially as Mr. Field has given up work to care for the child. Therefore, I asked my officials today to consult the regional and district heath authorities to discover whether there is any way that assistance can be provided more flexibly and a proper care plan drawn up for Rebecca's future. In my view, that should include appropriate arrangements for ventilation, so that the problem to which my hon. Friend referred should not be a burden on the family. I believe that the parents should be involved in the development of such a plan—perhaps I should say must be involved, in view of some of the circumstances that I have seen outlined in the papers.

I hope that what I have said tonight shows that I have looked carefully at the documents concerned and am well appraised of the issues. Sadly, there is no good outcome to this tragic case and all our thoughts are with the family concerned. However, I have initiated certain discussions to add to those that are currently under way. I am sure that my hon. Friend joins me in hoping that these matters will be brought to a satisfactory conclusion as speedily as possible.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-one minutes past eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 19 November 1987

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) (NO. 2) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered upon Thursday 26 November.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (BECKTON) BILL *(By Order)*

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

YORK CITY COUNCIL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

KEBLE COLLEGE OXFORD BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

SELWYN COLLEGE CAMBRIDGE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HAMPSHIRE (LYNDHURST BYPASS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (LONDON) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 26 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Stocks

1. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the current totals of intervention stocks held in store in the United Kingdom, broken down by commodity.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Donald Thompson): A note setting out the volume of intervention stocks in the United Kingdom on the latest available dates, broken down by commodities, is deposited in the Library of the House and is updated monthly.

Mr. Loyden: I have acquainted myself with the up-to-date position. Does the Minister agree that it is an outright indictment of CAP policy that food to this extent can be hoarded when in the Third world about 40,000 children die every day from starvation and related diseases? Why do the Government appear to be sabotaging the only good that has flowed from that policy—the distribution of food in Britain to the poor and needy—by intervening to stop that plan?

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Patten) has made great efforts to ensure that European food is distributed in the Third world, but the inability of Third-world Governments to accept Oxfam or other organisations and the habit of Third-world revolutionaries of shooting at food convoys does not help the smooth distribution of that food. *[Interruption.]* That may sound absurd to Labour Members, but it is true. Intervention stocks of butter in Britain have decreased by 25 per cent. and of wheat by 50 per cent. over the past year. We are not trying to sabotage any deals on food for the poor. In collaboration with other people, we are trying to make those schemes more efficient and more effective.

Mr. Curry: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Third world needs help in developing self-sufficiency and that to use developing countries as a dustbin for European surpluses is against their interests?

Mr. Thompson: I agree with my hon. Friend. The examples of India and China demonstrate what happens when countries begin to produce their own food. Oxfam says that it is not food that is needed, but education for people in the Third world on how to become as efficient in agricultural production as we are in Europe.

Mr. Ron Davies: We deprecate the Minister's facile comments about the Third world. Does he understand that this winter there will be a sense of outrage if these large stocks of beef and dairy products lie unused in intervention as a result of the Government's deliberate torpedoing of the scheme that is currently being discussed in Brussels? Will he undertake to reconsider his position and go to Brussels and argue for the distribution of the surpluses to the needy in Britain and the Third world? Will he further undertake that, if such a scheme is eventually agreed in Brussels, he and the Government will not block its introduction in Britain?

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Gentleman is uncharacteristically fudging two quite distinct issues. In the context of butter and food, we are doing as the hon. Gentleman asks, because we are trying to get the best possible scheme for this system to work efficiently. The distribution of food surpluses to the Third world is of paramount importance, and I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should do all that we can to ensure that it is distributed properly. I wish that some of the recipient countries were as open, free and able to receive it.

Sir John Farr: The House recognises that the surpluses are caused by over-production. Will my hon. Friend comment on what happened last night when the French and German Ministers of Agriculture walked out of a meeting designed to bring about a European 20 per cent.

set-aside programme? Will my hon. Friend condemn the action by those Ministers, because if we could bring about that sort of programme it would reduce surpluses?

Mr. Thompson: I do not wish to pre-empt the answer to be given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on that detailed and important question.

Mr. Speaker: I appeal to the House for briefer questions, please.

Pollution

2. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will recommend a date for the termination of burning waste at sea, ocean incineration, as agreed by delegates at the sixth meeting of the Oslo Commission in 1981.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): This is one of the questions which will be discussed at next week's ministerial conference on the North sea in London, and one to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment and I will be giving careful attention.

Ms. Ruddock: I thank the Minister for his reply. Is it not true that the British Government have already blocked a proposal by the Nordic countries to end incineration at sea by 1991? As the Government are a signatory to the Oslo agreement, surely they have a commitment to set a date for termination prior to 1990.

Mr. Gummer: The Oslo agreement demands that there should be a date for termination. We will listen to the arguments carefully. The United Kingdom is responsible for only about 3 per cent. of the waste incinerated on the North sea, but we are concerned to ensure that the destruction of waste is done in the most ecological way. A difficulty facing the hon. Lady is that the scientific evidence shows that in many cases incineration is the best way of dealing with waste. We have to face that problem.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I congratulate Her Majesty's Government on the initiative taken in holding the North sea conference on this matter, which is of great international anxiety. I congratulate also those concerned with the production of a consensus document agreed between the scientists of the countries concerned. Does my right hon. Friend agree that international co-operation, which involves give and take on our part as well as that of others, is the route to solving all these problems?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right about that. It is a matter to which the countries concerned must together find an answer. I think that my hon. Friend will also agree that any answer that we find should be based firmly on the scientific evidence and not derived from ulterior and exterior emotional answers.

Dr. David Clark: Why is the Minister so hesitant about joining all our North sea neighbours in calling a halt to incineration at sea, which is partly responsible for 30 per cent. of the fish caught in the German Bight being diseased? Is the Minister aware that the Government's hazardous waste inspectorate's report for 1986 says that ocean incineration should not be regarded as a long-term solution?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. That is not the reason for the diseased fish. The United Kingdom Government want to find the best possible answer to this problem and we wish to go ahead on the basis of the best possible scientific information. We are holding the conference in order to come to a decision together. There is not much point in pre-empting the decisions of the conference.

Dairy Industry

3. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what impact on the dairy industry he expects as a result of capital gains tax from the sale of milk quotas being given roll-over relief?

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John MacGregor): I am delighted that roll-over relief on capital gains tax on the sale of milk quota has been accepted as from 29 October. It will now be more attractive for farmers to develop their businesses, since the tax on the proceeds of the sale of milk quota will be deferred when these are used to acquire a new asset. I know that this has been warmly welcomed by the farming community.

Mr. Harris: Will my right hon. Friend take it from me that the decision has, indeed, been warmly welcomed in dairying areas, such as the south-west of England? However, is he aware that many farmers who sold their farms with milk quota prior to that date have suffered hardship? Is there any chance that they might benefit retrospectively from the announcement?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I should like to express my gratitude to my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Treasury for making the announcement and agreeing the decision. As my hon. Friend knows, there is a general principle, which I believe is supported on both sides of the House, that one cannot have retrospective legislation in tax matters and that there is always a cut-off point. Nevertheless, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it is helpful that the announcement has been made by means of a written answer in the House well in advance of next year's Budget so that all those concerned will benefit from 29 October through to next year's Finance Bill.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware of the great concern in many dairy areas about the effect of the sale of milk quotas outside those areas? It is feared that that will lead to less milk being available in creameries and to a shut-down of creameries, as is being proposed in Gwynedd and Dyfed. What does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. MacGregor: There is not a great deal of evidence to suggest that the introduction and transferability of quotas has led to big regional variations in the supply of milk. I do not think that that is so, but it is certainly something that I watch. The hon. Gentleman will know that there is quite a gulf between examining the evidence and agreeing proposals for policy changes which might in themselves be disadvantageous.

4. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next intends to have discussions about the dairy sector with the president of the National Farmers Union.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend meets the president of the National Farmers Union regularly, but has no immediate plans to have specific discussions about the dairy sector.

Mr. Knox: Does my hon. Friend intend to seek an extension of the quota period beyond 1991 so that dairy farmers can plan ahead properly?

Mr. Thompson: As my hon. Friend says, uncertainty is the greatest concern in the farming community at present. I know that my right hon. Friend is pressing the Commission—and will be pressed by the president of the National Farmers Union — on this very point. However, conclusions have not yet been drawn.

Mr. Grocott: We all know and understand that the Minister and his officials meet representatives of the National Farmers Union regularly. However, will the Minister ensure in future that he follows the precedent set by his distinguished predecessor, John Silkin, and takes a little more notice of what consumers of dairy products require and a little less notice of what producers require?

Mr. Thompson: Consumers want an ample and ready supply of clean, wholesome food at a reasonable price. We see the consumers from time to time on various matters. The hon. Gentleman may also like to know that yesterday I saw representatives of farm workers on various points related to agriculture.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my hon. Friend agree that something has gone wrong with the distribution of milk in the United Kingdom? In some areas butter is being manufactured for intervention while elsewhere creameries are short of milk to manufacture into cheese for early sale.

Mr. Thompson: My hon. Friend is being delicate when he refers to Scotland as "some areas". There is a trade in liquid milk between England and Scotland. My right hon. Friend and I have met Scottish Ministers to discuss this matter, and ways of resolving the difficulties are being pursued urgently.

Mr. Latham: Is my hon. Friend aware that he does not have to go to Scotland to find difficulties of distribution, as they are found in England, too? Will he discuss with the European Community whether the quotas are right, as we now seem to be passing from ridiculous surpluses to possible shortage?

Mr. Thompson: As my hon. Friend knows, I am fully aware of the difficulties that some cheese producers in the United Kingdom have had this year. I have already discussed this complex question with the Milk Marketing Board, and my right hon. Friend is doing the same. We hope that the situation in England will be resolved to everyone's satisfaction by next year.

Pollution

5. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is currently sponsoring into North sea pollution.

Mr. Gummer: This Department maintains an extensive monitoring and research programme in the North sea, which includes studies of fish and shellfish quality, water quality, conditions at sea disposal sites, and examination of the effects of a wide range of contaminants.

Dr. Moonie: I am sure that the Minister will share my concern about reports of the declining population of cetaceans in the North sea and of sickness among other species. What does he propose to do about the matter?

Mr. Gummer: I am always concerned when I hear reports of environmental damage or damage to particular species. We are spending about £1·5 million on work in the North sea alone and about £5·4 million in all on marine pollution. I look carefully at anything that suggests that we should be spending more or taking immediate action.

Sir Michael Shaw: Will my right hon. Friend accept the appreciation that is felt for his long-term work on incineration at sea? However, many fishermen in Scarborough fear pollution, because they claim that the processes presently adopted by boats, such as the Vulcanus,are not being properly carried out?

Mr. Gummer: I perfectly well realise the concerns of fishermen in my hon. Friend's constituency and elsewhere. As he knows, the area to which he referred is in Dutch waters. We are anxious that the rules should be carefully kept, even though we carry out only a small amount of incineration. My hon. Friend underlines the point that decisions about the North sea should be made together by all the countries concerned, and that is why we are taking so active a part in the North sea conference.

Ms. Walley: Will the Minister therefore give an assurance that he will introduce the best up-to-date technology to prevent discharges into the North sea from Sellafield around the top part of the country?

Mr. Gummer: I am obviously anxious to ensure that Sellafield has the highest standards, and we have recently imposed further restrictions on how that waste should be discharged. I take my responsibilities in that area particularly seriously because of my own constituency interest in nuclear power.

Mr. Devlin: Will my right hon. Friend note the proposal before the Teesside development corporation to build a barrage across the River Tees because the present washing of effluent up and down the Tees, which is dumped in the lower Tees by several Teesside manufacturers, would mean that the lower part of that river would become polluted to the extent that it would be almost dead and that the pollution would inevitably be washed into the North sea? Will my right hon. Friend take note of that so that his Department will be able to establish some monitoring techniques before the proposal is put fully before the development corporation?

Mr. Gummer: I shall look most carefully at that. We are anxious to continue our policy of improving the quality of water in the North sea. Our contribution to pollution is much lower than that of many of our neighbours. We must aim at solving the major problems in front of us and at the same time prevent any new problems arising. That is why the conference that is about to open is important, and we hope to use it most effectively.

Dr. Godman: As some research shows that the dumping of industrial waste can damage fish stocks, and in the light of the relative shallowness and the near landlocked nature of the North sea, with its important fisheries, does it not make better sense, if dumping has to continue, that waste should be sent out to the far Atlantic in suitably equipped ships?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the fact that we live alongside a sea that is widely used and has many shallow areas. For that reason, we look carefully at any dumping that goes on, upon which considerable restrictions have been placed over the years. In every case we look at the best available scientific response. If there were circumstances in which it seemed that we should change the way that we do things, I would be the first to do so because we have a real responsibility to protect not only the fish but the North sea environment.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

6. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the take-up in the first series of environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: In the eight environmentally sensitive areas introduced so far in the United Kingdom there have been over 1,600 applications and formal inquiries. Those cover 60,000 hectares, or 150,000 acres. In England alone we have already achieved three quarters of our long-term target for the first series of areas.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of the environmentally sensitive areas policy is in large part because it depends on co-operation and voluntary effort rather than on compulsion and coercion, and that many regard it as one of the most encouraging initiatives in the conservation of the environment for many years?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right. I recently attended a conference of environmentalists from all over the world at which it was widely said that our ESA proposals were the most encouraging concepts for the protection of the environment in the past 20 years. The reason is that it is a voluntary system, because it brings farmers in not as antagonists but as the operators of the protection of the environment. That is extremely helpful, and that is why we intend that the second series will spread the ESA attitudes to an ever-wider area of Britain.

Mr. Hardy: The ESA concept is commendable, but is the Minister aware that there is continued destruction of habitat in those areas and elsewhere, not least through the continuing destruction of large lengths of hedgerow, and that throughout that period of serious destruction the Government have maintained a most obstructive view to any attempt to secure protection? Is that obstruction to continue?

Mr. Gummer: I find that an odd question when, in the environmentally sensitive areas, we are encouraging farmers to look after the land in the most environmentally satisfactory way. One thing that we are doing is protecting the hedgerows. We now give grants to people to look after their hedgerows. To suggest that the Government are in some way obstructing that runs totally contrary to what the Government have done. We have moved from a position that obtained some years ago when people were given money to pull hedgerows up to one where we are now giving money to people to keep hedgerows. That is an entire change and cannot be called obstructive.

Mr. Charles Wardle: If farmers on that part of the Sussex downs designated as an ESA are encouraged to convert arable land to grassland for sheep grazing, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the question of access to the downs and the possible danger of dogs worrying sheep?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right to point out that there is a real, and increasing, problem in which various perfectly proper desires come into conflict one with another. It is not just a question, on the one hand, of farmers trying to look after the land properly and, on the other, of those who wish access wanting to get on to that land. Environmentalists are concerned to retain the sort of environment that is natural to particular parts of the country. With the local authorities, we will have to work out ways in the ESAs of ensuring that we do not get the sheep worrying that we might otherwise have.

Common Agricultural Policy

7. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent meetings he has had with other EEC Agriculture Ministers regarding the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The Agriculture Council met on Monday of this week with the objective of completing discussions on proposals on agricultural stabilisers in preparation for the European Council. It adjourned yesterday and reconvenes next Monday morning, 23 November. Some progress was made, but I greatly regret that it has not been possible to meet again earlier than Monday as it is now urgent that decisions are taken to ensure greater budgetary discipline in the CAP.

Mr. Skinner: Is it not a fact that, under this Government, agriculture is the most highly subsidised industry in Britain, costing every family of four approximately £11·50 per week? If the Common Market were a coal mine, the Prime Minister would close it. Is the Minister aware that £20 million of the massive subsidy is due to swindling, and that not one bureaucrat, unlike councillors, has been surcharged? Instead of whingeing about stabilisers, waving goodbye to the Germans, and the rest, why do the Government not do the decent thing and get out of this unmitigated disaster?

Mr. MacGregor: As usual, the hon. Gentleman just does not understand. The whole point about the discussion on agricultural stabilisers is to get greater budgetary discipline into the CAP. We are as concerned as anyone about the level of subsidy that is going into the disposal and storage of stocks that cannot be got rid of, except at subsidised prices. The Government are playing a full part in that. However, it is also a fact that the British agriculture industry is one of the most competitive and efficient in Europe and is one of the most competitive in the United Kingdom. It responds well to technological innovation, and it has enabled us to produce 80 per cent. of all the food that we can grow here, compared to a much lower level before. It is also a fact that agricultural incomes have been under pressure and that food prices have been rising less than the RPI.

Mr. Ralph Howell: May I ask my right hon. Friend totally to ignore any advice that he receives from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and to accept that the common agricultural policy has been a great success? Does he agree that food is cheap in the EEC and that in Britain we are spending 25 per cent. less of our disposable income than we were nine years ago? Does he realise that milk is cheaper than the water that can be bought in bottles?

Mr. MacGregor: I can assure my hon. Friend that I have yet to hear any advice from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that I have found at all helpful. Obviously, I agree with my hon. Friend's complimentary remarks about British agriculture and its contribution to our nation. On the other hand, I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that the present level of subsidies for unwanted surpluses is unsustainable and must be tackled.

Mr. Heffer: Is it not ridiculous that there is food in Common Market food storage depots in Liverpool when people in the Third world are suffering and starving and people in Liverpool are struggling to make ends meet? Is it not time that the Government stopped messing about with the agricultural policy and fought to change it entirely, or got out of the Common Market?

Mr. MacGregor: Getting out of the Common Market would do no one any good. The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard the exchanges earlier during Question Time, when the issue of food aid was addressed. I shall not repeat all that. However, he must realise that one purpose of the discussions on stabilisers is to reduce the amount of stocks in intervention. It is a fact that, as a result of the recent decisions that were taken by the Council, the United Kingdom's butter stocks are down by 20 per cent. compared with a year ago, wheat and barley stocks are down by over 50 per cent. and skimmed milk powder stocks are down by 85 per cent. Therefore, we are succeeding in reducing those stocks in intervention.

Mr. Marland: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that output from British farms is falling and that the real problem lies with the surpluses and in the cost of storing the surpluses that are currently in store, many of which are, sadly, unusable? Will he further confirm that he will not introduce quotas on any other agricultural produce, other than those that are currently in position?

Mr. MacGregor: I agree entirely with the earlier part of my hon. Friend's question. I assure him that we are reducing stocks such as the amount of feed wheat that is in store, and finding markets for it. On his point about quotas, no proposals for quotas on any other commodities are before the Council at the moment.

Dr. David Clark: May I assure the Minister that he has the support of Opposition Members in any genuine attempts at a major reform of the CAP that would reduce wasteful expenditure and lead to a reduction in unnecessary and unwanted surpluses? Will he assure the House that the stabilisers that he speaks about are truly effective, not only in reducing surpluses, but in cutting out unwanted production? Finally, will he give the House a categorical assurance that he will not in any way support an oil and fat tax, which would increase the price of margarine in this country by up to 60 per cent.?

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his first point. Regarding his second point, what we are striving to do in the current discussions is to get stabilisers that are truly effective in the direction that the hon. Gentleman is seeking. That is important for our farmers, and in other ways. I regret that we have not made enough progress on that this week, and I am determined to try to ensure that we make more progress when we resume on Monday.

The hon. Gentleman's third point concerned the oils and fats tax. We have been strongly critical of that tax throughout — the hon. Gentleman gave one of the reasons for that — and we are maintaining our opposition to it.

Veal Crates

8. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress there has been on the abolition of veal crates.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My hon. Friend will no doubt be aware that regulations to abolish veal crates were approved by the House yesterday and will be the subject of a debate in another place today.

Mr. Knight: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the regulations will require that calves be free to turn around without difficulty, and will also make provision to ensure that they receive a balanced diet? In addition, will he give a pledge to the House that the Government will support the tabling of a calf welfare directive in Europe?

Mr. Thompson: I shall give my hon. Friend all those assurances—especially the last one.

Mr. Morley: Has the Minister further considered the regulations as they apply to battery hens and cage sizes? Do the Government have any plans to amend the law and lay down recommendations for increased sizes of battery hen cages?

Mr. Thompson: The hon. Gentleman missed the pleasure of our debate with the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) yesterday, when we went into a great deal of detail about battery hens and cage sizes. The minimum size — and width — for a cage has been laid down for Europe, but minimum sizes above and beyond that are laid down in this country for cages holding one, two or three birds.

Rhizomania

9. **Mr. Alexander:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department is taking to ensure that there are no further outbreaks of rhizomania in the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: We have taken strong and positive action to prevent the spread of the disease. The outbreak of rhizomania in Suffolk has been contained by stringent controls to stop infected plants and soil being moved from the farm. Since the outbreak in August we have surveyed over 12,000 hectares of beet crops and have found no other infection.

We have recently reduced the amount of soil that can be imported with potatoes from 2 per cent. to 1 per cent. and introduced the 1 per cent. allowance for certain other root vegetables. We intend soon to introduce statutory controls to allow the disposal to land of waste from the processing of imported potatoes and other root vegetables only on sites approved by the Ministry.

Mr. Alexander: My right hon. Friend has given a most helpful reply. Does he recollect that the sugar beet industry has for some time been asking for stricter controls on soil disposal, and that the Ministry has declined those in favour of a voluntary code? As rhizomania is spread by a virus in soil imported from abroad, it is almost certain that the recent outbreak came from imported vegetables, so our present controls were clearly inadequate.

Mr. MacGregor: I have to tell my hon. Friend that I examined the proposals that I have mentioned to him today during the summer — before the outbreak of rhizomania — with a view to taking action. I am as determined as anyone to ensure that the disease does not spread, so we have been — and are — moving to the precise point to which my hon. Friend wants us to move.

As to whether the disease comes from imported vegetables, we have examined every possible source from which the outbreak might have come, and there is no evidence that it had anything to do with imports. It was certainly not due to the failure of the measures that we have taken in the past few years. It is now clear that the disease had been in that particular field for some years.

Mr. Bellingham: My right hon. Friend will be aware that many Norfolk beet growers will be pleased with the constructive and positive response that he has given today. Is he aware that many of those beet growers want to diversify out of arable land into woodland? What progress is being made on a farm woodland scheme?

Mr. MacGregor: The Bill dealing with the farm woodland scheme has now had its Second Reading in another place. It is progressing, and I hope that it will come to the House with due speed before too long so that we can get the scheme into operation.

Beef

10. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present state of the beef sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The market for beef cattle is reasonably firm, with prices generally above the level of last year. With the prospect of less beef from the dairy herd it is encouraging to note that the specialist beef herd had risen by 2·4 per cent. at the June census.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the Minister for that information, but will he accept that there is real concern that there could be a serious beef shortage in the coming years, given the cuts resulting from the dairy quotas? Given that that is so, will the Minister press hard in the next round of negotiations to ensure that there is a substantial increase in the suckler cow premium? That premium is the best way to ensure that we get the quality beef we need, raised in the environmentally acceptable circumstances that most people want. That is what the beef farmers in the quality area that I represent are looking for.

Mr. Thompson: The premium is at 35 per cent. this year. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's question, because a great proportion of the suckler herd is in the less-favoured areas and we need quality beef from those areas. We shall do all that we can to ensure that England and Scotland continue to provide premium beef of the highest quality.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Does my hon. Friend accept that, unless help is given to the small dairy farmers who suffered grievously from the hurricane, there will be an even more serious knock-on effect for the beef sector, as many farmers will have to go out of business?

Mr. Thompson: The dairy and beef herd run together and one depends on the other. We have looked at all sorts of ways to help those people damaged by the hurricane and we shall further consider any specific proposals that my hon. Friend may bring forward.

Mr. Haynes: Is the Minister aware that in my constituency we produce beautiful, delicious English beef? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear".] So as not to upset my Scottish colleagues, they also produce beautiful beef. When will the Minister do something about the importation of the rubbish from abroad?

Mr. Thompson: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman's constituency continues to provide high quality beef, as it continues to provide all sorts of other high quality goods. The limitations on imported beef are very strict. We allow a small amount of high quality Hilton beef from the United States. We import some quota beef to help Third world countries — Opposition Members were demanding that when we discussed Question 1 today. Generally, we produce and eat a great deal, if not most, of our own beef.

Agricultural Surpluses

11. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest progress being made within the European Community to reduce agricultural surpluses.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said earlier, the Council of Agriculture Ministers is currently considering Commission proposals directed at tackling surpluses and their associated budgetary costs and bringing the common agricultural policy within a framework of greater budgetary discipline.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is essential to continue to insist on a legal framework of binding rules to ensure budgetary discipline for agricultural spending if the future of the European Community is not to be imperilled? Such controls must ensure strict production controls on every major product area.

Mr. MacGregor: I certainly agree about the importance of providing a budgetary framework that really works to keep the CAP within the budget allocated to it. At the present time—this is one of the problems—the proposed Commission expenditure on agriculture for next year is £3,000 million above the guidelines calculated under the current rules. That is why it is important that we get effective stabilisers next week, and that means having clear figures and a mechanism that obviously works. I would not go along with my hon. Friend in saying that there must be production quotas for every sector. I believe that, in many sectors, price restraints and the kinds of proposals that we have before us at the moment, represent a much more effective way of tackling the problem.

Mr. John Evans: Will the Minister confirm that some of the stockpiled food is now unfit for human consumption?

Mr. MacGregor: Obviously that is so, since quite a lot of the stockpile is in feed wheat, which never goes for human consumption. We regularly monitor stocks, for example, of beef and other products. In our case, I do not believe there is any evidence that we are causing those stocks to deteriorate to the extent that they are unusable.

Alternative Land Use

12. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to bring forward detailed proposals for the set aside of agricultural land.

Mr. Gummer: The European Community extensification scheme already offers an opportunity to introduce incentives to farmers to set aside land used for cereals production. At this week's meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers, the Commission has proposed that this scheme should be strengthened and extended to cover all arable land. Discussion is proceeding on this.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a voluntary set aside policy is an expensive way of achieving not much, since producers throughout the Community will find ways of maximising the apparent acreage taken out and minimising the subsequent drop in production? Does my right hon. Friend think that the problem could be better tackled nationally, with each country separately committed to a reduction of expenditure on surplus production, and finding the mechanisms to do that?

Mr. Gummer: I must disagree with my hon. Friend. A voluntary system can be made to work efficiently, because it polices only those in the voluntary system. It can be made to work properly without the cheating to which he refers. We are enthusiastic about it, and the rest of the Community is beginning to come round to the idea. That shows that the United Kingdom is once again taking the lead in the European Economic Community.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I later visited the scene of last night's terrible fire at King's Cross, where I met representatives of the emergency services. I also visited some of the injured at University College hospital, as well as members of the hospital staff. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Ross: Has the Prime Minister had time today to read the letter in *The Independent* from members of the St. Mary's hospital action group, who are concerned about the £3 million deficit at the Paddington and North Kensington health authority? Is she aware that health authorities all over the country are facing similar situations? In my constituency the Tayside health board is facing a substantial cut in finance this year because of an alleged overprovision under a SHARE formula of earlier years. Does she realise that deficits in spending faced by health boards are borne by patients, through ward closures and reductions in services, and that such deficits damage the morale of people in the Health Service who have to support them?

The Prime Minister: Spending on the Health Service provided by the taxpayer has gone up from £8 billion to £20·5 billion during the past eight years. That has gone up as the taxation has gone up from £11 per week per family to £29 per week per family. With regard to London, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, the resource allocation working party reviewed the distribution of resources and concluded that there should be a move towards national equality of access to health care. That meant that all four Thames regions, which were substantially over their targets in 1979, should receive a reduced share of the total resources. May I also remind the hon. Gentleman that, on the subject of total resources in the health services, the report of Sir Alec Merrison in 1979 said:

> "We had no difficulty in believing the proposition put to us by one medical witness that 'we can easily spend the whole of the gross national product.'"

There has to be a limited budget on all services. The budget on health has gone up enormously—over 30 per cent. in real terms.

Sir Hugh Rossi: As hundreds of my constituents use the Piccadilly and Northern lines to King's Cross each day, may I welcome the sympathy and concern that my right hon. Friend has shown towards the victims and the tribute that she paid to the marvellous emergency services? Will my right hon. Friend make sure that any inquiry that will inevitably ensue encompasses not only the immediate causes of the accident, but safety throughout Greater London's underground system, in view of the deep concern that now exists among the travelling public?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend. I know that everyone wishes to thank all the emergency and hospital services. They were the first to thank members of the public for coming forward so readily and so quickly. Indeed, I think that there was unanimity of praise for almost everyone. Later today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be announcing the setting up of a public inquiry—*[Interruption.]* I thought that it was necessary to say that. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very serious matters.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to safety, investment in the Underground has been steadily rising since 1984. In 1985-86 it was £135 million, the following year it was £171 million and the next year £199 million, and £5 million per annum is spent on specific health and safety measures over and above the safety measures incorporated in other investments. Of course safety will be dealt with in the several inquiries that will take place.

Q2. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Strang: When will the Prime Minister recognise that the figures that she comes out with about health spending take no account of the increased costs in the Health Service, which are greater than in other fields, of the increased number of elderly people in the community or of increased technology? That is why, in my health board area, the Health Service has to cut spending this year on the hospital service by £7 million. That cut is against the background of a greater number of people needing patient care and poorer staffing ratios per patient. When will the Prime Minister recognise that, instead of encouraging the private service, she should be giving adequate resources to the Health Service?

The Prime Minister: When the hon. Gentleman's Government were in power the average family paid £11 per week to finance the Health Service. It is not Governments who pay to finance any service. This year the average family will pay £29 a week to finance the Health

Service. Clearly, the Opposition wish to put up taxation on average families in order to provide more. Every service will have to live within a budget and, because of our rate of growth, we have been able to make increasing provision for the Health Service. As we have a record rate of growth this year — much bigger than growth in the rest of the European Community — there will be increased provision for the Health Service next year of about £800 million. That was previously announced by my right hon. Friend.

Q3. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister is she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Will my right hon. Friend find time during her busy day to take note of the fact that the figure for those out of work in my constituency of Norwich, North has fallen by over 15 per cent. during the last 12 months? Bearing in mind that in Norwich and the surrounding area there is still a shortage of skilled manpower, will my right hon. Friend and her colleagues press on with programmes that give more emphasis to training and to incentives to work, such as those announced yesterday by the Secretary of State for Employment in his excellent statement?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that most hon. Members are delighted with the reduction in the unemployment figure, which has fallen by 445,000 over the last year. That is very welcome. I agree with my hon. Friend that the new training programme announced by the Secretary of State for Employment is excellent and will help many more people to get jobs as more and more people in our work force will require an increasing number of skills.

Mr. Kinnock: Clearly, everybody is glad about any fall in unemployment. We have only 2 million more to go and we shall be back where the Prime Minister started in 1979. Up to 45 per cent. of Jaguar, 20 per cent. of Rolls-Royce and 15 per cent. of British Areospace have been bought by foreign interests. Now that 10 per cent. of BP has been bought by the Kuwaiti Government, will the Prime Minister tell us whether this is what she meant when she talked about encouraging wider share ownership?

The Prime Minister: As our own overseas assets, including portfolio investments, are very considerable and contribute enormous sums to our balance of payments, I would hardly think that the right hon. Gentleman would want to do without them. Moreover, as British Petroleum owns many assets and oilfields overseas, it is not surprising that there should be some international investment in BP.

Mr. Kinnock: The claims that the right hon. Lady makes for returns on overseas investments constitute less than half the deficit that she has run up on manufacturing trade. She should put the matter in perspective. If the idea of Kuwaiti Government involvement in British Petroleum is so good, will she tell us why she has not taken 10 per cent. of the shares, or must we rely on the Kuwaitis to nationalise BP again in order to give it proper security?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman's questions are absurd. BP has great international assets, thank goodness. It is not surprising, therefore, that there should be a considerable number of overseas investors in BP. That is good. It seems to me that the right hon. Gentleman forgets that this is a global economy and that there is global trade. He wants to treat this country as some sort of Albania.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows a great deal more about the Albanian form of government than I do. I am glad that she is delighted about the strength of BP. Does it strike her as ironic that it used to be British strength in BP, and that now it belongs to everybody else? When will she stop re-flagging Britain?

The Prime Minister: It is because I am aware of the kind of government and attitude in Albania that I accuse the right hon. Gentleman of it.

Dr. Michael Clark: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend find time to study the Central Electricity Generating Board's statement recommending that, when privatisation takes place, electricity generation should be kept together as a whole and controlled by the board? Does she further agree that when privatisation takes place there should be competition in generation and that, whatever it might cost to break up generation, the savings would be far greater than any costs?

The Prime Minister: I am aware that there will be many representations before the Bill on electricity privatisation is presented to the House in the next Session. I think that it would be best to wait and see what that Bill contains, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is very interested in the representations that are being made.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Prime Minister say — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has not yet asked a question.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Prime Minister say what contingency plans she has to protect the economy in the event of the United States authorities failing to agree measures to deal with their deficit problem? In particular, will she say how much she proposes to rely on a fiscal and how much on a monetary boost?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman should be aware, if the United States Congress and President do not agree, Gramm-Rudman takes effect on Friday. During that time a number of alternative policies can be put forward, but, in any event, there must be a reduction in the budget. It is not for us to have contingency plans, but there must be some cuts in the United States' budget.

Mr. Boswell: Will my right hon. Friend find time in her busy day to go to Wandsworth to study the benefits to the nation of the sale of 10,000 council houses by competitive tendering, thus reducing costs by 25 per cent., so that it has the lowest rates in the Metropolis?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I can go down today, but I congratulate Wandsworth, under Conservative local government, on the excellent results that it has achieved, both in the sale of council houses, and in holding down rates.

Q4. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Cox: Does the Prime Minister recall that last winter there was very severe weather, which caused enormous problems for the elderly and disabled in being able to keep warm and to pay their electricity bills? As we again approach winter, can the Prime Minister tell the House what realistic thinking she is giving to the introduction of a proper cold weather payment that will bring benefit to people in need so that we do not have the utter confusion of the scheme earlier this year, which benefited absolutely no one? Can she tell us what thinking she is giving to that?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must have forgotten that considerable changes were made to the scheme last winter to meet requests from all parts of the House. The changes mean that the scheme is triggered at a higher temperature than previously. Also, considerable administrative changes were made so that people who have made claims will automatically get the claim again without having to apply, should severe weather happen again. It is an excellent scheme, far better than any previous scheme, and reasonably generous.

King's Cross (Fire)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Paul Channon): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the fire last night at King's Cross station.

At about 7.40 pm last night a fire broke out at King's Cross underground station on an escalator connecting the underground ticket hall area to the Piccadilly line platforms. Thirty people have lost their lives as a result of the fire; 20 were seriously injured. There has been extensive damage to the station ticket hall.

The injured have been taken to St. Bartholomew's hospital, University College hospital, Queen Mary's hospital, Roehampton, and the Wittington hospital.

I am sure the whole House would wish to join me in expressing our deepest sympathy to the families of those who have died and to those who have been injured. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I should like to pay tribute to all those involved in the rescue operations, especially the fire service, one of whose members lost his life in the fire, the Metropolitan and the British Transport police, one of whose officers is seriously injured; and to the ambulance service, the hospitals involved and the staff of the London underground. They all worked with the utmost bravery in appalling conditions to deal with the casualties and with the large numbers of people who were trapped underground by the smoke and flames. Without their dedication, the numbers of casualties would undoubtedly have been even greater.

I have decided that a formal investigation should be held into the disaster, conducted under the provisions of the Railway Acts. The evidence will be heard in public. I hope to be able to announce very shortly, after discussion with my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, the name of a senior QC to head the inquiry. The inquiry will be assisted by a member of the Department's railway inspectorate and by an expert in fires and fire prevention. The detailed arrangements for the inquiry will be announced as soon as possible. It will be for the inquiry to establish the causes of the disaster and to make recommendations to ensure that all possible lessons are learned. Its report will be published.

London Regional Transport, in collaboration with the police and fire services, is already examining the causes of the accident and its findings will be made available to me and to the formal investigation.

I understand from London Regional Transport that the Metropolitan and Circle lines through King's Cross are operating normally. Services on the Victoria, Piccadilly and Northern lines were suspended this morning, but LRT hopes that they will be resumed later today, although initially trains will not stop at King's Cross station. It is too early to say when normal services will be resumed.

Every year the London underground carries over 750 million passengers. I deeply regret that its generally fine record of safety has been marred by this accident. I am sure the thoughts of all hon. Members of this House are with those who have been bereaved, the injured and their families. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".]

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): May I, on behalf of the Opposition, express our condolences to the relatives of those who were killed and to those who have been severely injured and wish the survivors a speedy recovery? I join the Secretary of State in paying tribute to the emergency services. Everyone concerned clearly did a splendid job and we are grateful to them for that.

It is quite clear that a lot of questions will have to be answered and it may not be appropriate to put them now. However, I welcome the inquiry announced by the Secretary of State and especially the fact that it will be open, that the evidence will be heard in public and that the findings will be published. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the inquiry will be extremely far-reaching and will deal not simply with the precise cause of the fire at King's Cross and its effects, but cover all the facets of the operations of London Transport which affect future safety and the public? Have the lessons learned from the Oxford Circus fire inquiry been put into practice? Have any of those recommendations not been implemented?

When was King's Cross station last inspected by the London fire brigade? I understand that there should be an annual inspection. Even at this stage, can the Secretary of State say that the fire did not actually start on the escalator, but in a machine room or in some room underneath the escalator? As the inquiry will take a considerable time to reach its findings, will the Secretary of State immediately institute a fire safety audit on areas within the underground where passengers would be particularly vulnerable and put at risk should a fire occur? If such areas are identified, will he ensure that there are frequent and rigorous fire watchers to prevent a recurrence of this tragedy?

Will the Secretary of State also ensure that there is an immediate and urgent examination into the adequacy of the present sprinkler systems,? Will he ask other areas with underground systems such as Merseyside and Glasgow — although the circumstances of those systems are different from the London system—to consider their fire safety precautions very carefully?

As I understand perfectly well that the Secretary of State cannot make a detailed statement today because the circumstances are still unclear, once he receives the result of the LRT, fire service and police inquiry, will he make an early statement so that we can consider whether any other immediate lessons might be learned?

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his questions and I share the sentiment contained in the first portion of his remarks.

The hon. Gentleman correctly said that there are a lot of questions to be answered and that is why an inquiry is urgently needed. I have a whole list of the recommendations from the Oxford Circus inquiry that have been implemented. Of course that inquiry will be wholly relevant to the King's Cross inquiry when it is set up. As the House is aware and as the hon. Gentleman said, all underground stations are required to be inspected annually. In fact, King's Cross was inspected in April of this year.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's question about the machine room, it would be most unwise of me or the House to speculate on the cause of the accident at this stage in advance of an inquiry. I will, of course, discuss with the chairman of London Regional Transport—and have done so already—whether any immediate action needs to be taken, and naturally everything is being carefully considered.

The inquiry is required to investigate the cause of the accident and all the circumstances surrounding it and report on those and any other relevant matters, including recommendations designed to prevent a recurrence of this accident elsewhere. It is for the inquiry to decide how to conduct itself, but I would have thought that any reasonable matter could be considered.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): May I join the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) in paying tribute to those people who risked their lives, and in one case lost his life, in an effort to save the lives of others and get people to hospital from the holocaust at King's Cross? I hope that others, besides paying tribute to such services today, will ensure that they are not reduced in numbers tomorrow and over the next year. I hope that we do not go ahead with the proposed 800 reduction in the staff of the London fire brigade. I hope that the cuts of over 200 beds at the hospital visited by the Prime Minister today will be restored and that the health authority visited by the Prime Minister and her hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will have sufficient funds to pay enough nurses and other staff to provide a proper service in the area.

Will the Secretary of State confirm that this is the third major fire at a tube station in my constituency in three years since the Oxford Circus fire; that few, if any, physical changes have been made to King's Cross underground station since then; that there have been cuts in the staff deployed in maintaining the escalators, and that further cuts are proposed; that the staff at a station with eight platforms and a veritable rabbit warren of tunnels have been cut from 16 to 10; that the cleaning staff have been cut from 14 to two; that the training provided for station staff to deal with fires lasts for 30 minutes, and is not specific to their stations; and that no members of staff were taught how to help in an evacuation of the station?

Will the Secretary of State also confirm that the Chaiman of London Regional Transport recently said—referring to other difficulties—that too much risk had been accepted in the interests of economy? Will he confirm that the Government will not require any further such economies? Will he also make representations to the management of British Rail to persuade it not to take the threatened disciplinary action against staff at King's Cross who were yesterday threatened with such action for distributing leaflets which said that part of the system between there and Moorgate was a fire danger?

Will the right hon. Gentleman not only provide the funds to make the underground system safe, but change the management, so that it is composed of people who take it seriously?

Mr. Channon: I understand the hon. Gentleman's natural and rightful concern, as a constituency Member who is obviously very seriously affected by the disaster—as, indeed, is the whole House. I cannot agree with all that he has said, and the House would not expect me to. Nevertheless, I shall try to deal with the points that he has made.

I am assured by both the fire and the health authorities that they are more than satisfied with the adequacy of the resources available to them. Certainly, the emergency services seemed to operate with astonishing efficiency last night. As for the cuts in underground staff, it is the prime and the statutory duty of London Regional Transport to operate the underground safely. Safety is paramount in staffing considerations. An annual review of training and procedures has been taking place for some time with the London fire brigade, and efforts are continually made to improve procedures.

There has been a considerable increase in investment on LRT, a good deal of which will be devoted to safety measures. I assure the House that we shall go on with our large programme of investment in LRT, much of which is spent on the underground. That investment has risen considerably since 1984, and has included money spent on the renewal of lifts and escalators, and specific expenditure allocated for health and safety purposes.

With respect to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), many of his remarks are more properly a subject for discussion by the inquiry, rather than ones for snap judgments by any of us.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): Let me join my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in conveying deep regret to all those who have suffered. As one who has used the London Underground for some 40 years, I believe that, in view of the standards that the staff have always shown with regard to safety and protecting the interests of passengers, it does no good to their morale to make the sort of remarks that we have heard from one person this afternoon.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the remarks on a BBC news programme at five past seven this morning, implying that the fire had been caused by rubbish under an escalator, were not what we expect from an impartial public service broadcasting organisation?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out that the London underground carries hundreds of millions of passengers a year and has an extremely good safety record. He is right also to point to the extreme devotion to duty of those who work on the London underground, in particular those who were on duty last night and today at King's Cross station, the many people who came back to work, and, indeed, others who helped in the appalling disaster.

As to the point about the BBC and speculation as to the causes of the accident, it is impossible at this stage to make any judgment, and it is irresponsible to make any attempt to do so. The inquiry will get to the bottom of it. The whole House and the country will know the results of it.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): As we on this Bench recently had cause to be grateful for the sympathy that was expressed by right hon. and hon. Members, on behalf of the Ulster community I express our sincere condolences to the bereaved and our concern for the injured.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Channon: I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, who has behaved in a typically generous manner.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of my constituents in south Cambridgeshire who travel daily from Royston have to use King's Cross station and will continue to have to use it? Therefore, will he reassure them that, notwithstanding the dreadful tragedy, travel by rail, either

[Sir Anthony Grant]

overground or underground, is still one of the safest means of travel and, indeed, involves far fewer casualties than occur on the roads?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I understand my hon. Friend's concern and, obviously, his interest for his constituents and, indeed, the constituents of many hon. Members who travel on the line. I certainly confirm what he said. Travel on British rail and on the London underground is by far the safest form of travel.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): May I join the right hon. Gentleman and other colleagues on behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends in expressing condolences to those who have lost relatives and to those who are now in hospital? I pay tribute to those who worked selflessly and, in one case, tragically, to save the lives of others. I hope that the Secretary of State will confirm that, of all fires, underground fires require particular preventive measures. They are the most difficult to deal with. The television pictures illustrated how horrific the fire was. When the inquiry takes place, will he make sure that evidence from the emergency services and from passengers throughout London is acceptable so that the lessons that can be learnt from the specific tragedy can immediately be applied to prevent tragedies throughout the network and throughout the capital? I hope that no evidence will be excluded on the ground of its irrelevance if it will save lives.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks, which will generally be welcomed in the House.

The conduct of the inquiry must be a matter for the chairman. I cannot lay down how he will conduct the inquiry. As I said, the inquiry is required to investigate the cause of the accident and all the circumstances surrounding it. They are extremely wide terms of reference. I am sure that the inquiry will want to get to the bottom of the incident to see what lessons may exist to prevent any recurrence ever again.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Will the Minister be assured that the people of the Province whom I and my colleagues represent extend their sincere and heartfelt sympathy to those who have been bereaved in the appalling tragedy? We earnestly pray that those who have been hurt will soon enjoy a speedy recovery. Will the Minister accept that we welcome a full-scale inquiry into the matter? Perhaps snap judgments about what happened may not be of best assistance to those who have suffered.

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I endorse the last part of his remarks.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): As a fireman for 26 years before coming to this place, I understand the conditions that were encountered and the tragedy that last night's events have inflicted on families. I add my condolences to those families, particularly to the family of Colin Townsley, a 45-year-old station officer from Soho, and to the other firemen who were injured. They typified the dedication and self-sacrifice of our emergency services. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that the safety aspect of all rail premises, particularly on the underground, will be looked into as a result of this tragedy? Will procedures for evacuation and escape in an accident be looked into? Will he ensure that maps of the warrens of King's Cross and other tube stations are made available to the emergency services and not locked away in the ticket office, as they were yesterday?

To support my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), will the Secretary of State, with the Treasury and the Home Office, ensure that the 800 jobs due to go in London and other metropolitan areas are saved by the Government, because yesterday's tragedy and the loss of life of members of the public and of the emergency services will pale into insignificance if these cuts go ahead?

Mr. Channon: I thank the hon. Gentleman, particularly for his opening remarks. Anyone who saw the fire service at work could not fail to have been deeply impressed and full of admiration for what it did. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for referring to the work that it did and to the sorrow that we all feel at the death of one of the fire officers.

There is a conflict of evidence on the point about maps. I heard directly contradictory information about whether maps were available, so I asked immediately for the chairman of London Regional Transport to investigate this matter urgently to ensure that maps are available, if they were not last night. I do not prejudge whether they were or not; it will be a matter for the inquiry to consider. We must take urgent action in advance of that. As to the fire services in London, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has considerably increased current expenditure, and he is keeping a close eye on the matter.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I thank my right hon. Friend for the concern that he and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister have shown about this matter. Will he reconsider the ratio of investment in LRT between new investment, such as the docklands light railway, and investment in core infrastructure maintenance? Does he accept that the public transport is essential in a city such as London and that part of King's Cross is part of the oldest tube railway in the world? If we are to maintain and improve public transport, which is essential, we must build new lines and ensure that old lines are modernised and invested in to keep them up to scratch.

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend and I shall consider the pattern of investment in the London underground. As I told the House, much of the investment is aimed at renewing and modernising infrastructure. Grant settlement for next year allows for high levels of investment, including renewal of lifts and escalators, specific expenditure for health and safety purposes—safety considerations underlie a major part of the total investment programme—and renewal of track structures and signalling. My hon. Friend makes a perfectly fair point, which I shall examine.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, particularly the form of the inquiry that he has now announced. Will he accept that when such large numbers of people are packed so tightly in such a confined space, as happens on the London underground, any sudden emergency puts life at risk? Will he therefore specifically ensure that the inquiry considers LRT's emergency procedures, the frequency with which those procedures are not only reviewed but practically tested and, most important, the adequacy of the training given to the staff in the operation of those procedures?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman raises two important points. I have read to the House on a number of occasions what the inquiry must investigate and it would be unlikely, even astonishing, if it were not to investigate the cause of the accident or the circumstances surrounding it. I should have thought that the emergency procedures and matters that the hon. Gentleman raised were wholly relevant to that point.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): As one who had to use the emergency telephone number and stay up all night, fortunately without justification, I should like to pay tribute to the ladies who dealt with that emergency service; they behaved splendidly, as did all the emergency services. In his earlier remarks, my right hon. Friend said that there were lessons to be learned. Would one of those lessons that he may consider learning be the feasibility of establishing some form of automatic sprinkler protection in places of public congregation?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the first part of his remarks. The emergency services reacted to the appalling disaster with impressive and astonishing speed and efficiency. That was admirable and encouraging. Of course, the question of sprinklers and other such matters will be dealt with in the inquiry, and we shall consider them extremely carefully.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that for some months concern has been expressed by London Members about the safety of the London underground? Written Question No. 15 today is evidence of that. Does he agree that in striking the balance that is always present between efficiency and safety, the regulations and management decisions inherent in that balance should receive the widest possible consent and agreement between representatives of those employed on the underground and representatives of those who travel on it?

Mr. Channon: I am sure that as a general statement that must be right. I ought to tell the House that the safety record of the London underground has been generally excellent considering the age, density of traffic and all the circumstances surrounding it. It compares well with underground systems abroad of a comparable age. I shall examine the hon. Gentleman's point.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no knowledge of which right hon. and hon. Members have constituents who have been killed or injured in the fire. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) has summed up the feeling of the House. We all have sympathy with the injured and with the families of those who have been killed as a result of the tragic fire.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Business of the House

3.56 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Wakeham): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week.

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER—Opposition Day (4th Allotted Day). Debate on a motion in the name of the leader of the Liberal party entitled "The Future Government of Scotland".

TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER—Until about Seven o'clock Second Reading of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency Bill.

Motion to take note of EC documents on CAP reform and agricultural stabilisers. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER—Remaining stages of the Urban Development Corporations (Financial Limits) Bill followed by remaining stages of the Scottish Development Agency Bill.

Afterwards motion on the Food Protection (Emergency Prohibitions) (England) Order.

THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER—Opposition Day (5th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "Worsening Financial Pressures on National Health Service Hospitals".

Motion relating to financial assistance to Opposition parties.

FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER—Private Members' Motions.

MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER—Second Reading of the Education Reform Bill.

[Debate on Tuesday 24 November

Relevant European documents:

(a)	*8250/87*	*Common Agricultural Policy Reforms*
(b)	*8761/87 & ADD 1 to 4*	*Agricultural stabilisers*
(c)	*9066/87*	*Certain oranges: prices and budgetary stabilisers*
(d)	*6116/87 & COR 1*	*Income support for farmers.*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee:

(a) HC 43-iii (1987-88), para 1

(b) HC 43-iv (1987-88) para 2

(c) HC 43-v (1987-88) para 4

(d) HC 43-i (1987-88) para 2]

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for the statement. The right hon. Gentleman will have noticed that even some of the Government's most ardent supporters in the other place, who debated the matter yesterday, registered the fact that they had little or no confidence in the present handling of science and the science budget. I have asked previously for a debate on the Government's failures in that area. Will the Leader of the House now give us a date for such a debate?

There is growing concern over the recent report of the National Radiological Protection Board about the safety levels of exposure to radiation. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made on the report as soon as possible, since there is widespread and justifiable concern?

May I ask the right hon. Gentleman why there will be only one day's debate on the Education Reform Bill? The Education Bill of 1944, which is the foundation of the

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provisions that the Government are now seeking to destroy, was given proper time in the House. Will the Leader of the House, even at this late stage, arrange for a two-day Second Reading debate because it is a matter of general and considerable interest and concern?

I assume that we shall have the Second Reading of the poll tax Bill some time before Christmas. I am sure that the Leader of the House shares my view that such an important constitutional matter should not be debated too close to the festive season, with all its natural distractions. Could he therefore tell us when the Second Reading debate will be?

Finally, I note that the Prime Minister's PPS has been breaking his Trappist vows on the subject of the televising of the proceedings of this House. As there is strong support on both sides of the House for the change, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when this important debate will take place?

Mr. Wakeham: The right hon. Gentleman asked me five questions. First he asked whether I could announce a debate on science and research matters. I cannot give him a date for that. I shall be happy to organise a debate as soon as I can—time is pressing—because I am sure that the Government would like a further opportunity to point out that our contribution to science and research compares very well with that of many of our major competitors.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the National Radiological Protection Board report. The board's speedy response to the statement of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment is welcome and the Departments with regulatory responsibilities will be considering the report in detail to see whether any changes in United Kingdom policy are needed. They will report to the House if anything should arise from that.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me about the Education Reform Bill and asked whether there should be a two-day debate rather than the one-day debate that is intended at present. I do not think that a two-day debate is necessary but I can arrange for discussions on the matter through the usual channels to see whether we can extend the one-day debate later into the evening.

The right hon. Gentleman asked me when the Second Reading debate on the Community Charge Bill would be. I cannot tell him the exact date, but I believe that many millions of people will consider that to have a Second Reading debate before Christmas would be an excellent opportunity.

On the televising of Parliament, I have already said that I will discuss the matter through the usual channels and with other interested parties, and I hope that the debate can take place around the turn of the year—perhaps very soon after Christmas.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In view of the constant allegations by the Opposition and the media about Health Service cuts and delays in operations, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he is aware that our hon. Friend, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security announced two days ago at the European Health Ministers conference that we now lead the world in transplant surgery and in the number of operations performed? Is he further aware that despite next Thurday's Opposition debate many Conservative Members would welcome a full debate on the financing of the Health Service and its future in the latter part of the 20th century?

Mr. Wakeham: I was aware of my hon. Friend's points. I hope that, in the absense of a better opportunity, he will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, in the debate next Thursday.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I am sure that we wish the Secretary of State for Social Services better health. However, will the Leader of the House make it known that there is some disappointment that the long-awaited statement on primary care has not been made? Can he tell us whether it will be made before Christmas? If the statement is made, will there be an opportunity for the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is responsible for health in Scotland, to make a separate statement so that Scottish Members have the opportunity to question him?

Mr. Wakeham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his good wishes to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. Certainly the statement on primary health care will be made very shortly. I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's question about a Scottish statement, but I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that early-day motion 275 concerning the future of the national dock labour scheme has now been signed by more than 100 hon. Members?

[That this House believes that the National Dock Labour Scheme is an anachronism which both endangers the viability of jobs in the scheme areas and acts as a deterrent to job creation by new ventures; and calls on Her Majesty's Government to abolish the scheme, and open negotiations immediately with employers and unions to bring that about.]

Is he further aware that a growing number of Conservative Members feel that the national dock labour scheme is not in line with the Government's principles. Will he find time for a debate on the matter in the near future?

Mr. Wakeham: I have indeed seen my hon. Friend's motion. The Government made it clear in the last Parliament that they have no plans to change the operations of the scheme, and that remains the position. However, such matters are kept under review and I shall certainly refer my hon. Friend's remarks to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Is the Leader of the House aware that in my constituency and in other Glasgow constituencies, review committees, which are not democratic bodies by any means, are considering the future of primary schools? Some of the proposals will entail young children having to negotiate the Townhead interchange, which is one of the biggest motorway interchanges in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, young children are being expected to cross main roads. If the future of our children is to be considered in this manner, we should surely debate the matter in the House.

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly take on board the concern that the hon. Gentleman expresses on behalf of his constituents. The first step is for me to have a word with the Secretary of State for Scotland to consider how best to proceed.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will my right hon. Friend consider giving time for an early and urgent debate on an act of arrogant political dictatorship by Haringey borough council? The council has removed all opposition members from its committees and outside bodies on the ground that they have refused to sign a questionnaire, which goes far beyond a declaration of legitimate interest, and which is at least impertinent and at most an infringement of individual civil liberties, as has been confirmed by the National Council for Civil Liberties. This act has deprived the majority of my constituents of proper representation on the authority that looks after their local interests.

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I understand that there is no statutory obligation on councillors to complete such a questionnaire, but there is a statutory obligation on them to declare a pecuniary interest when it arises in debate. That appears to be the better approach. The Government are considering carefully the prevention of such abuses in the light of the recommendations made in the Widdicombe report.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Leader of the House find time to read the report of Tuesday's Supply day debate on the provision of public transport in this country, and see what was said about the state of London Regional Transport? Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the provision of emergency services in London, given that we face the loss of hundreds of uniformed fire brigade officers and that we are suffering cuts in the ambulance service and in the National Health Service generally. London's emergency services do not want simply to hear tributes from this House for the service that they provide in times of emergency; they want to hear that the Government are taking action.

Mr. Wakeham: I think that it would be better if the hon. Gentleman, not I, read the report of last Tuesday's debate. He has given what sounds to me a very distorted account of the proceedings, during which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made an extremely good speech. Of course, it is right and proper for emergency service matters to be debated in this House, but not on the basis of the hon. Gentleman's wild allegations. The best way to proceed after the recent tragedy is to wait for the inquiry's report and then for the House to consider how best to proceed.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a statement from the Home Secretary or an early debate on broadcasting so that the concern of the Salvation Army and some of the churches about the withdrawal by the broadcasting authorities of the film "The Love of God" can be considered? The arrogance of the broadcasting authorities allows them to show violence and other objectionable material for hours on end, while a valuable film such as this cannot be shown at all. We want to know why.

Mr. Wakeham: I shall refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. Even if my right hon. Friend does not think that it is right to make a statement next week, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), can find a way of raising the matter on the Floor of the House.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Is the Leader of the House aware that his statement will be followed by a statement on education by the Secretary of State for Scotland. Given that we are to have a debate on Monday week about the English education system and that we are about to hear our second major statement about Scottish education, could we not at least have a meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee to enable us to pick up the issues affecting Scottish education so that the democratic voices of the Scottish people can be democratically heard?

Mr. Wakeham: I understand the hon. Lady's concern to debate those issues. This is a matter that we can best discuss through the usual channels.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we are delighted that we shall be debating the Education Reform Bill a week on Monday and would be happy to see that debate extended, because we understand that the Bill will do a great deal to improve the quality and standard of state education?

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise my hon. Friend's desire to ensure that as many as possible can take part in that debate. I cannot add anything to what I said to the Leader of the Opposition, but I shall consider the matter through the usual channels.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): A practical point and then a theoretical one. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the more malfunctions of the fire warning system within the premises, the less Members are likely to regard those clamant sounds when there is some point in them? We have had two or three malfunctions this week.

The theoretic point. Will the right hon. Gentleman carefully resist the enticements of even the most charismatic sirens—honourable sirens—within this place on the televising of these proceedings? Will he accept that the elder statesmen, who have been here for somewhat longer than our younger colleagues, know the dangers of the provision of television cameras within this Chamber, because not only will it lead to even worse behaviour on the part of some of my colleagues, but it may also lead to worse behaviour within some of the Galleries where other people will want to show off for the cameras?

Mr. Tony Banks: My hon. Friend will get a walk-on part.

Mr. Faulds: I shall be one of the stars and my hon. Friend will be a walk-on.

Mr. Wakeham: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's practical point is yes, Sir. His point is right and I shall look into it and see that we try not to have too many of the things about which he complains.

On the televising of Parliament, I have my own views, but I take my responsibilities as Leader of the House carefully and seriously. The right thing to do is to have a debate. I know how persuasive the hon. Gentleman is in debate; if he finds one or two other people to put the argument his way we shall have an interesting day's debate, and I have no doubt that the result will be close.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Does my right hon. Friend recall that three Labour Members are paid ministerial salaries but are not directly accountable through questioning to hon. Members—the Leader of the Opposition and his Chief Whip and Deputy Chief Whip? Will he consider widening the scope of Thursday's business from simply the financial assistance provided to political parties to the more general question of the taxpayers' value for money from those office holders?

Mr. Wakeham: My hon. Friend tempts me, but I think that I shall resist that temptation. Some things in life are best done in private, and discussion through the usual channels is one.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): I have already mentioned this question to you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Leader of the House arrange for an independent study of the management of the House and its departments? I particularly have in mind the wrangles that have gone on for years over grading, the relationships between departments of the House, the use of space and the style of management, particularly the management of those who work here.

Mr. Wakeham: I know that the hon. Gentleman has considerable experience in these matters, but I have recently come into a job that gives me some responsibility for and insight into such matters, and my first impression is to be impressed at the amount of progress that has been made in recent years. However, if the hon. Gentleman would like to have a talk with me about it, I should be interested to hear his views.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): As it is nearly two years since the House had the opportunity to debate AIDS, since rapid progress is being made in that area, since the Government are hosting a conference of all Health Ministers early in the New Year, and in view of the great public concern about the protection of workers in the Health Service and other health areas, and the responsibility of those working in them who have the misfortune to have contracted the virus, may we have a debate at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Wakeham: It is an extremely important subject and one which the House has debated in the not too distant past. I am sure that we shall come back to it again. I cannot promise my hon. Friend a debate in the near future, although, subject to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, some of the points that he might wish to make might be relevant to the debate on the Health Service next week.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): Did the Leader of the House see last week the photographs of the Secretary of State for Defence dressed in full military uniform, with beret and regimental badge, attending the exercise in the south-west of Scotland? Will the Leader of the House come to the House next week and advise us whether it is now the intention that Ministers should dress in uniform the Secretary of State for Transport as a lollipop man, the Home Secretary as a policeman and the Secretary of State for Scotland as a demolition contractor because of the job that he is doing on all the Scottish services?

Mr. Wakeham: I have a feeling that the hon. Gentleman is jealous because my right hon. Friend looked rather fine in his uniform.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): If my right hon. Friend can find time for the debate on televising the House, will he recognise that the public outside are not as concerned about the televising of this establishment, as they are about crime? When shall we have a debate on the restoration of capital punishment?

Mr. Wakeham: I cannot add anything more to what I have said about the debate on televising the House. I have no doubt that, when the Criminal Justice Bill comes from the Lords to this House, whatever I might do about it, there will be a debate on that matter.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): I know how difficult it is for you to fix a date for a debate on the poll tax because of the Government's arguments about the matter, but will you please——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would have no difficulty.

Mr. Young: In the interest of truth, can the Leader of the House give us a definitive debate by next week? Many of my constituents are extremely worried about the fictitious estimates of payments placed in the papers yesterday. They would like a debate, and to know when it is to take place, as soon as possible. May I have the assurance, please, that it will be announced by next week, if not today?

Mr. Wakeham: I am delighted to know of the enthusiasm that there is on both sides of the House to get on with this matter. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, as soon as I am in a position to announce such a debate, I shall do so, and it will be before too long.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): May we have a statement on the extent to which the Upper Waiting Hall and the refreshment facilities of the House are being used by firms to promote their own commercial interests? Not a day passes without hon. Members receiving invitations, sometimes signed by their own colleagues, but often signed by research assistants and others who purport to act on behalf of their colleagues, inviting them to functions in the House to suit a commercial interest that is not related to the constituency interests of the Members concerned, or, indeed, to any desirable parliamentary object. Is it not right that Members' own use of the facilities of the House for constituency and parliamentary purposes should be made a priority and that commercial interests should take a back seat?

Mr. Wakeham: My experience of visiting such exhibitions is not complete. I do not think that I have seen all of them. I have found some of them interesting and some less so. I shall consider whether the arrangements made are satisfactory and I shall find a way of communicating with my hon. Friend.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The House knows that I am always reluctant to curtail business questions. I shall call those hon. Members who have been rising, but I draw their attention to the fact that there is a statement from the Secretary of State for Scotland and we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): If the Leader of the House was present at Question Time yesterday, he may have noticed that Foreign Office Ministers were calling on a number of other countries to conform to United Nations' resolutions, yet were trying to brush aside the resolution passed on the Malvinas Islands. Would it not be best for the Leader of the House to try to arrange for someone from the Government to come to the Dispatch Box and clarify that position, lest the Government lay themselves open to accusations of hypocrisy?

Mr. Wakeham: I do not believe that that charge could be levied by any hon. Member, and certainly not by any hon. Member who was in the House yesterday when my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary adequately dealt with those points.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House arrange some time next week or soon afterwards for a debate about emergency services in London? While the inquiry into the tragedy at King's Cross is to be welcomed and while tributes should be paid to the police, the fire services and the station staff for all the work that they did, as other hon. Members have said, it is also necessary that there be a full debate on the provision of emergency services as a whole. The London fire brigade gets no Government grant, the health services in London are being continually cut, and the ambulance service is under severe threat. I am sure that the Leader of the House would not want us to go into the winter period with the danger of other accidents, perhaps on the railway system, without a full examination of the need for proper funding of the emergency services throughout London, so that, should another tragedy such as the King's Cross fire occur, at least there will be the infrastructure to deal urgently and immediately with the horrors caused.

Mr. Wakeham: Of course, the subjects that the hon. Gentleman raises are perfectly proper subjects for a debate. However, I do not believe that I can add to what I said to his hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about a debate in the immediate future.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Following the tragedy yesterday at King's Cross and the tributes that have rightly been paid to the emergency services, will my right hon. Friend reconsider the decision that he has just given to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)? It is important that the emergency services should have experience in dealing with those matters. My right hon. Friend will remember that there were tragedies at Moorgate and at Oxford Circus before the fire at King's Cross. Does he agree that, despite the magnificent work of the emergency services, quite clearly they need every possible opportunity to practice their skills, backed up by the civil protection organisation?

Mr. Wakeham: I certainly take note of my hon. Friend's view and I know of his great experience with part of the voluntary services. It is a matter that we must consider again, but I do not believe that I can offer a debate immediately.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Following the tragic death of my constituent, Billy Walker, who swallowed the top of a Bic pen, and as several other children have died in the same way, may we have a debate on how that sort of apparently unnecessary tragedy can be avoided and on whether the design of pens should not be subjected to some form of governmental approval? As the appropriate executive at Bic has persistently refused to speak to me on the matter, and has avoided doing so, which is a callous and wicked disregard for the misery suffered by the family, friends and school of the child, is it not all the more important that the matter should be ventilated in the House and in public?

Mr. Wakeham: I must say that, if the executive of Bic thought that he would not get it ventilated by refusing to speak to the hon. and learned Gentleman he does not know the hon. and learned Gentleman very well. That being said, I recognise that it is a serious matter and that it is a proper concern that he has for his constituent. I cannot promise a debate in the immediate future but it is something that we will have to bear in mind.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): May I again press the Leader of the House for a full and immediate debate on the deteriorating standards of London Regional Transport, especially in the light of the King's Cross disaster? As well as expressing sympathy to the relatives of the victims and paying tribute to the emergency services, some hon. Members want to put the case that the rundown in stations and in the infrastructure of LRT has been far greater than the patching-up investment by the Government, and that the staffing cuts have played fast and loose with safety at hundreds of stations in the London area. The King's Cross disaster is a prima facie case of criminal negligence by the board of LRT and the Government. Can we have a debate to prove that?

Mr. Wakeham: To put the case in such an exaggerated form does not encourage me to change my mind immediately. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in his statement made it abundantly clear that safety is the prime consideration of all the railway networks. They have a very high record of safety. The matters are important and we will have to find time for a debate at some time, but I cannot promise one immediately.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his decision to allocate only one day to the Education Reform Bill? Does he recall that in the summer Ministers were talking about two Bills —one to deal with schools and one to deal with higher and further education? If the two Bills had proceeded, there would have been two days of debate. If he really wants an ordered debate, would it not be far better to allocate one day to deal with the destruction of the schools that the Government are proposing and a second day to deal with the destruction of further and higher education?

Mr. Wakeham: I am not likely to be more forthcoming to the hon. Gentleman than I have been to the Leader of the Opposition. There is a matter of principle. I gave an undertaking to the Leader of the Opposition——

Mr. Kinnock: I do not mind if the right hon. Gentleman goes further with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Wakeham: That is to protect myself, not the right hon. Gentleman. I gave the right hon. Gentleman an undertaking that I would look at the matter again. I did not indicate that I thought it very likely that we could have two days, but that we might be able to extend the one day to a later hour.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): May we have an early debate on the disgraceful refusal by the Secretary of State for Scotland to reappoint Mr. Ted Matthews of the Edinburgh council of social service to the Lothian health board, which is now sadly under-represented by the voluntary and charitable sectors that play such a vital role at a time of shameful cuts? Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on that?

Mr. Wakeham: My right hon. and learned Friend has no doubt heard what the hon. Gentleman has said. I would not like to encourage the hon. Gentleman to think that there will be a debate, but I will certainly refer the matter to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the Leader of the House reflected on early-day motions 228, 253, 272, 273

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

and 286? With his considerable personal knowledge of the matter, is not the best way to settle it to announce next week an inquiry and to have before the inquiry on oath Mr. T. P. Abraham, Sir Robert Armstrong, Miss Collette Bowe, Sir Brian Hayes, Mr. Richard Mottram, Mr. John Mogg, Mr. John Michel, Mr. Bernard Ingham, Mr. Charles Powell and Sir Clive Whitmore?

[That this House notes in the book, Campaign, by Rodney Tyler, the Selling of the Prime Minister: from behind the doors of Downing Street and Conservative Central Office—A unique inside account of the Battle for Power that the author on page 1, chapter 1, paragraph 1, sentence 1, states 'It was an extraordinary turnaround in fortunes from the moment on 27th January 1986 when Mrs Thatcher secretly confided to a close associate that she might have to resign. . . .' and on page 3 that 'On the eve of the crucial Westland debate she herself felt shaky enough to doubt her future' though some around her later sought to dismiss this as late evening anxieties of the sort that had disappeared the following morning). It is certainly true that if Leon Brittan had chosen to, he could have brought her to the brink of downfall, by naming the real culprits inside Number 10. Instead, he chose to remain silent', and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account of what transpired between 3rd January and 27th January 1986, at Number 10 Downing Street, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

[That this House notes that the Member for Aldershot on page 136 of his book Heseltine: the unauthorised Biography, states in relation to the Westland Affair that 'John Wakeham issued an order of the day which contained the trite, if effective message, that it was time for all good men to come to the aid of the party. We did and calls on the Leader of the House, the Right Honourable Member for South Colchester and Maldon, to explain when he first knew the role of the then Trade and Industry Secretary, the Right Honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, in the matter of the disclosure of a selectively leaked Law Officer's letter.]

[That this House notes that in his book Mrs Thatcher's Revolution, published this week by Jonathan Cape and Co., Mr Peter Jenkins writes, on page 200 'Brittan himself refused to enlighten the Select Committee on any point of substance. However, he is reputed to have told close friends subsequently that not only has she known perfectly well what had happened but that, on the day following the leak, had expressed her satisfaction to him at the way things had been handled. However at that time, the downfall of Heseltine had not been achieved. . . . He (Mr Brittan) might point the finger at her (Mrs Thatcher). Potentially he now had the power to destroy her'; and calls on the Prime Minister to give the House a full account of her conversations with the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, over the period from 3rd January and 27th January 1986, in relation to the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter concerning the Westland Affair.]

[That this House notes that in The Thatcher Years—A decade of Revolution in British Politics, published by BBC Books, Mr John Cole, on page 170, considering the selectively leaked Law Officer's letter in the Westland Affair, writes 'why did he (Sir Robert Armstrong) not give her a quick interim report when he discovered that the leak was an inside job, authorised by her office? Why did Leon Brittan not tell her? Or the private secretary concerned? Or his chief, who sits in the same room? Or her press secretary? And why did she never ask?'; and calls on the Prime Minister to inform the House of the answers to these questions.]

[That this House notes that, in the book 'Not with Honour—The Inside Story of the Westland Scandal', on page 142, Magnus Linklater and David Leigh write that 'Instead, following Havers's complaint, she spoke privately to Brittan about the leak. Although this is something the Prime Minister has failed to disclose, to widespread disbelief, the evidence comes from an authoritative source, who told us: "The Prime Minister knew about the leak. She was pleased it had been done. There was a meeting between Brittan and her after the complaint from Mayhew. Only the two of them were present . . . Brittan assumed she knew of [the leak's] origins. You must draw your own conclusions." One of Brittan's friends adds, "Nobody thought it was a problem. The complaints were out of the public domain and any inquiry was expected to be a formality. Leon wasn't worried at all about it."; and calls on the Prime Minister to give a full account to the House of the meeting between herself and the Right honourable Member for Richmond, Yorks, referred to therein.]

Mr. Wakeham: As the hon. Gentleman knows full well, I have no intention of adding to the full statements and replies that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Will the Leader of the House cease the constitutional outrage and insult to parliamentary democracy in failing to bring forward the orders necessary to reconstitute the Select Committees, and will he do that either in whole or in part in the near future? So that that does not recur, will he consider re-instituting the Select Committee on Procedure so that the whole matter of how Select Committees are constituted and perform their duties can be re-examined and a decision made by the House rather than by the representatives of the Government and the shadow Government?

Mr. Wakeham: I think that it is the hon. Gentleman who is making a constitutional outrage by seeking to ask me to do things that are not in accordance with the rules of the House. I am sticking strictly to the rules of the House. The question of Select Committees is a matter of some concern. I am happy to tell the House that the Committee of Selection made certain changes and additions to the names originally nominated for Departmental Select Committees. Those are now on the Order Paper and will appear above the line early next week. If they are not objected to, the Select Committees will be able to start work immediately. If they are objected to, I will provide time for the Chairman of the Committee of Selection to put the matter to the House for resolution and will announce a debate in my business statement next Thursday.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Can the Leader of the House discover whether it is the Home Secretary's intention to make a statement before the Christmas recess about what the Government intend to do about those people living here who have been accused of serious Nazi wartime crimes against humanity? Later today the distinguished French citizen, Beate Klarsfeld, who has done so much to help bring Nazi criminals to justice, will speak to an all-party group of MPs. Therefore, can the Leader of the House also find out whether she will be meeting the Home Secretary at some stage?

Mr. Wakeham: On the main part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave last week or the week before. However, I shall refer the points that he has raised to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to read the extensive coverage in the *Daily Mirror* of the ludicrous decision of the Football Association to sell the FA Cup — the most prestigious and famous football trophy in the world — to a brewery? That is especially unacceptable, since a major cause of football hooliganism and the ban on English football clubs in Europe is drunken slobs who have no interest in the game. Will the Leader of the House make arrangements for the Minister for Sport to come to the Dispatch Box to hear the opinion of the House on this serious matter?

Mr. Wakeham: I have not read the *Daily Mirror* but I know the substance of the matter that the hon. Gentleman has raised and I shall refer it to my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Leader of the House consider the possibility of a debate on the decline in the Merchant Navy? I understand that the number of ships flying the red ensign has now plummeted to the 300 mark. That was highlighted in south-west Scotland during the past few days when it was necessary to hire £6 million-worth of ships to conduct a military exercise. As it might not be possible to contact shipbroking companies in the event of a national crisis, might it not be a good idea to consider the strategic implications of the slaughter of the Merchant Navy, as well as its civil implications? I know that a Merchant Shipping Bill is due and I am interested in its timetabling, but as it has tragically failed to address the problem of the decline in the Merchant Navy, I believe that a major debate is also necessary.

Mr. Wakeham: I recognise that this is an important issue. There is a Merchant Shipping Bill which will enable the hon. Gentleman to make his points if we cannot find time for a separate debate. Speaking from memory, I do not believe that his analysis of the recent NATO exercise squares with the facts. As I understand it, the difficulty was not the inability of British ships to take part, but the price that they wanted to charge for their services.

Curriculum and Assessment (Scotland)

4.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement.

Scottish education has a deservedly high reputation, which we are determined to maintain. There is, particularly in the primary schools, a need to achieve a more coherent and better understood curriculum; a more systematic approach to assessment; and to identify pupils who may need extra help. There is also a need for parents to be given more information about what schools are trying to achieve and how their children are progressing.

I intend to secure substantial improvements in those areas. Steady progress has already been made and my aim is to build on this in collaboration with teachers, education authorities and parents. To this end, I am today issuing a consultation paper, "Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: a policy for the 90s." This sets out proposals for defining and developing the curriculum and for introducing a new approach to assessment including testing of key aspects of English and mathematics at the primary 4 and primary 7 stages.

The proposals are aimed particularly at the five-to-14 years age group. The secondary school curriculum and associated assessment procedures have been the subject of considerable study in recent years. The task now is to draw together existing guidance and good practice. That is done in the document "Guidelines for Headteachers on Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages" which, with my agreement, the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum is issuing today. Copies of this document, along with the consultation paper, are available in the Library.

The primary curriculum, however, is less well defined. There is substantial agreement over the subject areas that should be covered, but there is no guarantee of the emphasis that each receives in individual schools. Accordingly, I intend to invite the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum to advise on the balance of components within the curriculum and to develop curricular guidelines for all subject areas for ages five to 14 where satisfactory guidelines do not already exist. I envisage that the consultative committee's initial review will be completed by the end of 1988 and detailed guidelines, at least for English and mathematics, will be in place by the end of 1989 for inclusion in school courses in the 1990-91 session. I also intend to ask the consultative committee to draw up a set of statements explaining the school curriculum to parents.

So far as assessment is concerned, my intention is that national guidance will be issued on assessment policy and methods to accompany the guidelines for each area of the curriculum. I also propose to establish a joint committee of the Scottish Education Department, the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum and the Scottish Examination Board to co-ordinate the development of a bank of test items in connection with the new approach to assessment. At present, in many schools, assessment techniques are well developed, but there is no certainty that basic attainments in language and mathematics are being consistently or accurately assessed. The more able pupils are often insufficiently stretched, while the needs of the less able are not identified in a way that allows

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appropriate extra help to be given. The aim will be to remedy those deficiencies by providing parents and schools with better information on children's progress and their individual needs. Tests will be drawn from the bank by head teachers and will be administered and marked by the schools themselves. Tests will not be used to select children for particular schools or courses, nor is it the intention that they should be used to rank pupils in order of merit.

The proposals on curriculum and assessment, taken together with our proposals already announced for school boards, will provide parents with much better information about their children's education. I intend to reinforce this with the development of a new format for the pupils' progress record and, in particular, the report card so that it becomes a clear and comprehensive report on achievements and aptitudes.

The proposals provide the basis for a substantial step forward in the quality and effectiveness of education in Scotland. They reflect the particular nature of the Scottish system and build on well-established approaches to meet the needs of teachers, pupils and parents. Given the context of the Scottish system, I hope to implement the proposals by consultation and agreement with our partners in the education service. I am inviting comments from interested parties by 26 February 1988, but if this timetable causes difficulty I shall be happy to receive comments up to Easter 1988.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Does the Secretary of State accept that his statement will have been heard by many with a combination of suspicion and dismay? Despite the closing flourish about Scottish tradition, the impression is that the Scottish Education Department is again being made an intellectual prisoner, over-influenced by what happens south of the border.

The Secretary of State referred to curricular developments, balance and new guidelines. Does he accept that we want assurances that that does not mean dictation, with schools being forced to follow a set and precise curriculum with little room for discretion? How does he reconcile such a concept—if that is what is meant—with the rhetoric of choice with which we have become so familiar? Is it his determination to regiment even the form of the report card compatible with educational freedom?

Why does the Secretary of State want to import national testing at this time? What is the justification for that at the primary 4 and primary 7 levels? The Secretary of State will be aware that my hon. Friends and I strongly support assessment when it is in the interests of the child. However, why force our primary schools into what looks like a tight corset of examinations? I should, for example, support the use of the Edinburgh reading test at primary 4, but only because the professional judgment of the teacher would properly be exercised in the interests of the child, not because the Secretary of State demands a set national test. Who has been pressing for such changes?

I recognise that there is a short period for consultation. However, what advice has the right hon. and learned Gentleman received during the consultations that he will surely have carried out informally with the teaching profession? Is there not something damaging about his excursion into education when, as I understand it—I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong—his own inspectors have reported favourably about what is happening in the primary education sector? Is it not in the nature of things that inevitably the tests will be seen to be and will become competitive? If that happens, is there not evidence that the bright will be held back and that those who are struggling will be artificially forced? Is there not a danger that teachers will end up teaching for the examination and not for the children?

I fear that the clear implication is that the Government are encouraging a climate of false competition that will put pressure on children, bring anxiety to parents and distort the community's view of its schools. Is there not a real risk that this importation will be used to rank schools in the public mind and to judge them on false criteria? In the testing, especially at primary 7, many people will see something that will look very much akin to the old 12-plus. Does the Secretary of State accept that the atmosphere is wrong and that he seems to be moving towards a system that is rigid, uniform and traditional in a self-defeating and narrow way? Is there not a reasonable fear, which the House will want to watch carefully and guard against, that children will ultimately be the victims of changes that owe everything to the Government's social prejudices and little to good education practice?

Mr. Rifkind: I do no know whether to be amused by or sorry for the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). He began by suggesting that the proposals are drawn from those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, which could mean only one of three things: that the hon. Gentleman has no idea of what is being proposed down south, that he has not listened to what I am proposing, or that he is unaware of either.

In many significant ways the proposals are not the same as what is being proposed elsewhere, because they are designed to deal with the structure of Scottish education and to be based on the tradition of continuous assessment that is an important feature of the Scottish education system. If the hon. Gentleman does not know that, he knows less about Scottish education than I thought.

First, the hon. Gentleman asked for an assurance that there will be no dictation of the curriculum. He will know that there is a tradition in Scotland in which the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum has, over the years, already achieved something close to a national curriculum. Nowhere does the document suggest powers of dictation or imposition. I hope that that reassures the hon. Gentleman.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman has suggested that the proposal for the report card will create a standard format throughout Scotland. He appears to be unaware that there already is a standard format for report cards around Scotland——

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): No, there is not.

Mr. Rifkind: There is indeed. There is concern that the report cards provide inadequate information fully to satisfy parents as to how their youngsters are doing in school at present. I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman observe to the House that he supported assessment in the interests of the child. That is sensible and desirable, and I am glad that we have common ground about it.

The hon. Gentleman went on to ask why the Government are proposing the limited testing in English and mathematics at primary level. The reason is simple: first, it is surely important, and not a matter of political controversy, that we should be able at an early age to identify whether a particular youngster is having problems with the basics. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen will allow me—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen did not just produce a knee-jerk reaction to everything that is proposed by the Government, they might find that their own education would be improved.

It is in everyone's interests that youngsters at school who may be having difficulties with basic reading, writing or arithmetic should be identified at an early age, so that they can be given the extra help that their teachers think appropriate. Secondly, it is desirable that parents should be fully informed about the capacity and potential of their youngsters so that the latter can fulfil their capabilities.

The hon. Member for Garscadden predictably went on to suggest that what we are proposing would bring back the 12-plus and introduce ranking of schools and competition in the classroom. If he and his hon. Friends had cared to read the document before they made accusations and had listened to my opening remarks, they would have heard that I said explicitly that there was no proposal to rank pupils as a result of the tests. The information that will be obtained as a result of the tests will be made available to the teacher, the parents and the youngster himself. It will not be made available in a way that would enable anyone to know where that particular child ranked in the class. The document explicitly says that there are no proposals to that effect.

I know that Opposition Members will be disappointed by that, because they might have found it easier to attack the proposals if they had included such a provision. Opposition Members may by all means come to a responsible judgment about what is in the proposals, but they should not create a bogus sense of indignation about matters that are not being proposed in the document.

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise—the Opposition appear not to—that any measures that improve the quality of education in Scotland will be widely welcomed by parents—and, I hope, by teachers, who should study the proposals carefully. Does he also recognise that in recent years we have had a plethora of consultation papers, working parties and others, which have swamped schools? My right hon. and learned Friend puts at risk what is good in the proposals unless adequate time is allowed for consultation. Therefore, I ask him seriously to consider extending the period of consultation; otherwise, he will put at risk what may be good in the proposals.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure us that the proposed tests and examinations are an aid only to individual assessment at the choice of the teacher, and not a replacement for the assessment procedures that are in place now?

Mr. Rifkind: I thank my right hon. Friend, whom I can reassure on both counts. We have stated our preference that consultative responses should be available by the end of February, but, as I said earlier, if comments are forthcoming thereafter, they will be taken into account.

The tests are exactly of the sort that my right hon. Friend suggested—namely, to assist the teacher to decide what is in the best interests of the child, and whether he requires additional help and is meeting the basic requirements of English and mathematics. It is therefore desirable that a youngster at primary school who might have particular problems should be identified at an early stage so that appropriate help can be given him.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Secretary of State must recognise that, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said, it is an unusual coincidence that we are considering proposals now in the wake of the proposals for the south. Will he reassure the House that that is not so, and answer the question about where the demands for the changes came from? Will he assure the House that, at the end of the consultation period, and in due course, there will be primary legislation—as there will be south of the border—to enshrine the proposals in law, so that they are not slipped through as a guidance note or a statutory instrument?

If the Secretary of State is saying that no ranking is involved in the assessment, why does he not build on, and develop, the existing diagnostic tests, which already fill the need that he has identified?

Mr. Rifkind: We have no proposals for legislation on the curriculum. I have not yet come to any judgment as to whether legislation on assessment would be helpful. I have asked those who comment on the document to say whether they believe legislation would be helpful to achieving our results, or whether it is not necessary, given the nature of the Scottish education system. The normal co-operative process might be sufficient for the purpose.

Essentially, we are trying to allow the individual head teacher to choose from a bank of national tests the test that he thinks is appropriate to the circumstances of the school for which he is responsible. It will then be for the teacher to mark the test, and the information will be made available only to the parents and children concerned. The teacher will then be able to come to a judgment about whether additional help might be required. Of course, tools are already available to teachers, but I cannot see why there should be objections to making a judgment about whether the basic, crucial elements of a good quality of education have been achieved in the case of a child.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that I welcome his proposals to improve the quality of education in Scotland, particularly in mathematics and English? Does he accept that I do not believe it will be necessary to legislate, because all his proposals can surely be covered by administrative arrangements and circulars?

Will my right hon. and learned Friend give firm approval to the view that the consultation period should be extended to the end of March, or perhaps April, so that the schools and teachers can plan their discussions over a longer period, rather than rush things through by the end of February?

Mr. Rifkind: I noted with interest my hon. Friend's view that the necessity for legislation is unlikely. I also confirm to my hon. Friend, as I said in my opening statement, that we shall be extremely happy to receive the responses of those interested in these matters up to Easter of next year.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Provan): On the question of national assessment and testing, will the Secretary of

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State answer the question that has already been asked: who in Scottish education has been demanding this particular proposal? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman name anyone in the Scottish education world who is demanding national assessment and testing? Is this not just another simple example of aping the English and, in particular, following the disastrous proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science? Does he accept that the proposals completely ignore the fruitful developments that have taken place in recent years regarding internal assessment in Scotland both at primary and secondary level?

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, Sir. The right hon. Gentleman is quite right that there have been significant improvements with internal assessment, and that will continue. However, inspectors' reports suggest that although in many schools the methods of assessment are perfectly satisfactory, that is not true of all schools. There are different methods of assessment and different approaches. We do not mind a degree of flexibility, but it is useful that teachers should have available to them — as part of teachers' consideration of continuous assessment — the results of tests such as those we are proposing. We are not suggesting, nor have we ever suggested, that a teacher will simply be expected to rely on this particular method when making a judgment as to what may be appropriate for an individual child. I cannot understand why the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends are so anxious that teachers should not have the benefit of information of that nature. If Opposition Members can identify some basic problem that will arise as a result of our proposals, we would be interested to hear what it is.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): It will come as no surprise to the Secretary of State when I say that today's statement confirms our suspicions that the SED is becoming the DES backwards. His statement makes a mirror image of the legislation that is being proposed south of the border.

On the specific point of the identification of children with special learning needs — I remind the Secretary of State that I speak as one who is specially qualified in this aspect of education as I hold the certificate for remedial education — are not such children best identified through continuous assessment by the classroom teacher backed by qualified remedial teachers who have access to diagnostic tests and who are trained to administer those tests effectively? Would it not be better if resources were put into the remedial service, which has been sadly cut under this Government? That would be of great assistance to youngsters with special needs.

Secondly, on the issue of resourcing, what assessment has the Secretary of State made of the implications of the implementation of his proposals? Would it not be better if the money came into the schools for better textbooks, better facilities and better access for teachers to learning opportunities for themselves?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Lady will see, when she reads the document, that we acknowledge that particular provision may be required for those youngsters with special needs. That is something that we will happily take into account.

When the hon. Lady says that these proposals are a mirror image of the proposals down south, all I can say is that she must use an extremely curious mirror. In a number of important respects the two sets of proposals are very different. First, my right hon. Friend's proposals apply to secondary as well as primary schools, whereas our proposals for assessment apply only to the primary level.

Secondly, my right hon. Friend's proposals envisage testing over a wide range of subjects, but our proposals are limited to English and mathematics.

Thirdly, in the English context my right hon. Friend has proposed the need for legislation, but I have said that there will be no need for legislation. In the English context, my right hon. Friend is also proposing that certain national tests will apply in every school, but I am suggesting that, in a Scottish context, it will be up to individual head teachers to choose what particular kind of test is appropriate to their local circumstances.

I ask the hon. Lady not to give an immediate reaction, based perhaps on her natural prejudice, but to look at what is proposed.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the Secretary of State take cognisance of the fact that we are rather hesitant about accepting his advocacy in relation to education because, in effect, we really do not trust him to have the good of the people, especially the oncoming generation in Scotland, at heart? There is a basic distrust. If the proposals contain so little to upset the education of young people, why is he bringing them forward? Does he accept that, in the past five to 10 years, one of the most exciting things in Scottish education has been the development in primary schools? If there are to be changes in primary schools, he should have better grounds for those changes than those that he has put forward. If we are to have such changes, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should say how much more money he will put into primary education.

Mr. Rifkind: It would appear that the hon. Gentleman trusts only those people with whose political opinions he agrees. I cannot change his political opinions.

As regards his subsequent points, we make it clear in the consultative document that we accept that our proposals will have resource implications and that, therefore, it will be necessary to bring forward funding to cover the costs that may be involved.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will not the effect of the proposals be to increase consumer power among parents with children in the Scottish education system? That will therefore enable parents to know effectively what is going on in the schools and to choose between them more effectively. Why does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that Opposition Members think that parents should not be trusted with that information?

Mr. Rifkind: Certainly the proposals on curriculum and assessment will provide much greater information for individual parents about their youngsters' performance. I would have thought that any Labour Member would be only too happy to have as much information as was available and obtainable with regard to the progress that their son or daughter was making at school. I find it difficult to understand why that should be considered a controversial matter.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): To what purpose will the results of the primary 4 maths test be put?

Mr. Rifkind: I have already informed the House that the purpose of the assessment tests for primary school children is to enable their teachers and parents to be aware of their capacity and of any particular problems they might be experiencing in the subjects that are clearly basic to their future educational prospects.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): If the Secretary of State is so interested in the education of young children, why is he cutting money from Strathclyde region and forcing it to close schools that are only 12 years old? In constituencies such as mine every primary school is affected either by closure or amalgamation. If he is serious about improving education, surely the Secretary of State should ensure that schools are kept open?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand the growing embarrassment of the Labour party about the controversy that has been generated in Strathclyde about the regional council's proposals.

Mr. Foulkes: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has caused it.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) knows perfectly well that our reason for requiring Strathclyde region to consider the closure of individual schools is demographic, not financial. The hon. Gentleman also knows perfectly well that it is the number of youngsters attending schools because of demographic changes that has led every education authority throughout the country to realise some rationalisation of school provision is necessary. I suggest that if the regional council exercised slightly more leadership than that advocated by the hon. Gentleman, the people of Strathclyde might end up with a more sensible use of their resources.

Mr. Sam Galbraith (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I speak as someone who sat the qualifying examination—*[Interruption.]*—and passed—[AN HON. MEMBER: "He was a late developer".] I well remember that examination and the divisions, sadness and bitterness that resulted from it. We must not have that again. I remember the way in which our education was suspended so that we could prepare for it. That was one of the troubles with it.

Under these specific proposals, will the Secretary of State tell us what key aspects of maths and English will be tested? Will the results be held centrally? Will he give us a categorical assurance that they will not be published? I repeat a question that he failed to answer: who is pressing for these examinations? From where does the demand come?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the purpose of the examination that he sat in earlier years was to determine to which school he would be allocated. When asked by his hon. Friends, he said that he had passed that examination and others had failed. It is not being proposed that these tests should be used to decide whether individual youngsters pass or fail. Pass and fail will not be appropriate to the tests that we have in mind. We are concerned that individual teachers should be able to determine the degree of attainment that individual youngsters achieve so that they can decide whether a youngster requires extra help.

The hon. Gentleman asked what would be done with the results of those tests. I have already said that the results will be made available to parents, individual teachers and children. The individual results of each child will not be made known to his classmates or to the school generally. The headmaster will inform the school board in due course about the overall results of the school—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I find it difficult to understand why Opposition Members should be concerned that parents should be aware of them. No doubt they have their own reasons. I can assure the House that the achievement and the degree of attainment of any individual child will be known only to that child, to his parents and to his teacher.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): I have one child who has passed through the primary school system, and another who is currently in it. Each year that they have been at school, my wife and I have gone to the school and discussed them individually with their teachers and been given a detailed assessment of their progress, with which we were contented. I have served on an education committee which examined the standards in our schools, and we were satisfied with those standards. What possible additional advantage can there be from the proposed scheme? Is it not just another hare-brained notion from a bird-brained group of Ministers?

Mr. Rifkind: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman has in his constituency individual tenants who are delighted with their housing. Does he thereby conclude that there are no problems in housing? No doubt he will find individuals in his constituency who are delighted with the education that they are receiving. Does he suggest, therefore, that there are no problems in education and no need for further resources? The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that these proposals seek not only to satisfy his personal requirements, but to improve the quality of education in Scotland.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Sadly, the Secretary of State is showing distressing signs of repeated applications of the leaded handbag. He is seeking to bring the Scottish system into line with the English one. He asked about the question of trust. Here is an opportunity for the Secretary of State to honour some trust. He acknowledged that there would be resource implications. Will he promise to receive independent advice on the resource implications of his proposals and will he promise to honour them in the grants that he gives to local authorities?

Mr. Rifkind: If the hon. Gentleman will read paragraph 43 of the consultative document—[HON. MEMBERS: "It is not available."] He will be able to read it in due course. It is available to the House and to Hon. Members. Paragraph 43 states:

> "In particular the Secretary of State will make resources available to fund the development, administration and maintenance of the national item banks and the system of sample moderation. The Government does not propose that education authorities should be charged for these services."

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): If the Secretary of State is as concerned about special needs and pupils with learning difficulties as he says, why were they not mentioned in his statement? As he has not given the House any information about costing, will he be surprised if the House concludes that resources will be taken from other aspects of the education system? In view of the compliments in a recent report that have rightly been expressed about secondary comprehensive education, will

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he refuse to introduce an alien system into primary education, especially when so many alien philosophies have already been imposed on Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman asks about special needs. When a copy of the document has been made available to him, I suggest that he look at paragraph 36. It contains a recognition that particular requirements may well be needed for youngsters with special needs. Clearly, the education authority will want to adopt a system that is appropriate to requirements as the authority perceives them for that category of youngster.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that parents have a duty to find out how their children are doing at school? They want to know how they are doing — at least I do. If the Opposition believe that we should help less successful teachers to withhold this information, they are not helping the cause of education in Scotland or the future of children.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is quite right. He ought to appreciate that the Opposition felt obliged to oppose my statement, irrespective of its content.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Returning to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), does the Secretary of State realise that the profound ignorance of the history of Scottish education that that answer revealed will be seen with the greatest interest in Scotland? Surely he is not too divorced from the much more than 95 per cent. of Scottish people who use the state education system to realise that the past purpose of these examinations was to determine not to which school a child should go, but rather to deal with streaming within schools. His reply, which denied that fact, was astonishing. Does he realise that the suspicion on the part of the Opposition is precisely that he is trying to get back to streaming?

Will the Minister answer the question that he has specifically and persistently evaded? Does he accept that support for this measure within Scotland is reflected by the backing that he has from his Scottish team behind him — one who would support anything and another who sounds distinctly heretical? As we are dealing with the learning abilities of young children, may I put my question in words of one syllable that the Minister might be able to understand and thereby not evade: who has asked for this nonsense?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman asks a number of questions. He knows perfectly well, and is right, that some years ago under previous education arrangements examinations were held at primary level to determine streaming. He will know that in the state sector in certain parts of Scotland some schools were, for all practical purposes, equivalent to grammar schools. They were not called grammar schools, but they were state schools that were deemed to be appropriate for youngsters with a particular level of education. We have no proposals for the streaming of children, nor do we propose that any child's future school will be in any way influenced or determined by the results of these tests. As I have already said, apart from anything else, children will not be judged to have passed or failed in these tests. Only the child's teacher and its parents will be aware of how the child has done. The purpose of the tests is to assist the teacher in deciding the appropriate extra help, if any is required, for the child. I can understand why the hon. Gentleman or his hon. Friends might take the view that this is unnecessary. I have yet to hear any reason why they think that it could be harmful.

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): On that point, does the Secretary of State not realise that it can be very harmful to grade a child at the age of seven or eight because that grading could remain with it for the rest of its school life? Does he not accept that it can be wholly undesirable to be coaching or even cramming children for an examination or test at the age of eight when the child could be stretched to the utmost by existing assessment procedures? Will the Secretary of State now answer the question that he has failed to answer? Being an intelligent man, surely he can tell the House who had the idea for this proposal? As long as the Secretary of State refuses to answer that question, the suspicion will remain that the proposal came from the authors of that other crazy proposal—school boards. This has not been sought and is not wanted. It is high time that the Secretary of State and his team stopped interfering with the education of other people's children.

Mr. Rifkind: Being myself the author of the document on school boards and having put forward the proposals some months before the general election, I am happy to accept the authorship that the hon. Gentleman in his usual flattering way was content to put in my direction.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the question of grading children. If he likes he can put up an Aunt Sally to knock down, but it would be helpful, useful and relevant if he were at least to concentrate such criticisms as he thinks appropriate on what we are actually proposing. There is no proposal to grade children and there has never been such a proposal. There is no reference in the document or any intention on the part of the Government to grade children. If the hon. Gentleman's best criticism of our proposals is on the question of grading, I feel very reassured, because it suggests that there is nothing in the actual proposals that he feels able to criticise.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The Secretary of State mentions a consultation procedure. I am grateful to him for offering the caveat that this consultation will take place until Easter. Perhaps that is a result of his last consultation period on school boards during which I and certainly my colleagues never found any support for the proposition. The main question is: where did that come from? Did it come from the public watchdog that the Secretary of State has set up — Her Majesty's inspectors? I challenge the Secretary of State to show me an HMI report that advocates testing or school boards.

We have our ear to the ground about Scottish education because we are involved in public education in Scotland and can speak to the authorities. We know that what the Secretary of State has put forward is not at all the case. In his paper he talks about testing at primary 4 and primary 7 levels. In other words, at one go he has taken on the primary and secondary sector. There is a proposal in the report by the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum for the eight-to-14 age group, and that report has been out for two or three years. Why does the Secretary of State not look at that and build on it, because it contains no suggestion for streaming in schools? Where is the concern being expressed in Scottish education? It does not come from the political side or from educationists. In the name of honesty, where does it come from?

Mr. Rifkind: I have to remind the hon. Gentleman that there are no proposals for assessment of secondary school pupils. I am not sure where he got that impression. I spoke about primary 4 and primary 7.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Primary 7 is the last step before secondary school.

Mr. Rifkind: I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman does not know what he is talking about. The purpose of testing at primary 7 is not to assess suitability for secondary education, but to identify whether there are individual youngsters who need extra help.

Mr. Maxton: Grading.

Mr. Rifkind: No—at the level they have reached. For the Opposition to continue to try to discover proposals that are not in our document does themselves discredit and in no way enlightens the House.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that he betrays his ignorance of the state sector of education in Scotland when he completely fails to recognise that any move towards a nationally imposed curriculum of national testing in schools at the ages of nine and 12 runs contrary to the whole development of Scottish education over the past 30 years?

I am especially concerned about the justification that the Secretary of State has trotted out for these proposals. On the one hand, he says that they will provide better information for parents. On the other hand, I think that in response to an hon. Member he said that the information would be made available to school boards. I am worried that we might create a situation in which parents will be able to compare one school with another and that we shall end up with schools at each other's throats, with some being successful in attracting high numbers while others will be less successful and will see their rolls begin to fall. Will the Secretary of State make it absolutely clear to the House whether the information on testing will be publicly available in a form that will enable one school to be compared with another?

Mr. Rifkind: First, having accused me of ignorance, the hon. Gentleman said that we are seeking to produce a national curriculum. If the hon. Gentleman knows Scottish education, he should know that we virtually have a national curriculum and have had one for years. For all practical purposes, that was achieved through the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum. If the hon. Gentleman does not know that, it is about time that he did.

With regard to school comparison, the results of tests on an all-schools basis will be made available to the school board by the head teacher. I have always found it difficult to understand why Labour Members get so upset that parents involved in one school may be aware of the achievements of their school compared with those of others. What are we trying to hide?

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Can the Secretary of State tell parents what relevance these assessments have, given that there will be a bank of tests from which the headmaster can draw? How will the individual parent know whether that particular test makes sense? How does the parent differentiate between those tests? Does he have any say in which tests the headmaster uses? What relevance does this assessment have, if it is drawn from a bank?

Mr. Rifkind: The national bank of tests will be devised by educationists, not by Ministers. It will be up to the head teacher to choose the particular test which he thinks appropriate to the circumstances of his school and his pupils. That matter can be discussed with parents and, naturally, we expect full and close co-operation.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): If the Secretary of State were at school today, does he realise that his teacher would say, "We are having great difficulty getting through your thick skull today, boy"? Will he tell us who knocked on his door and give us the names of the individuals and organisations which asked for these proposals?

Mr. Rifkind: Her Majesty's inspectorate has consistently referred to the need to improve assessment techniques in primary schools. That is what these proposals are designed to do.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Secretary of State aware that the people of Scotland will have no confidence in Ministers' stewardship of Scottish education so long as those Ministers do not send their own children to local authority schools? If the Secretary of State did that, he would know that such testing and assessment is already under way in schools. So far as I can divine, the reason for the imposition of this centralised national test is the same as that for the proposal of school boards — that he and some of his advisers have a long-term plan to change the nature of Scottish education and restore streaming and a degree of selection which is alien in Scotland. Does the Secretary of State accept that he is taking his advice from the wrong former pupil of Keith grammar school?

Mr. Rifkind: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that those people whose children do not attend state schools cannot be assumed to have any genuine interest in, or contribution to make towards, the welfare of education in that sector. Am I to assume, therefore, that those people who, like the hon. Gentleman, live in homes which they have purchased, can have no real interest in the welfare of those who choose to live in council houses?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As one who has a married son living in Scotland and, therefore, like many people south of the border, has a direct interest in what happens north of the border, will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House whether it is Scotland which is against all and every reform proposed or is it just the Labour party in Scotland which is against these reforms and will use every system of distortion and obfuscation in a vain attempt to prevent this happening?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is quite correct.

Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill

5.19 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I put to you on Monday that on the Third Reading of the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill an error of procedure occured. Will you confirm that you have written to me and that you confirm that that error occurred, but that you feel that no further action is necessary on this occasion? Will you also confirm that you have taken steps to ensure that failure to signify the Queen's consent on a Third Reading will not happen in future?

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to refer to the matter. The hon. Gentleman was correct when he suggested to me on Monday that the House should have been informed that the Queen's consent had been obtained to the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. I have satisfied myself that the Queen's consent had, in fact, been properly obtained. This was done as long ago as June of last year. The failure lay in not communicating that consent to the House. In these circumstances I consider that the proper course is to follow a precedent of 1971 and not to impede the progress of the Bill to another place. Had there been a failure to obtain the Queen's consent, the precedent of 1852, referred to by the hon. Gentleman, would have been appropriate and proceedings on the Third Reading would have been null and void. I have asked for steps to be taken to avoid an oversight of this kind occurring again.

BILL PRESENTED

HOUSING

Mr. Secretary Ridley, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Moore, Mr. John Major and Mr. William Waldegrave, presented a Bill to make further provision with respect to dwelling-houses let on tenancies or occupied under licences; to amend the Rent Act 1977 and the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976; to amend the Housing Associations Act 1985 and to repeal and re-enact with amendments certain provisions of Part II of that Act; to make provision for the establishment of housing action trusts for areas designated by the Secretary of State; to confer on persons approved for the purpose the right to acquire from public sector landlords certain dwelling-houses occupied by secure tenants; to make further provision about rent officers and the administration of housing benefit and rent allowance subsidy; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 54.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the first statutory instrument is not to be moved. With the leave of the House, I propose to put together the questions on the two motions to approve the other two statutory instruments, that is, items Nos. 2 and 3 on the Order Paper.

Ordered,

That the draft National Metrological Co-ordinating Unit (Transfer of Functions and Abolition) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft British Film Fund Agency (Dissolution) Order 1987 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Housing Benefit

5.20 pm

The Minister for Social Security and the Disabled (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move,

That the draft Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 3rd November, be approved.

This debate is a sequel to the debate last week on the regulations on income support, claims and payments and uprating of social security benefits. The scope of the regulations before us today, which introduce important and fundamental reforms, fully justifies them being taken separately in the House. Nevertheless, it is important for the House to recognise that they are part of the strategic review undertaken by the Government of the whole structure of income-related benefits over a period of four years.

Housing benefit is clearly a very major element in the social security system, first, because it relates to one of the most basic family needs—a place to live; and secondly, because over the years it has greatly increased as a programme both in terms of costs and the numbers in receipt of benefit. Expenditure this year is expected to be in the order of £5·25 billion. I will use figures for Great Britain throughout the debate. The equivalent help at constant prices being given with rent and rates when we took office in 1979 was £2 billion. Similarly, the number of households receiving help with rent and rates has increased steadily over the period. We estimate that over 7 million households will receive help with their rates and/or their rents this year. The equivalent figure in 1979–80 was about 5 million. Since total households in Great Britain number about 21 million the figures mean that no fewer than one in three households is receiving help with rent or rates.

The other general point I want to make to the House in introducing the debate is that, as with other parts of our programme, the Government have shown themselves willing and able to examine the fundamental structure of the existing pattern of provision and to undertake major reviews and reform. It was this Government who tackled for the first time in 1982 the long-standing issue of the entirely different administrative structures for giving help with rent and rates. For many years, expert observers—perhaps, most importantly, the Supplementary Benefits Commission—had criticised a system where people were often receiving less than their potential benefit because they went to a local authority rather than to the DHSS office and vice versa. The 1982 reforms provided a single administrative roof for all households seeking assistance with their housing costs. This was an important step forward and we could not have achieved the new structure proposed in the regulations before the House if we had not taken this first important step in 1982.

I acknowledge at once that the first attempt at achieving sensible administrative reform ran into difficulty not least because many local authorities found it hard at first to administer the housing benefit scheme. In most places those administrative difficulties have been overcome. Equally, there are issues in our latest proposals which will no doubt be the subject of intense debate, including the limits we are seeking to place on the growth in expenditure and caseload. However, the point I want to emphasise this afternoon before I describe the proposed changes in more detail is that we have a coherent strategy and the will to undertake the necessary reforms within a sensible and responsible framework of public expenditure.

While the Opposition will wish to exercise their proper constitutional duty to criticise the proposals of the Government, I hope they will find it possible to say what they would propose to put in place of our suggestions. In particular, it would be useful for the House and the public to know whether the Opposition agree that there should be a common framework for income-related benefits and that available resources should be directed towards those most in need. On the scope of the scheme, I wonder whether those who do not wish housing benefit to be kept within bounds have a figure beyond £5 billion which they would like to offer as a sensible public expenditure target. Finally, do they share our concern about the numbers now receiving benefit? Is one out of three households too high or too low a figure for any scheme that they might want to put in its place?

I put these questions to the Opposition in the hope that when they respond to my opening remarks they may feel it possible not merely to exercise what I recognise as their proper constitutional duty to criticise us but to let the country know what they would like to put in place of our proposal. As with other debates on social policy, I fear that, instead of a coherent response, we shall simply have suggestions that more money should be spent on one group or another without any idea of the framework that should be achieved or without an attempt to set any coherent set of priorities.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Perhaps I may remind the Minister of the statement that has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), the shadow spokesman on housing, who has repeatedly offered to meet the Government to discuss a new framework for housing subsidies on the clear understanding that such a framework would have to be fair to the purchase and the rental sectors and fair within them. Provided the Government are prepared to accept the principle of equity between the two sectors and the principle of equity on the basis of income within them, we are prepared to sit down with them to devise a permanent new system.

Mr. Scott: That would not for one moment prevent the hon. Gentleman or, if he does not feel able to do it, his hon. Friend from standing up to say what suggestions they would put forward within the current framework for a sensible system of housing benefit. It is easy to talk about more radical solutions and changing the whole system fundamentally. We are not talking about the whole structure of housing policy but specifically about housing benefit and the way that we respond to those needs. It is in that context that I think it lies within the remit of the hon. Gentleman himself to come forward with specific proposals.

Mr. Robin Cook: I have a high regard for the Minister's intellect which I have admired over a number of years in the House. I do not believe that he has been subjected to the lobotomy which would be necessary to say that housing benefit should be considered in isolation from housing policy. The point that I put to the Minister is that we are willing at any time the Government indicate to sit down and discuss with them a permanent and rational structure of housing subsidy that will bear a relationship

[Mr. Robin Cook]

to the future of housing policy and which also will be equitable between the sectors. Until the Government are willing to enter that negotiation with us they can hardly object if we take their proposals at face value.

Mr. Scott: Which means that the answer to the question which I put to the hon. Gentleman is no, he is not prepared this afternoon to come forward with suggestions particularly about the operation of housing benefit itself.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sorry to disagree with my hon. Friend but I think he is wrong. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has come forward with a very positive suggestion which I presume is now Labour party policy—that is, to do away with mortgage relief on house purchases.

Mr. Scott: It is perhaps not for the hon. Gentleman but for whoever holds the portfolio on housing policy as a whole to come forward and explain exactly Labour's proposals in that regard.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I want to make it quite clear that at the moment I have received no reply to my offer from the Government. The other assumption that I have built in is that it must be introduced in such a way that it does not throw people into economic distress whether they rent or buy. The Minister has an opportunity here. If his colleagues in the Department of the Environment have yet to decide, he at least can offer to talk about his part of the package.

Mr. Scott: This is a remarkable constitutional proposition. The Labour party which has managed to lose three general elections on the trot wants to negotiate with the Government about the pattern of housing policy—*[Interruption.]* This is the forum in which the Opposition can put forward their suggestions about the development of housing policy. I am sure that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of the Environment will welcome debates on housing policy in this forum and I am sure that our ideas will carry the country as they have carried the country successively in general elections over the past few years. Let us not talk about negotiation, let us sort these matters out on the Floor of the House.

In presenting and explaining to the House the detail of the regulations, I will seek to divide them into four broad areas. The first will cover the main features of the current housing benefit scheme, which are in most need of reform. The second is how the regulations achieve these reforms through a new structure which is both simpler to understand and has a common framework with the new income support scheme and family credit system. Thirdly, I will refer to the timetable and role of local authorities in implementing the new arrangements. Finally, I will set out for the benefit of the House the broad effects of the proposals, including our revised estimates of overall caseload and expenditure.

As I said earlier, housing benefit brought the administration of assistance with rents and rates together under one roof for the first time. It resolved the so-called "better off" problem, which was the target of much justifiable criticism from the Supplementary Benefits Commission and others in the late 1970s. It made for far more sensible and efficient administration, in that millions of households had their bills rebated at source for the first time, instead of having to take the money handed out by an arm of central Government and immediately pass it on to the local government offices down the road.

The main shortcoming with the current housing benefit scheme lies in its basic structure. Many hon. Members who have experience of constituents' difficulties will recognise that. Although the 1982-83 reforms unified its administration, in structure it remains essentially an amalgam of the two separate schemes that preceded it. The jargon of housing benefit divides the world into standard and certificated cases and ne'er the twain shall meet. The assessment of needs, of income and many other features of the scheme are different according to the category into which people happen to fall. On top of that, the entitlement calculation for standard cases is one of the most complex and obscure in the entire benefits system. The scheme includes needs allowances, which virtually no one understands and which are not in effect allowances at all, positive and negative tapers, local variations to the national scheme, supplements and additions here, deductions there, and they seem almost deliberately designed to bewilder both the claimant and the counter clerk. Even——

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I always give way. I will gladly give way once I have finished my sentence.

Even Ministers at the Dispatch Box have been known to be puzzled by some of the intricacies of the scheme.

Mr. McCartney: I am amazed by the Minister's admission. The scheme introduced in 1982-83 was an utter national shambles. Does the Minister not regret the fact that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench and the local authority associations also warned him that that would happen? He rejected their advice then, as he will reject advice over the present proposals. The shambles since 1982-83 has meant that hundreds of thousands of people are living in real hardship and poverty. It ill behoves the Minister to come here tonight and apologise for the introduction of that legislation and try to get round that by introducing an even more draconian measure.

Mr. Scott: I have not come here to apologise. I have acknowledged that there were administrative difficulties in the introduction of the 1982-83 reforms. The outcome of those reforms was a substantial improvement on the previous position. To a very large extent that scheme has now settled down and is working reasonably. However, as I was in the middle of explaining to the House when the hon. Gentleman intervened, that scheme has structural weaknesses. The purpose of the reforms that I am announcing today is to settle those structural weaknesses and differences and so get us on to a better system. The dual system which proceeded the 1982-83 reforms was absolutely indefensible and we were right to tackle it. We are now ready to take the next step forward.

Two particular features of the present scheme illustrate the structural weakness to which I have referred and which I freely admit exists. One is the high-rent scheme, which is a variation of the normal entitlement calculation that can be used in some circumstances when the normal formula delivers an inadequate amount of benefit to those with unavoidably high rents. The second, which many hon. Members who are concerned with policy in this area will know only too well, is housing benefit supplement. That is a notorious paper chase of a benefit that is sometimes described as a piece of sticking plaster used to bridge the gap between the two systems of help which make up the housing benefit scheme.

To put it on the record, it is worth explaining to the House how housing benefit supplement works. A person must first claim supplementary benefit from the local DHSS office, even though he knows that he will not receive it. He also claims housing benefit from the local authority. After assessing the claim, the DHSS office informs the local authority of the amount by which the claimant's income exceeds his supplementary benefit level. The local authority assesses housing benefit entitlement in the normal way. Then, if housing benefit is payable, it compares the excess income figure notified by the DHSS with the claimant's rent and rates after deducting amounts for non-dependants and amenities included in the rent. If the resultant figure is more than the housing benefit payable, housing benefit supplement makes up the difference.

However, the procedure does not end there. The local authority must then send a copy of its calculation to the DHSS office for it to be checked and authorised. The DHSS returns the notice to the local authority either authorising the calculation or with an amended figure. That whole process must be repeated every time a claimant's circumstances change. I believe that it was right for us to change to a new system in 1982-83. However, I am equally sure that the time has come to tackle that kind of structural weakness and move to something which will be much easier for claimants and those who administer housing benefit to understand.

The shortcomings that I have discussed are complex and a source of great confusion to the general public. They are also fundamentally inequitable. It cannot be right to treat people differently according to whether they are in or out of work so that a man who takes a low-paid job and claims a rebate may find himself worse off than if he had stayed on supplementary benefit. It is not right to treat an occupational pensioner differently from a supplementary pensioner, in many cases forcing the former to enter the labyrinth of housing benefit supplement if he or she is to receive a full entitlement and remain above basic safety net levels.

As I said earlier, there has been legitimate concern about the growth in housing benefit expenditure and caseload. That partly reflects the increase in those on supplementary benefit and increases in rent and rates. Yet despite the supposed "cuts" in housing benefit, it has continued to grow in cost and numbers each year. The measures we have introduced have merely constrained growth. Our aim must be to concentrate help on those most in need.

All the factors of which I have spoken were part of the background against which the independent review of housing benefit was first established in 1984. The problems and concerns that I have outlined to the House, coupled with a number of serious administrative problems in certain areas of the country, meant that the review and reform process started slightly earlier for housing benefit than for the other income-related benefits. However, the housing benefit review rapidly became part of the wider social security review which led, through the Green and White Papers of 1985 and the Social Security Act 1986, to the various sets of regulations that the House has been debating during the past two weeks.

It is a great credit to Jeremy Rowe and his colleagues, who carried out the original housing benefit review, that almost all of the basic ideas in his 1984 report are reflected in the regulations that the House is discussing today.

Mr. Robin Cook *rose*——

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself for just a moment, I shall give way. Perhaps he will calm down while I continue what I am saying.

I would also like to pay tribute to the contribution of many individual local authorities and their representative organisations, which had been consulted on the regulations since the beginning of this year, and which have provided invaluable technical advice.

Mr. Cook: If the Minister is going to praise the housing benefit review team for having recommended the structure that he is commending to the House, will he refer us to the passage in the team's report that recommended exclusion of one fifth of rates, and will he tell us why he rejected the team's explicit statement that it did not recommend exclusion of any part of rates from housing benefit?

Mr. Scott: I am not saying for a moment that every detail of what Mr. Rowe and his colleagues put forward should be accepted. Governments do not set up reviews so that they can accept every single piece of advice that is issued. They ask for them so that they can provide a background of information, and a set of recommendations, which can then quite properly be subject to the political judgment of Ministers—and, ultimately, to the political decision of the House of Commons.

Having set out the background to the regulations, let me now discuss the main features and effects. The most important feature is a word that I have used several times in our recent debates: alignment. Nearly all of the structural problems inherent in the current housing benefit scheme arise from its disalignment from the rest of the social security system. Alignment removes many of them —I was tempted to say, "at a stroke", but I shall not use that particular phrase.

However, we do not consider that it would have been possible to achieve such alignment alongside the current supplementary benefit scheme, with its complex pattern of additional requirements. In other words, the reform of supplementary benefit, and the change to income support, is in itself a fundamental feature, and makes possible the change to the new system of housing benefit that the regulations will provide for—assuming that the House approves them today.

What alignment means is quite simple. For a start, several important sections of the regulations are substantially the same as their counterparts within the Income Support (General) Regulations which the House approved last week. I refer in particular to the parts that deal with membership of a family, and the assessment of both needs and income and capital. The latter part is also largely the same as its counterpart within the Family Credit (General) Regulations which were discussed and approved by the House last night.

From the claimant's—or the counter clerk's—point of view, this means that for the first time housing benefit has a simple, logical and coherent conceptual framework.

[Mr. Scott]

Anyone on income support, or whose net income is ~~at or~~ below the income support level—even if he is in work—will normally be entitled to maximum housing benefit. Above that level, benefit will be reduced according to a simple percentage or taper related to net income, with separate tapers for rents and rates. The need for the housing benefit supplement and high-rent scheme is immediately removed, and there is a built-in incentive for unemployed people to take employment in the knowledge that their housing benefit entitlement will not leave them below basic income support levels.

These are major achievements of which I hope all hon. Members will approve, even if they disagree with some of the details.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): In assessing the taper for housing benefit, will the Minister take into account the concessionary fuel allowance that widows of retired and former mineworkers receive? Does he agree that that concession should be disregarded in the assessment of housing benefit.

Mr. Scott: I shall ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to deal with that point when he winds up the debate, rather than interrupt the outline of the housing benefit scheme that I am trying to give the House.

I hope that the House will find it possible to approve at least the fundamental structure of the scheme. Let me point out some of the other advantages that flow from alignment. For one thing, the enhancements built into the income support scheme for the elderly and disabled will also automatically be reflected in the calculation of housing benefit for those on higher incomes. Those enhancements will replace their somewhat inadequate counterparts in the current needs allowances.

It will also be much clearer to those assessing housing benefit how particular types of income or capital should be treated. I would not accept that, by significantly expanding the number of regulations covering the assessment of income and needs, we have created unnecessary complexity. Clarity and precision frequently require comprehensiveness, and the vagueness with which such matters are treated in the current scheme has helped neither the claimants nor those who administer the scheme.

In only one area have we breached the principle of alignment, and we have breached it in the right direction from the viewpoint of incentives and similar considerations. We have accepted the argument put to us that lone parents, whose needs are currently assessed as a couple under the standard housing benefit scheme, would, whatever the theoretical logic of such a move, fare disproportionately badly from alignment with income support. We have therefore set the housing benefit lone-parent premium significantly higher than its income support counterpart, to offset that effect.

I do not intend to dwell in detail on the other features of these regulations. My colleague the Under-Secretary can respond to specific points that are raised. In many of the areas I have not so far covered, our policy has not significantly changed, although we have tried to make the wording of the regulations more precise. I will mention in passing a couple of the more important details, starting with non-dependant deductions. We have significantly simplified the rules, and have introduced a new criterion for applying the higher rent deduction—namely, that the non-dependant should be in remunerative work for more than 24 hours a week. That will be a welcome improvement for many non-dependants on training courses or other social security benefits, who are at present assumed to be contributing the same as a non-dependant in full-time work.

We have also greatly clarified the rules for converting monthly rents and annual rates into weekly amounts, and we have provided more detail on the assessment of students, the handling of overpayments and the procedures to be followed when a claimant wants his case reviewed. We have set out the sort of information that we think should always be sent to a claimant when his claim has been determined. There are many other improvements or clarifications, too numerous to mention. If any hon. Members wish to raise particular points, my hon. Friend will try to deal with them when he winds up the debate.

Mr. Timothy Raison (Aylesbury): In general, I welcome the lines on which the reform has taken place. However, I am concerned about the capital limit of £6,000. May I briefly illustrate the point with a constituency case?

I was visited the other day by one of my constituents, a divorced lady. The divorce settlement had taken the form of a so-called "clean break". The lady was given a capital sum, on the income of which she was living. Not surprisingly, that capital was above the £6,000 level.

As a consequence of the new regulations, if I understand them correctly, that lady will certainly lose rate rebate, and it seems to me that a substantial number of people will be affected by the £6,000 capital limit. We are discussing unamendable regulations, but I hope that my hon. Friend will at the very least give us an assurance that the next time that this matter is examined—which I hope will be soon—the capital maximum will be viewed sympathetically. Otherwise, I think we shall see real hardship.

Mr. Scott: Before I conclude my remarks, I intend to deal with the capital rules. I do not believe that the rules will do anything to help the case that my right hon. Friend mentioned. Nevertheless, a proper system for the treatment of capital is an important way of helping to concentrate help on those who most need it. In due course, the House may discuss whether the £6,000 figure should endure for ever. When we give people help with their housing costs, it is rational to take some account of the capital resources that are available to them.

It is important to emphasise that the clarifications are just as important for the local authorities administering the scheme as for the claimants who are applying for benefit. A few moments ago, I mentioned the important role that local authorities have played in the consultative process that preceded the regulations being laid before the House. We have been concerned throughout to develop a reformed scheme that is workable and makes sense in the context of the modern, computerised systems that most local authorities possess. We want to encourage and promote better administration of housing benefit, so that, ultimately, all local authorities can attain the high standards that are already operating in some areas.

Our proposals for reimbursing local authorities for the costs of running the scheme are another element in the package, although they are not actually part of the regulations before the House. Our aim has been to ensure that local authorities receive fair recompense for their duties, while having greater incentive than at present to administer the scheme efficiently and effectively, particularly in areas in which they have some power to influence. This is why the basic rate of benefit subsidy which we are proposing—97 per cent.—is roughly equal to the current rate of subsidy, while a lower rate, which will normally be 25 per cent., will apply in a few selected aspects such as overpayments and excessive rent increases. The same approach underlies our proposal to link administration subsidy more closely to workload. We have also developed, in consultation, I emphasise, with local authority representatives, a comprehensive management information system, which will ultimately enable local managers and central Government to see that appropriate standards are being met in all aspects of the scheme's administration.

In considering the role of local authorities in the reform process, I do not for one moment underestimate the task which they, like local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security now have to face to deliver the reformed scheme next April. Reform timetables are always tight if consultation is undertaken and taken seriously. I am optimistic that local authorities are much better placed than before the 1982-83 reforms to plan for and implement the new scheme. Quite apart from the advantages that will flow to them and to others from a simpler structure and clearer regulations, local authorities have had much longer to prepare for the changes. They saw a first draft of the regulations at the start of the year and a further draft in May, which was little different from the final set we are discussing.

We have been at pains to assist local authorities' training needs by funding the local government training board to produce a central training package, and a video which has been sent to all authorities. Computer software houses have also contributed to the discussions on the draft regulations, and my Department funded a short computer systems handbook from a firm of management consultants, which was circulated to all authorities in the autumn. We have also provided £25 million towards local authorities' implementation costs. The Department will continue to contribute all it can in terms of expertise and guidance towards a successful implementation of the reforms, and I firmly believe that we are well on course towards that goal.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Minister has usefully spent some time in explaining to the House the strategic rationalisations realignments and the basic ethos of the reform. In principle, I go along with much of his rationalisation. Are the original savings of £450 million still the savings that the Department expects to make?

Mr. Scott: If the hon. Gentleman will be patient with me, I shall deal with that matter in due course.

I want now to refer briefly to the impact of the changes and to comment on a couple of the specific features that attracted criticism in the weeks leading up to the debate. But I should make one point clear at the outset. The housing benefit reforms cannot be seen in isolation from the other changes that we shall introduce next April. Indeed, one of their strengths is that they go hand in hand with the changes to income support at that time. For example — we have always been perfectly frank about our intentions in this regard — the housing benefit changes are consistent with the significant reduction in caseload and expenditure. In our view, income support and family credit offer a better and more efficient way of delivering such support, and I do not see that we need to feel defensive about that.

Some Opposition Members have talked about cuts. Such talk is quite misleading. There will be a significant reduction in expenditure on housing benefit of about £640 million. That will be redirected to additional payments on other benefits. In fact, we shall pay out £420 million more in weekly payments of income support than would have been the case if the supplementary benefit scheme had continued with a normal uprating, and family credit will cost £220 million more than if the FIS scheme had been continued. Overall, expenditure on weekly payments of benefit will not be lower, and it will be better targeted.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): The Minister said that £400 million more will go into income support. The implication of the figures is that all the money being saved on housing benefit will go back into other schemes. Surely at least half of that amount is transitional protection to look after people who will be worse off under the new scheme unless transitional protection is given. That is only a temporary measure.

Mr. Scott: Temporary, but, in effect, for the coming year, it will mean that the figures balance out. It is worth reminding the House that, in shifting to the income support scheme, we shall be targeting the money that is available for social security support in its broadest sense much better than we are doing under the present scheme.

The same point that I made before I gave way applies when considering individual cases. A supplementary pensioner, for example, may well find that her housing benefit is reduced because of the 20 per cent. minimum contribution to rates. But, equally, she should find her income support increased, not least because of the compensation for the minimum contribution that we have built into the rates of benefit. If her disposable income is increased overall, it would be misleading in the extreme to concentrate solely on any reduction in her housing benefit. That is why our published tables show the effect of the reforms as a coherent whole.

Those who experience significant reductions in their housing benefit will generally be the better-off, and those who lose all entitlement to it will generally be those whose entitlement was quite small in the first place. We have said before — the figure has not changed since the technical annex to the White Paper two years ago — that we expect the reforms to lead to a caseload reduction of just over a million. There are three main factors which contribute to this, and I shall briefly explain them to the House.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Before my hon. Friend leaves that point, what calculation has he made of the maximum amount of housing benefit that will be lost each week with effect from 1 April next year as a result of the proposals? What would he say to a person who has been thrifty throughout his or her working life, who has savings of £6,000 and who might be tempted to say that those who have been feckless and spendthrift continue to benefit, but those who have saved and have been thrifty do not?

Mr. Scott: As I said, I shall deal with capital — that is to say, those with savings of £6,000 or so — towards the

[Mr. Scott]

end of my speech. It is difficult to put a figure on the amounts that individuals may lose. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State may help in that regard. It is clear that some people may lose all the housing benefit that they get at the moment. In general they will be people who are better off or people whose entitlement to housing benefit consisted of quite small amounts under the existing scheme. The underlying figures have not changed a great deal since the technical annex was published two years ago.

I shall mention the three main factors that contribute to the reduction in the caseload. The first is the minimum contribution to rates, which I have already mentioned. We have debated this issue before on several occasions, and I believe that the arguments are well understood even if there is not agreement across the Floor of the House. We still believe that local accountability is a vital part of the democratic system in this country and that it must be right in principle to expect all those who use local services to feel the impact of their cost. In this respect, the minimum contribution is a step on the road to the community charge which we shall introduce in due course.

We firmly believe that only by widening the numbers who contribute to the cost of local services will we ensure that proper democratic control is exercised over those who spend the money. The alternative — a housing benefit scheme based on 100 per cent. of rates, which would considerably have increased the numbers wholly insulated from the effect of rate increases—was not acceptable for those reasons. I do not intend to dwell further on this aspect, except to remind the House that this proposal was well understood when the Social Security Act 1986 was passed, since when we have decided to build compensation for the minimum contribution into the income support rates.

The second factor contributing to the caseload reduction is the steeper rent taper. The rates taper is roughly the same, for someone paying standard tax and national insurance, as the existing one. The rent taper is steeper, even after the conversion is made, and five percentage points higher than our original illustrative figure two years ago. However, the House should not be misled into looking at the rent taper in isolation. It has to be viewed alongside the decision to build 100 per cent. of the claimant's rent into the calculation in all cases, instead of 60 per cent. as at present for standard cases. The effect of this is generally to work in the opposite direction to the taper change.

I am not denying that the rent taper is steeper than its current equivalent, but people with unavoidably high rents — two or three times the national average — will generally find that the new scheme delivers them more, not less, help with their rent, right the way up the income scale, as a consequence of the 100 per cent. starting point. That is why I reject any suggestion that the steeper rent taper is incompatible with our housing policy initiatives.

I hope that the Opposition will acknowledge that, even at below average rents, the new scheme will still deliver more help with rent to the poorer households — up to the level of the current needs allowances, for example. This group, which includes many occupational pensioners, is precisely the people that the reform process has always been aimed at. I do not apologise for the fact that there is an element of redistribution towards poorer households inherent in our proposals.

Finally, the upper capital limit of £6,000 will contribute to the caseload reduction. Again—I understand some of the criticisms made—this proposal tends to be viewed as one aspect of the reforms in isolation from other proposals. As a whole, within the changes that we are introducing next April we are introducing capital rules that are more rather than less generous than at present and £6,000 is twice the present supplementary benefit level: capital below £3,000 will be wholly ignored for the first time in housing benefit. The present arrangements — whereby supplementry benefit ignores investment income but takes capital into account, whereas housing benefit ignores capital but takes investment income into account —surely cannot be defended as a rational way to run a coherent income-related benefit system.

I should emphasise that the improvements built into the income support capital rules, such as the total disregard of the surrender value of life insurance policies and the disregard, in normal circumstances, of personal possessions, will also be built into housing benefit. It is not right to consider the proposal for the £6,000 limit in housing benefit in isolation from the improvements that we are providing for the treatment of capital across the range of income-related benefits.

I want to conclude where I began: I welcome this debate and the chance to explain and defend our proposals. I am sure they will bear critical examination. But I shall not regard criticism of isolated features of the regulations, which take no account of other offsetting changes or of the wider context, as a constructive contribution to the debate. The package of reforms that we are introducing next April should be considered as a whole. I ask Opposition Members who wish to speak from the Opposition Benches to state not just what details of the reform they do or do not like, but where they stand on the big issues. How would they fit assistance with housing costs into an overall package of income-related benefits? What do they regard as the proper cost and coverage of such a scheme? The House has a right to hear those as well if we are to have a balanced and constructive debate.

The Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 are the last but not least in our package of social security reforms. They tackle the problems of the existing system and provide a sensible framework against which future adjustments, which may arise from policy changes elsewhere, such as the community charge can be taken into effect. Most important of all, they place housing benefit firmly within the context of a coherent structure of income-related benefits.

6.6 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): On one point I would cheerfully agree with the concluding remarks of the Minister. The regulations must be regarded as part of an overall package of changes in the social security system —I avoid the word reform—that will hit claimants next April.

We debated a large part of the rest of the package last Thursday and the Minister heard precisely what we thought of them. We did not think very much at all of them; they will result in a reduction in entitlement to benefit of 4 million claimants of supplementary benefit, so we think equally little of these regulations.

One reason we object to means-tested benefits in principle is because under this Government means-tested benefits have a nasty tendency to become meaner. The Minister said that these regulations would achieve administrative streamlining and greater equity between claimants. I shall argue those points later, but I must disabuse the House of any notion that these regulations were drafted or given birth to by a concern for administrative streamlining or greater equity. They owe their birth to a commitment to cutting housing benefit. The main motivation that has led to the debate is the Government's concern to claw back £640 million that they would otherwise be obliged to pay under the previous system. That is the mainspring of the Government's motivation.

One million people will lose all benefit altogether, or, to use the euphemism that the Minister used on four successive occasions, there will be a reduction in case load of 1 million claimants.

I should like to pursue the Minister through the major reasons for that reduction in case load. I shall begin with the point that he, wisely, left until last—the exclusion of claimants from benefit if they have a capital sum; particularly if they have £6,000, after which point they will lose all entitlement. On many occasions you have sat in that Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and heard us being taunted with being envious of the wealthy. I assure the House that I do not regard people with savings of £6,000 as being, to use the Minister's own term, better off.

That category includes many households who, by anybody's definition, have modest circumstances. It will include many unemployed people with redundancy payments in excess of £6,000. It will certainly include large numbers of pensioners. Indeed, it will include the pensioners who have taken the Government and the Conservative party at their word and have put by for their old age and created a nest egg. They wish to preserve that nest egg for a rainy day or for particular expenditure that may be required on their house or family. They do not wish to diminish that capital in order to meet the weekly outgoings on their housing costs.

We are not talking simply about cash in the bank. We are talking about realisable assets such as BP shares. Housing benefit officers may find that they are obliged to advise claimants that they will have to sell their shares in order to pay their housing costs. I doubt whether the stockbrokers would agree with that advice in the present circumstances.

The irony is that this measure will hit the constituents of Conservative Members the hardest. Some of the London boroughs have done calculations. I have the calculations for the borough of Barnet, which is a particularly interesting borough, in that it contains the constituency of the Prime Minister. If we look at the owner-occupiers in Barnet who are currently in receipt of housing benefit we will see that two out of five pensioners will lose all entitlement to housing benefit under the regulations. If we look at the private tenants in Barnet who are currently in receipt of housing benefit, we will see that one out of five pensioner householders will lose all entitlement to housing benefit. The address of the right hon. Member for Finchley (Mrs. Thatcher) is well known and I hope that many of her constituents will write to her on that point.

We are aware that, unfortunately, the numbers affected go well beyond the Prime Minister's constituency. The last estimate we have goes back to 1982 but even then there were 750,000 claimants for housing benefit who had capital of over £3,000 and half of them were thought to have had capital of over £6,000. In other words, over 350,000 claimants will lose their housing benefit entirely as a result of this rule and the overwhelming majority of them will be pensioners.

At one stage, the Minister appeared to be saying that the changes are introduced by humanitarian impulse because of confusion among pensioners about the present system. It is certainly the case that, once the regulations are enacted, there will be fewer pensioners around to be confused by the system because there will be fewer pensioners in receipt of housing benefit.

The next major change that will result——

Mr. Scott: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether he welcomes the improvements in the capital rule as applied to income support from next April? Will he tell us whether he believes that there is virtue in aligning the capital rules between the income support scheme and housing benefit? Will he say whether there is any level of capital that should prevent people from being helped with their housing costs and, if so, what the level would be?

Mr. Cook: The answer to the Minister's question is perfectly simple. There is no great mystery about it. The Minister talked about capital as if it is wholly disregarded by the present system. That is nonsense and a moment's reflection will tell him that is the case. What is taken into account by the present system—it is perfectly proper and we make no objection to it—is the income flow from the capital available to the claimant of housing benefit as a resource with which they can meet their expenditure requirements. It is perfectly reasonable that that income flow should be taken into account. However, it is wholly unreasonable that they should also be required to diminish their capital in order to meet their weekly revenue outgoing. That is precisely what they will be obliged to do as a result of the change. The Minister is saying, "Irrespective of the income you obtain from capital, because you have capital of a modest sum you will lose all entitlement to weekly assistance."

The next change that results in the reduction of caseload is the increase in the tapers. In a spirit of moderation and in seeking to find common ground, I can say that I agree that it makes sense to place the tapers on net income rather than gross income. I accept that as a sensible structural change and an improvement. However, we have to measure the impact of the change in the context of the increase in the tapers. When the Government took office, the combined rent and rate tapers were at 23 per cent. of gross income. As from next April, the combined rent and rate tapers will stand at 56 per cent. of gross income. In the past eight years the Government have doubled the rate at which housing benefit is reduced for every successive increase in income. They are constructing a ferocious poverty trap.

Any family with children that is entitled to housing benefit will almost certainly be entitled to family credit. Indeed, they may even be receiving family credit. We are assured repeatedly that the take-up rate of family credit will be higher. The wonderful circular reasoning given to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) in a written answer last week said that the take-up rate will be higher because more people will be receiving it and therefore it will be better known.

[Mr. Cook]

The taper on family credit will be 70 per cent. If we add together the tapers on housing benefit and the tapers on family credit and look at how they interact with each other, we find that families entitled to both and claiming both will be paying a marginal rate of taxation of 98p in every pound. For every additional pound in income they will lose 98p in benefit. No Conservative Member pays a marginal rate of taxation approaching that figure. Indeed, over the years the Government have taken great care to ensure that they do not have to face that rate of taxation.

When the Government took office in 1979, the top rate stood at 97 per cent. It now stands at 60 per cent. It has gone down over the same period by almost the identical amount as the marginal rate of tax on claimants of housing benefit has gone up. The effect will be to melt swiftly the entitlement to housing benefit of anybody with an income above income support.

For example, a single person paying an average rent will have their entire entitlement to housing benefit extinguished when they achieve a net weekly income of £60. At that point they will be part of that reduced caseload. A married couple with one child on an average rent will find that their entitlement to housing benefit is extinguished entirely when they achieve a net weekly income of £95. In other words, their entitlement to benefit will disappear when they are still on less than half average income.

The effect on young people is particularly draconian. However — this is the point at which I recognise that there is a structural improvement in the regulations — I agree that there is a good and profound attraction in aligning the thresholds for income support with the needs allowances for housing benefit. However, that is a general principle and should not be pursued mindlessly. One of the consequences of pursuing it mindlessly is what happens to young people. As the Minister will be aware, people under the age of 25 are denied the full adult rate of income support. Therefore, under this scheme, they find that they do not qualify for the full adult rate of needs allowance either. The full adult rate is denied them until they reach the age of 25 and until that time they will have a needs allowance of £26 a week. That means that any income over £26 a week will be offset against their housing benefit entitlement.

I am indebted to the Shelter housing aid centre for a calculation concerning one particular youngster. That youngster was paying a rent of £15 a week. That is a perfectly reasonable rent because it happens to be the average rent for a local authority house with one bedroom. If he has an income of £26 a week, whether on income support or not, he will receive 100 per cent. housing benefit. If he obtains work and is successful in increasing his earnings to £70 per week, his income, net of housing costs, will rise not to £70 but to the grand total of £36 a week. In other words, because of the effect of the poverty trap that young person will have experienced an increase in income of £44, of which he will be left with only £10 in his hand.

It would be difficult to come up with a scheme better designed to discourage young people from seeking work and from seeking to maximise their earnings. *[Interruption.]* We produced no scheme that penalised young people in this way and at no time before the Minister took office did any Government have the benighted idea that people under 25 have lower housing costs and lower personal expenditures than those over 25.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): The hon. Gentleman has not yet drawn attention to the fact that more than 1 million low-paid people have been taken out of income tax by the Government. Furthermore, he has not yet answered the question put to him by my hon. Friend the Minister: how many people should receive housing benefit? Already 7 million people receive housing benefit. How many people does the hon. Gentleman suggest should go cap in hand to ask for housing benefit?

Mr. Cook: First, may I take the gravest exception to the hon. Gentleman's use of the phrase "cap in hand". If he had been in the Chamber throughout the debate he would have heard many of his hon. Friends express perfectly proper and legitimate concern on behalf of constituents who will be denied housing benefit under the regulations. The hon. Gentleman would have grave difficulty in avoiding seriously provoking an audience of elderly citizens if he told them that those pensioners who apply for housing benefit because they need it are going "cap in hand" to ask for it. Such people have worked for this country for most of their lives and some of them have fought for this country and they deserve the support that the Government now want to diminish.

I want to pause here — in a sense, the hon. Gentleman's intervention helps me in these comments — to compare the Government's attitude to those who receive housing benefits with their treatment of those who require subsidy for their mortgage costs. I imagine that the hon. Gentleman will not tell us that they go cap in hand for mortgage tax relief. We subsidise mortgages by an arrangement that relieves the interest of liability to tax. It is a very real cost even though it is a tax-free system rather than a payment system. Indeed, the system costs more than we pay out in housing benefits. In 1983, the cost of mortgage tax relief was £200 million more than the cost of housing benefit in the rented sector. In 1987 it was not only more; it was very much more. By then the gap between the cost of tax relief on mortgages and the cost of housing benefit in the rented sector was not £200 million but £1,100 million. And the gap has got five times larger.

In spite of that we have no proposal from the Government to bring the ballooning cost of mortgage interest relief under control and no regulation providing that owner-occupiers with capital of more than £6,000 should apply it to reducing their mortgage costs, although that would be more rational than asking people to apply it to reducing their rent because those with mortgages would at least be left with an asset to show for it. We have no regulation providing that tax relief should be tapered off with increases in income; on the contrary, the higher one's income and the higher one's tax rates, the more valuable mortgage tax relief becomes.

Of course, it is possible to defend that system on grounds of social policy and to say that it encourages people to invest in homes and makes decent housing accessible to people who would not otherwise be able to afford it. However, it is not possible with any intellectual integrity to adopt that argument in relation to those paying mortgages and simultaneously to adopt the vindictive, punitive approach to poor tenants that the regulations display.

I will give the Minister this: in one regard, he is putting owner-occupiers on an equal footing with tenants—that is in his proposed treatment of applications for benefit for the payment of rates. Hitherto, rates have qualified for full coverage by housing benefits, but not any more. From next April, the first fifth of a rates demand will be excluded from cover. There is no logical reason for that step in any assessment of housing need or any of the workings of the benefit system. The Minister was good enough to admit that the housing benefit review team rejected the proposal. It has also been rejected by the Social Security Advisory Committee, by every local authority organisation and by the Select Committee on Social Services.

The Government have run out of people to ask in their search for someone to agree with their proposals. The measure is purely political in its objective, which is to make the experience of local government as nasty and expensive as possible by forcing it to oblige residents to pay a local tax by going without food or heating. That is exactly what the Government are saying in their proposal that those in receipt of income support will be obliged to meet part of their rates out of their income.

The Government have not protected those on income support from the effects of the measure. If the Minister seriously wishes to maintain his claim that they have, I must repeat to him the question that I asked him last Thursday, to which he did not reply. The Minister can have it one of two ways. Either the Government have fully uprated the 1985 figures in the White Paper, in which case they have not compensated income support claimants for the effect of the new rates burden, or they have compensated those claimants for the effect of the new rates burden, in which case they have not honestly uprated the 1985 figures. The Minister can have it one of those two ways. He cannot have it both ways. I am perfectly happy to give way to him so that he can clarify the position.

Mr. Scott: We have provided compensation for the minimum contribution to rates. The 1985 figures were illustrative figures used to show how the scheme would work. When we came to introduce income support, we were perfectly entitled to set the benefit levels as we thought appropriate, but compensation has been provided for the minimum contribution to rates.

Mr. Cook: Shorn of the persiflage, that statement is perfectly clear and I commend the Minister at least for his honesty. He is claiming that he has compensated claimants for the new rates burden but that he has not fully uprated the 1985 figures. He is saying that the illustrative figures were too generous and that when I referred last week to the fact that the figures had not been uprated—although the Minister shook his head at the time—I was perfectly correct. The real level of benefit provided in last week's regulations is lower than the 1985 level.

The consequence that the Minister must now face is that, unavoidably, inexorably and arithmetically, there are more losers from his income support system than there were under the 1985 figures. The Minister cannot maintain that he has not uprated the 1985 figures and then argue that there are fewer losers.

Mr. Scott: No.

Mr. Cook: With respect, the Minister's figures assume that the compensation for the new rates burden is part of the uprating. He has just told us that that compensation is to be provided specifically to meet that new burden. If he says that, he must take that rates burden into account in his tabulation of losers, which unfortunatly he has not done. There will be more losers than the Government admitted last week.

Mr. Scott *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cook: There is no point in the Minister shaking his head because he has created the logic that leads us inevitably to that conclusion. If the figures are lower than the 1985 figures there are bound to be more rather than fewer losers.

So far, I have dealt with only the major cuts that the regulations contain. However, if one lifts any one of the 105 paragraphs, out of it scuttles a further minor cut. At risk of distressing the House, let me hold up to the light three of these nasty little beasts, all of which will cause severe hardship to one group or another and all of which could be dropped with minimal cost. In the old days, when we had Governments who listened to the Opposition, it might have been possible to amend these provisions in Committee, but we cannot do that tonight because we must swallow the regulations whole or choke in the attempt.

The first of the minor cuts is the exclusion of amenity charges from coverage by housing benefit. That will also overwhelmingly affect the elderly. Heating is specifically excluded from housing benefit. This is the season when we are increasingly conscious of the dangers of being old and cold, yet at this point in the annual cycle the Government have introduced a regulation which specifically excludes heating from housing benefit. Almost all those who will find that they are affected by the measure are frail elderly tenants living in sheltered housing schemes with communal heating which is not under their control. They will find that the amount of heat that they use cannot be affected by them, so the size of their bill cannot be affected by them, but they will now get no help with the heating bill that they cannot reduce.

Similarly, along with the exclusion of heating charges, there is the specific exclusion of alarm systems in dispersed houses, although it is much cheaper and more desirable to provide an alarm system to enable people to live in the community than to oblige them to go into hospital. The Government have said that that specific provision is necessary to remove doubt about whether alarm systems are covered. I presume that it is typical of the Government that, faced with doubt, they have removed the doubt by prohibiting cover rather than by making sure that alarm systems could be covered by the housing benefit system.

Secondly, among the other minor cuts is one affecting people in hospital for a lengthy period. It is a striking example of the lack of common sense in the regulations and one of the most mindless examples of alignment with income support. After six weeks stay in hospital, entitlement to housing benefit under the regulations is reduced dramatically. No one in the Chamber would argue that housing costs would fall dramatically after six weeks in hospital. I know of no local authority which is prepared to say to any of its tenants who have been in hospital for over six weeks that they can forget the rent because it will cancel it. Indeed, if there were any such local authority, no doubt these days it would be hauled before the district auditor to explain its attitude.

I very much hope that the Secretary of State will not be in hospital for six weeks. As he is paying £195 a night, it

[Mr. Cook]

is natural that we wish him a speedy recovery. But there is an irony in the regulations; that is that, if the Secretary of State was on housing benefit, his stay in hospital would not affect his entitlement to housing benefit because he is in a private hospital and the regulation that provides for housing benefit to be taken away from patients in hospital for over six weeks specifically excludes patients in private hospitals. Having listened to many lectures from the Dispatch Box about how important it is to target help on those who need it most, it is sheer effrontery to bring to the House a measure that withdraws help from patients who go into a state hospital while preserving that benefit for those who go into a private hospital.

The Under-Secretary of State says that that has a long precedent. I am sorry to have to disabuse him, but this is the first time that any Government have suggested that housing benefit should be withdrawn after six weeks in hospital. It does not have a long precedent. It is an entirely novel and extremely illogical proposal from the Government.

Thirdly, there is the extinction of the discretion of local authorities to add to their housing benefits system and to make it more generous by up to 10 per cent. of total cost. This is being extinguished by the Government on the ground of consistency. That is an odd argument, since the whole point of having locally elected local authorities is that they should be inconsistent, or at any rate have the right to be different, so that they can legitimately respond to local circumstances and needs.

This particular extinction is all the more vindictive since the Government do not subsidise that 10 per cent. by one penny. They will not save one penny in Treasury money by cancelling it, and it would cost nothing to drop that provision from the regulations. It would be a diplomatic gesture to local authorities and I must advise the Minister that he should make such a gesture to local authorities for whom the regulations pose a major administrative challenge.

Local authorities were promised 12 months' clear notice of the regulations. We are debating regulations that were laid a fortnight ago, which must be implemented five months from now. Major changes were introduced at a late stage. The increase in the rent taper from 60 to 65 per cent. took place only last month. It is important to grasp the scale of the administrative burden that we are placing on local authorities. They will have to reassess every claimant from gross income on to net income. They will have to obtain information about the capital circumstances of every claimant. They will have to administer the new rates demand to 4 million people who at present have no rates liability. While doing all that, they will have to cope with 6 million people queuing up at housing benefit offices wishing to know why their housing benefit has been cut or, in 1 million of the cases, wishing to know why they are part of the reduction in caseload.

If the local authorities fail to match up to the task, the Government, being the Government that they are, will be tempted to put it all down to the incompetence of local government and the sleepiness of the public sector. It is too bad of local authorities not to be able to do in five months what it has taken the Government two years to decide upon.

Unfortunately, I must advise the Government that one of the main reasons why local authorities will have difficulty in implementing the regulations for next April is that the private sector is letting them down. IBM and ICL have now advised all those many local authorities with whom they have contracts that they cannot deliver on their software package in time for 1 April. That is hardly surprising. There are 105 paragraphs which are hardly designed to achieve simplicity.

There are 19 separate references in the regulations to people in polygamous marriages. There is a special disregard for the earnings of part-time firemen or auxiliary coastguards and the schedule that provides for the disregard for part-time firemen and auxiliary coastguards has special mention and exemption for those part-time firemen and auxiliary coastguards who are in polygamous marriages. I invite the Minister to try to develop the computer package that could cope with such variety and diversity.

It is worth stressing those problems, because a number of local authorities have already been to the Government to say that they cannot do the work by next April. One of the local authorities that has notified the Government that it cannot deliver is Croydon, the borough which contains the constituency of the Secretary of State for Social Services.

I pause there to review all those people involved in critical decision-making in the Government, who are hitting their own constituents. The Prime Minister is hitting her own pensioners disproportionately. The Minister, who has a high rates burden in his constituency, is excluding his constituents from cover of the rates. Finally, the Secretary of State himself has a local authority that cannot implement his own scheme in time. To save the Prime Minister and the Minister from the consequences of their actions, I urge them to reconsider and at least to allow a transitional period for the introduction of their scheme.

We were earlier reminded of the shambles of 1983. It was, according to *The Times*, the biggest administrative fiasco in the history of the welfare state when housing benefit first began. I vividly remember it because in Edinburgh we had to call the police to remove 200 private tenants from the housing office where they were rioting because they faced eviction if they could not obtain their benefit in time. We shall be faced with similar scenes unless the Government recognise that they cannot possibly get the scheme up and running in time for 1 April and must consider transitional protection.

It is extremely moderate of me to seek transitional phasing for a scheme that I find deeply repugnant and objectionable. However long the Government take to bring in the scheme, its consequences are plain and will be harsh and unjust.

First, many ratepayers, especially the elderly, will find themselves in arrears with their rates. The penalties for rates arrears are severe. In Scotland they are warrant sales and the sale of furniture. In England they are appearance in court and fines on pain of imprisonment. As a result of this measure, some people will lose their furniture and others will face the threat of imprisonment.

The second consequence is that many private tenants will fall behind with their rents. Many of those will find themselves being evicted. They are the most hapless victims of a Government who cannot make up their mind between two contradictory impulses—on the one hand to let private rents go out of control and on the other hand to keep the cost of housing benefit under control.

Lastly, in the public sector local authorities will face a sharply escalating problem of rents and rates arrears. To put it in terms that Conservative Members may understand, the Government are shooting the local authorities with both barrels. On the one hand they are increasing their costs, and on the other hand they are diminishing their revenue.

I want to end with a specific illustration of the consequence for an individual family. It is an illustration provided to me of a real family—a couple with two children—in Newcastle on a gross wage of £110, which is half the national average, who have a current rent of £18, which is typical because £18 happens to be almost exactly the average rent for a three-bedroomed council house. That family, on their wage of £110, have a current weekly charge for housing costs—rents and rates—of £12·86. After 1 April that same family, on their same income and rent, will face a weekly charge of £26·39. Even if there is no rent or rates increase, they face that increase of £13·50 a week simply as a result of the changes in the regulations.

I invite those right hon. and hon. Members who think that new charge reasonable, who consider that increase fair and who are prepared to face that family and say that that increase is fair and that that new charge is reasonable, to vote for the regulations tonight. I invite all other hon. Members who regard such an increase as a scandal, to join me in the No Lobby.

6.42 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Often when Parliament tries to help people to meet necessary or socially desirable expenditure, it overlooks the long-term effects that flow from the introduction of a benefit, subsidy or relief. For example, regional subsidies may well provide work for one city but take it away from another. Mortgage interest relief, to which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) referred, often has unexpected effects. One obvious effect presently being experienced in the south-east is that it puts up house prices. The more people can borrow, the more vendors charge for properties. That was not expected at the time mortgage interest relief was introduced. However, it can still be argued that the advantages of that and of regional subsidies outweigh the disadvantages, but it is unwise ever to forget the other side of the coin.

Housing benefit is no exception to the rule that every benefit, subsidy or relief creates its own special problems. One problem that hon. Members on both sides of the House will immediately recognise is that of landlords who know that they can hoist the rents of those on low incomes or supplementary benefit, knowing that the taxpayer will pick up the tab. Landlords of that ilk are only interested in letting to those on supplementary benefit because most people in work would find it impossible to pay the rents they charge.

For every person who is entitled to help with his rent, there are two persons entitled to assistance with their rates. It is on that narrower aspect that I wish to concentrate, as it is here that the effects of housing benefit have been even more far-reaching. My hon. Friend the Minister pointed out that there are now 7 million ratepayers whose rates are subsidised under the housing benefit scheme. Of those 7 million, 2 million pay income tax. In reply to a recent question by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), it was disclosed that 1 million occupational pensioners both pay tax and receive housing benefit.

With 7 million ratepayers being subsidised, it is no wonder that irresponsible local authorities have been spending as if there is no tomorrow. It is now widely accepted, certainly by Government Members, that too few voters with an interest in containing local government expenditure leads to higher and higher local government expenditure. In Manchester, for example, 57 per cent. of all ratepayers receive rate rebates. With 57 per cent. receiving rebate, quite apart from all those who do not pay rates at all, it is no wonder that Manchester city council is not interested in containing spending.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): The hon. Member is paranoid.

Mr. Favell: He is also correct.

Until 1966, rate rebates were extremely limited, and local government almost invariably acted in a responsible and careful way. In 1966, a limited national rebate scheme was introduced and in 1974, that national rebate scheme was greatly expanded. Since then, the number of full ratepayers has gone steadily down while the number of irresponsible local authorities has gone steadily up. For the first time since 1974, my hon. Friend is now reducing the number of those on housing benefit. He is to be congratulated. That move, together with the community charge that is shortly to be introduced, will restore sanity to local government. Once again, town halls will be truly answerable to the voters, and as sanity returns to the town halls, spending will return to sensible levels. That is the only true and lasting way to assist those hard-pressed ratepayers who have been fleeced by town halls for too long.

6.46 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): A chill goes down my spine when the Government refer to reforms, because I substitute "reforms" for "cuts". I think that is what the whole exercise is about. I will not go down the same road as the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) because I know that he is paranoid about Manchester city council. If he paid as much attention to Stockport, I am sure that his constituents would have their interests better cared for. I am concerned about the effects on my constituents of the change to the regulations. Why do we have benefits at all? Why are benefits required? Who are the people who need and depend on benefits? It is certainly not the Ministers who are putting forward the proposals to cut housing benefits, or the series of social security changes that has already been discussed. People in the inner-city areas claim because they depend upon benefit to exist.

Manchester spends well over twice as much on housing benefit as the national average. The reason is the extent of massive unemployment in the inner-city area, low pay, poverty, the crime of getting old and becoming a pensioner, sickness and disability. That is why rates and rents are above average in Manchester. It is because of Government cuts that the Manchester local authority has to provide extra resources. Manchester has made tremendous efforts to encourage residents to take up housing benefit entitlements. The city council has

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

estimated that the cuts will hit its residents disproportionately and that the benefit loss will be at least £9 million, an average weekly loss of £1·50 for each household on housing benefit. It is also estimated that, on the basis of the Green Paper, 105,000 out of 112,000 people will lose some or all of their housing benefit, which is more than nine out of every 10 on housing benefit.

We had worked on the assumption that grant-aided students would be prevented from claiming housing benefit. Now we know the facts. Nearly 7,000 such grant-aided students receive housing benefit from the city council. The average amount is about £214 per academic year and the total cost of that help is £1 million. If, as we expected — we now know — the Government prevent students claiming housing benefit, that will either further penalise individual students or require additional expenditure from hard-pressed local education authorities. What will be the effect of that on the local authorities' resources? The city of Manchester has always taken the view that because of its income support role, the housing benefit scheme should be a national responsibility that should lie with the Department of Health and Social Security.

The imposition of transferring further work to local authorities, while reducing subsidies, implies that local authorities cannot be trusted with the discretion of assessing the needs of their community. Therefore, the Government are forcing incentives to maintain costs on local authorities. That is the crunch of the regulations and it is another blatant infringement of the democratic procedures that have been the prerogative of local authorities in the past.

It is considered inconceivable that two separate agencies should operate the assessment of need and income for the same claimants. My local authority rejects that nonsensical and bureaucratic set-up and believes that redistribution of income can be based only on a national programme. To overcome the severe local and regional disparities, we envisage that those responsible for expenditure must have the power to raise revenue on a national basis. I discussed that matter only this week with the officer in charge of the housing benefit department at Manchester city council. He informed me that his department will have to take on about 30 extra staff to administer the new regulations. It is essential that there are sufficient staff to protect the most vulnerable.

The council is also the major provider of benefits. Every year, 150,000 Manchester residents receive help with their rent and rates from Manchester's housing benefit office. In administering that complex scheme, the city council has resolved that the regulations should be interpreted for the maximum benefit of its residents — and rightly so. Since April 1984, the city council has twice resolved not to carry out national cuts in housing benefit. Instead, it has maintained the level of benefit by operating a more generous local scheme for Manchester residents.

What will be the consequences of the regulations for my constituents? I hope that in replying to the debate the Minister will answer some of the points that have been raised. My constituency has one of the highest percentages of people claiming supplementary benefit, free school meals and housing benefit. I should illustrate the massive unemployment in my constituency. In one area of the Manchester, Central constituency there is 46 per cent. male unemployment. It is now estimated that one third of all residents claim some form of benefit. As I think we would all agree that not everybody claims benefit, it is therefore estimated that about 50 per cent. of Manchester's population are below the poverty line.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has said, some of the hardest-hit are pensioners. About 80 per cent. of Manchester's pensioners are now poor enough to qualify for supplementary or housing benefit. Many people who live close to the city centre are poor and depend on benefits. Indeed, 39 per cent. of personal incomes in Manchester come from welfare benefits and about £80 million is paid out in housing benefit.

In my constituency, people do not fall foul of the ups and downs of the Stock Exchange. They fall foul of loan sharks — those vultures and parasites who prey on the demise of the poor. That is a growth industry in Manchester, and the Government always welcome that type of entrepreneur.

There are no areas of escape from poverty and its humiliations. I could list the areas and districts in Manchester — for example, in Openshaw, 38 per cent. of my constituents receive benefit. In other areas, 50 per cent. of schoolchildren receive free school meals. That is the situation in Manchester and I hope that the Minister will be able to tell me how my constituents will benefit from the regulations. By imposing such cuts in the housing benefit scheme further hardship is being heaped on communities that are striving to survive. As about 1 million claimants are expected to lose all help with rent and rate payments, surely, as night follows day, many of my constituents will be affected.

I have already mentioned the massive unemployment in my area. There have been closures of steelworks, of heavy engineering factories and of the finest wire manufacturers in the world. Major employers in the area have thrown workers on the streets with only their redundancy money in their pockets to show for a lifetime of work. Many who are only in their 50s are possibly too old to gain full-time employment again and must now face the further indignity of losing their housing benefit entitlement. That is the Government's thanks to the workers of this country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingstone mentioned pensioners. Such people have devoted their working lives to creating the wealth of the City and the nation, but they are not excluded from the cuts. In my area 25,000 pensioners receive standard housing benefit and more than half the city's pensioners receive either supplementary or housing benefit. We recognise that not all elderly people are poor but many are clearly on low incomes and are forced to claim benefits.

National statistics suggest that the most vulnerable people are elderly people and those who live alone. As long ago as 1983 a survey showed that 54 per cent. of that group were dependent on state benefits. In Manchester there are more than 30,000 lone pensioner households — that is 17 per cent. of all households. As an estimated three quarters of a million claimants — mainly pensioners — will face benefit cuts, by the law of averages, the pensioners in my constituency will be severely affected. As my hon. Friend said, many are independent. They have scrimped and saved all their working lives for their retirement and for the possibility of enjoying that period of their lives. The cuts will inflict hardship and distress on them because of their thrift. That is the reward of the caring Government.

The Low Pay Unit calculated recently that there are about 430,000 low-income households in Greater Manchester. That means that 44 per cent. of the work force in the Greater Manchester area earn poverty wages. In the city, the percentage will almost certainly be higher and, as we have heard, many of those unfortunates will lose benefits. With £500 million being cut from housing benefit, there will be many losers who can ill afford further cuts in their living standards. How could it be otherwise when the number of Manchester council tenants taking up certificated housing benefit amount to 59 per cent. of the population, and about 34 per cent. of them are in receipt of standard housing benefit? Private sector households do not escape the need to claim benefit—one third of them claim standard or certificated benefit.

These facts, figures, percentages, estimates and forecasts cannot demonstrate the profound hardship that these human beings will suffer. That is an indictment of our so-called affluent society. Many kids in the Manchester area will face a barren Christmas, relying on charity handouts for presents. These things should be exercising the conscience of Scrooge-like Ministers, with little or no compassion. How can they claim to have compassion when the Government's cuts will add to the misery, poverty and sickness that already exist?

There is a recognised correlation between poverty and ill health in our area. In the Manchester inner-city area there are 80 per cent. more deaths among people under 65 than the national average. Not a single person there will be able to afford the luxury of being pampered in a private hospital at £195 a day like the Secretary of State who was instrumental in pushing through these provisions. That is an insult to the poor. We live in a sick society in which more resources can be heaped on the greedy while the lifeline for the needy is being cut. I hope that Tories with consciences will come into the Lobby with us tonight.

7.1 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I strongly resent the attack that has just been made on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. It was perhaps symptomatic of the Labour party's extraordinary view that those who already receive large salaries should receive still more to help them when they are sick. The Secretary of State earns his salary daily, and nightly, and it is right that he should spend some of it on paying for his own health care, so leaving a bed for someone who cannot pay.

Whenever the House debates matters of this type, we are regaled with a briefing from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. We all turn eagerly, leaving aside the rest of our mail, to see what that Labour-controlled organisation has to tell us. Tonight's debate is no exception. I turn to my AMA parliamentary briefing and see in the first paragraph—surprise, surprise—that the association does not like the new benefit scheme. It says:

> "It will reduce benefits available to claimants, will be more difficult to administer, and result in further financial losses to authorities."

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) has with admirable economy already dealt with the charge that there will be more financial losses for the authorities, so I shall not burden the House further with that. His remarks were extremely relevant and knocked the AMA case into a cocked hat.

The association says that the scheme

> "will be more difficult to administer."

That surprises me because the Government's aim is to simplify the system by making it easier for claimants to understand and staff to administer. That is a good aim. Often claimants do not know to what they are entitled because the system is so complicated. Therefore, our striving to simplify the system for people who cannot understand its complexity is a worthy and proper aim. We shall have a more clearly defined structure of income-related benefits, with help based on easily identifiable and understood criteria. The rules for assessment of income-related benefits will be standardised, and administrative rules across the whole range of benefits will be aligned.

The regulations simplify what has been a complicated matter in other ways, too. The evidence against the AMA's claim, and for the Government's view on the matter of simplification, is overwhelming. Aligning income support and family credit must surely make the system simpler, because the assessment will be on net, rather than gross, income.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): As the hon. Lady could not be present for the whole debate, she missed a telling intervention by her hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who expressed worries on behalf of his constituents. He asked how the Government arrived at the figure of £6,000, beyond which elderly people in his constituency will be penalised. His view is shared by the AMA. Does the hon. Lady think that her hon. Friend was wrong, too?

Dame Jill Knight: I cannot be responsible for the opinions of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I can only be responsible for my own. Mr. Speaker was well aware of why I could not be in the Chamber for part of the debate. Heavens alive, the regulations have been before us for 16 days. I do not know what the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) does with his time, but I am capable of reading them in 16 days.

The system will also be fairer because people will be treated alike. That has not happened until now, but it is right that they should be. Whether they are in or out of work, they will be treated in exactly the same way. Providing people on benefit with a regular income upon which they can rely and plan seems a good idea. I am pleased to deduce from the regulations that that is what will happen. As an individual's income rises, his benefit will be reduced progressively, which seems perfectly sensible. The more he is paid, or the more money he receives, the less money the public will put in his pocket. It will be done by a fixed proportion of the amount by which his income exceeds a needs level. It is right that that level should be set by the Government at what the regulations call an applicable amount. That will usually be the same as the individual's income support level, which seems perfectly fair.

Mrs. Beckett: I have been following with interest the hon. Lady's argument that benefit should be withdrawn as income rises. Does she apply the same argument to the subsidies that are given to mortgage interest tax relief?

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Lady brings in the most extraordinary red herrings from time to time.

No one who looks at the regulations will deny that they are extremely complicated. It is not an easy matter to establish one's entitlement to help. We are dealing with people who frequently do not find it easy to explain what their needs are. I am absolutely astonished that the AMA is apparently not aware of that. Most hon. Members have received a tremendous number of complaints about the complexity of the present system, so how the AMA can have the bare-faced nerve to describe the new scheme as difficult to administer I cannot understand, given that we are trying to make it simpler for ordinary people to claim.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Lady will give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I must say that this will be the third time. If I go on like this, I shall talk for far longer than I had wished, in courtesy to other colleagues who wish to speak.

Mr. Kennedy: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. This will be a brief intervention. The hon. Lady is making a great cry about the reform and simplification that the Government are introducing with this measure, but surely what they are reforming and trying to simplify is their own mess when they introduced housing benefit to begin with?

Dame Jill Knight: The hon. Gentleman must understand that the Government have already considerably simplified the complications that lay in their way after previous elections. This is one more step on the road and it is advisable for the sake of claimants.

The AMA document talks about the reduction of available benefits and paints a picture of gloom and doom. It says that more than 1 million people will lose eligibility to benefits. Shock horror. We are back to the stage where Labour keeps putting foward the curious view that public money should be lavished on the un-needy as well as the needy. Our simple point is that the money available for people in need should be restricted to them only. I know that that is a simple point, but apparently it is too complicated for Opposition Members to take in.

If one has savings of £6,000 or more, one really cannot be described as a poor person in need of public help. That sum does not involve a house or money tied up in jewellery or clothing; it is money available to spend there and then. I believe that there can be no possible justification for the argument that people who have quite a substantial amount of money in the bank, at their disposal, should be given more money out of the pockets of those who perhaps do not even have £50 in the bank. I do not know how Opposition Members justify that.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Dame Jill Knight: I have made it quite clear that I will not give way again.

The situation that I have just described is the system that is in operation at the moment. Many people who pay tax today have less than £50 in the bank. It is not fair to take their money and give it to those who already have a lot. The old Labour party of years ago would have been on my side about that. It would have said, "You don't give vast amounts of public money away to people who have got that money already and who don't have a need." I believe that the thrust of our tax reforms means that we are trying to alleviate the problem faced by those poor people — there are many — who are paying taxes. We want to raise the threshold. Again, we are always under attack from the Opposition about tax cuts, but we are trying to help the very people whom the Labour party ask to fork out to help those who have no need.

An important and significant shift for Britain is to try to get back to the days when healthy people, in work, shouldered their own burdens. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Opposition Members may groan, but that idea makes a lot of sense to people outside the House. Of course there are people who cannot bear their burdens, and they must certainly be helped. The difference between the Conservative and Labour Benches is that we want to give more money to the people who cannot help themselves, but they want to give more money to the people who have already got it. That is absolutely crazy.

Currently, we are making fools of ourselves. For too long we have encouraged the view that the state will meet every reverse in fortune suffered by any individual from the womb to the tomb. We must return to the acceptance of the idea that we all have our own burdens. We should fight to carry them and not ask the rest of society to carry them for us.

Three great evils have arisen from the idea that the state will always meet every problem—an idea fostered for so long by the Labour party. First, it saps human will and initiative if someone else is footing the bills and solving the problems. Secondly, a system that allows such a thing to continue means that so much money is taken away in tax that people are incapable of carrying their own burdens. We should consider that. Thirdly, it leads to Government overspending all the time. That, of course, leads to inflation, and again we hit the very people who need to be protected.

The AMA document — hon. Members must understand that I have not had it under my pillow for the past three weeks, but at least I have read it extremely carefully since it arrived — complains about the change from 100 per cent. alleviation of the payment of rates to a mere 80 per cent. alleviation.

If we had a system whereby people who were lucky enough to get benefit could go into a shop and have everything free, it would be incredible. Even if they were told that they were being asked to pay only 20 per cent. of what everybody else paid, I think that they would cheer. I believe that that is a pretty good bargain if one gets one's rate bills settled by having to pay only 20 per cent. Many people would be absolutely delighted with that.

Mr. Favell: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Dame Jill Knight: I did say that I would not, but since it is three to one, I will.

Mr. Favell: My hon. Friend has come to an extremely important matter. What is the AMA frightened of? Is it perhaps that it is frightened of facing its electors?

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend makes an interesting and valid point. I believe that that is probably one of the things that frightens the AMA.

When people pay even a tiny percentage — 20 per cent.—of the rates, they will be much more interested in how that money is spent. All the vast sums being spent on one-armed homosexual window-cleaners' social clubs will come to public notice. "Hallo," they will say, "that is not what I pay my 20 per cent. of rates for." That is a good thing. Let the searchlight of public understanding fall on some local councils' expenditure and we will be all the better for it.

I am extremely glad that the preferential treatment built into the income support for disabled people will be reflected in the housing benefit calculation. That gave me particular pleasure. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh, yes!"] Opposition Members do not have a monopoly of care and concern for the disabled. They should also learn a few manners.

Those on income support will continue to get full help with rent, and that is right. Indeed, more than four fifths of those on income support will be either better off or stay the same as now. Having read about such provisions in the regulations and having listened to some Opposition Members' speeches, I cannot equate the two views. The hard cases that the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) discussed will surely continue to be helped in the same way as they have been until now.

Mrs. Beckett: No, they will not.

Dame Jill Knight: Oh yes, they will. Sixty per cent. of housing benefit goes to pensioners. One must examine their needs, because they will be the group most affected. I understand from the figures that half will gain and half will lose. However, those who lose will be the ones to whom I have already referred — those who have more than £6,000 in the bank.

I do not know how Opposition Members were brought up, but I would have thought £1,000 in the bank to be a fortune, let alone £6,000, when I was growing up. As long as people are able to meet their needs from their disposable income, how can it be right for the taxpayer to be asked to do it for them? I welcome the regulations, the thought behind them, the extra simplification and the recognition that some people need help and must continue to get it.

With great enthusiasm I shall support the regulations.

7.20 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Before I follow the interesting excursion of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) into the equity of the Government's behaviour, I must apologise to the Minister for missing the early section of his speech, because I was delayed in travelling. However, I must compliment the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on an analytical and excellent demolition of the Government's case. I fully associate myself with his comments.

Housing benefit is an issue which successive Conservative Ministers have come to the House to simplify, extend, alter and reform. They are still trying to achieve that aim this evening. It is nonsense for the hon. Member for Edgbaston to boast about the Government's magnificient achievement in bringing forward this simplification. All hon. Members who have dealt with constituency cases involving previous simplifications tend to say, "We will see what happens with this one." It is a bit much for the hon. Lady to hold this up as a great achievement, when the Government are trying to sort out the entrails of their predecessors' efforts to minimise and restructure the system, which have resulted in shambles, as the Minister is aware.

The Minister was determined to talk about the plight of pensioners. Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that several years ago many pensioners who had never been in debt in their lives received notification from local authorities of considerable debts about which many of them were almost worried to death. They came to hon. Members and asked what could be done about it. That was the administrative nightmare that the system introduced.

Although any simplification will be welcome — and we cannot make a final judgment on that tonight — the Government should be a little more careful when claiming so much credit for what is, after all, a mess largely of their own making. The hon. Member for Edgbaston kindly took an intervention from me, but told us that she did not want to take too many others. I was less worried about the interventions. Indeed, the quality of her speeches would be improved by more interventions from Opposition Members and fewer contributions to the detail of her speeches from what I presume is Conservative central office. I found the image of society in Britain that she painted to be far removed from the lives of too many people in Britain.

Dame Jill Knight: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I suggest that he has no right to tell me whence I get my material. The main thrust of my argument was that it was ridiculous and wrong to give public money to people who do not need it. Does the hon. Gentleman agree or disagree with that?

Mr. Kennedy: Every hon. Member will agree that public money should be effectively used. There is no argument about that. In an intervention during the speech by the hon. Member for Livingston, the hon. Lady's hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) asked how many millions more people will be on housing benefit. The Prime Minister talks about the evils of a nanny state and people being too dependent. Because of their economic policy, the Government have made more people than ever before dependent on the welfare state.

Dame Jill Knight: That is nonsense.

Mr. Kennedy: I do not understand how the hon. Lady can say that that is nonsense, given the present levels of unemployment and dependency. Many Conservative Back Benchers complain about the number of people who are eligible for housing benefit. They should ask themselves why so many people are eligible, even under a scheme that successive Ministers have attempted to restrict. It is because so many people have an income that is so low that even this Government are forced to concede that it is inadequate in a civilised country like Britain. Government policies have caused that situation and the humbug and hogwash that we hear about targeting resources most effectively is like looking at a glass of water and arguing that it is not half full but half empty. The Government are standing logic on its head by claiming credit for a situation to which their own policies have been the major contributors. The oozing self-congratulatory selfishness that comes from Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers does not commend itself to the millions of people who will be affected by these proposed changes.

I shall touch briefly on one or two of the main points that arise from this measure. I shall deal first with the 20 per cent. rates contribution. The hon. Member for Edgbaston is attracted to this, but I doubt very much if those who will have to pay it will be attracted to it. The hon. Lady will not find the public fascination with this 20

[Mr. Kennedy]

per cent. rates contribution that she predicted. The level of interest on the part of the public will be restricted to those poor people who will be aware that they will have to pay a 20 per cent. contribution that at the moment they do not have to pay. The interest will end there. It will not extend, as the hon. Lady said it will, into a higher level of participation in scrutiny of local authorities.

We are told that this extra payment will be offset by increased income support. I think that the amount being discussed is about £1·30. However, that does not take account of areas in which there is high rating and in which, obviously, that offsetting amount in income support will be inadequate.

I have no more brief than the hon. Lady for a Labour organisation. However, I listen to experts. The Association of Metropolitan Authorities has argued with considerable force that we could well end up with a nonsensical scheme that is difficult and expensive to administer compared with what it brings in. As the hon. Member for Livingston said, in Scotland that will lead to an increased likelihood of warrant sales which must be one of the most offensive and unacceptable things on the local government statute book —if I may put it that way—north of the border. We do not wish to see that happen.

The rent taper is increased by 5 per cent. to 65 per cent. Obviously, its application on net instead of gross income is sensible and welcome. However, the 65 per cent. rent taper amounts to a cut of about £150 million in housing benefit. It will also mean an increase in the poverty trap, because the marginal tax rates for households paying tax and 9 per cent. national insurance and receiving help towards rent and rates has risen from 61·75 per cent. over the past four years. As a result of this measure, it will go up to 91 per cent. The highest rate of income tax over the same period and, indeed, before is now down to 60 per cent. and is paid on only taxable income above £41,200 per annum. That shows that there is a gross distortion in the way in which the Government are dealing with and handling public finance in terms of the distribution of wealth in Britain. That is why the double standards of the Government are so unacceptable.

In terms of the capital rule, the hon. Member for Edgbaston thinks that £1,000 is a great deal of money and that £6,000 is an absolute fortune. When Invergordon aluminium smelter closed in my constituency several years ago, there were significant redundancy payments. However, alternative employment for those people made redundant has not found its way to that part of the country and they have been living on dwindling assets. For that reason, the £6,000 capital limit that the Government propose is not in any way related to the reality of the predicament in which those people find themselves.

On average, local authority rents have increased by 155 per cent. since 1979. Over the same period, housing benefit has been reduced on four occasions and another cut is due in April. Given a track record like that, there is no guarantee that further cuts will not follow. The Government's record on that is deplorable and it shows consistent negligence on their part that they have not addressed the housing benefits system with a good deal more equity and fairness than this measure suggests.

The Government's White Paper on housing proposes decontrol of rents. In areas such as London, rents will be all too liable to rocket if landlords are able to charge an amount that the market will bear. There is a contradiction in that because, in a sense, the Government, given their market fascination, wish that to be allowed to happen while at the same time restricting the degree of application and support of housing benefit. That is a mark of the inconsistency of the Government's approach. That will mean a reduction in living standards unless housing benefit goes up accordingly. Four cuts since 1979 and another one promised in April is hardly the basis on which we can have much confidence that that will happen.

My final point is about the recovery of overpayments. In many ways this is one of the most remarkable sections of the publication that is before us. It would have been wonderful to sit in at the meetings between civil servants and Ministers when they decided on the definition of an overpayment. To have the gall to institute measures to recover overpayments from this category of person is quite remarkable. At the moment the maximum that can be taken from benefit to recover an overpayment is £4·65 a week. The limit—surprise, surprise—is one of the few things that will go up because of this measure. Another is the taper percentage increase. Therefore, people receiving supplementary benefit or income support, when it is introduced, are already on the poverty line, according to the Government's own official definition; otherwise they would not be eligible for such support. To talk about increasing the amount for the recovery of an overpayment for people in that income category is ridiculous.

We shall certainly oppose these regulations. They highlight the great distortions in housing policy in Britain, in that those who are unfortunate enough to be in receipt of income which enables them to be recipients of housing benefit are castigated by hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Stockport. It is said that people at the worst end of the income spectrum are going cap in hand for support from public finance, but the public finance should be there by right to alleviate their distress.

People like me who are in employment and at an age when overheads in terms of dependants are not high and who benefit from mortgage interest relief continue to enjoy a straightforward subsidy. Mortgage interest relief should continue, but not at the higher levels that we see at the moment. It should be restricted to people who pay standard rate income tax. It would be equitable if the Government were to come forward and do something even-handed like that while trying to restrict housing benefit or simplify the system. Of course, that would inevitably lead to losers.

If the Government acknowledged that many people are doing very well while many of their fellow citizens continue to get poorer, they would get a more reasonable hearing in the House. However, they will not do that. All their energies are concentrated on restricting the rights of the poorest people while not addressing Britain's tax distortions. They need to be addressed and I hope that the Chancellor will yet address them. The Government's attitudes point to inconsistency and a completely irreconcilable conflict in the approach that the Minister is taking. I cannot believe that the Minister is proud of these regulations or can take much satisfaction from them. He has a reputation as a humane man. I hope, therefore, that he will implement them in that manner.

7.35 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): It has been accepted by Governments of all political persuasions that budgets should be set and then adhered to. There is no unlimited pot of taxpayers' money that the Government can spend. Therefore, as the global total is limited, it is hon. Members' responsibility to ensure that that money is spent wisely and that the best priorities are placed upon it. I hope that Labour Members will not regard the proposition as jejune, but I believe that taxpayers' money should be concentrated on those who are least well off in society. If not, those least well off will be penalised and those relatively better off will enjoy the extra benefits.

It is remarkable that the Labour party has sought to defend the relatively better-off sections of the community in this respect. There is a natural tendency for social security expenditure to expand beyond the limits originally conceived. This can happen for a variety of reasons. For example, the original legislation may have unforeseen consequences. Often people use human ingenuity in exploiting the flexibility of the regulations. There is also a tendency for the creeping establishment of precedents by social security commissioners as they respond to the reasonable and understandable human difficulties before them.

We have had help with housing costs for many years. Back in 1975-76, the Labour Government spent £259 million on rent rebates for 1 million households and helped with housing costs for a further 1 million households through the supplementary benefit system. However, in 1979-80 the Government helped 5·5 million households with housing costs at a cost of £1·24 billion. In 1986-87 the Government are helping 7 million households at a cost of £5·1 billion. That is equal to one third of all households in this country.

I would like to ask the Minister an important question. What was the original concept of housing benefit in this respect? What was meant to be the original catchment of housing benefit? As an ex-civil servant, I ask myself whether this may have been yet another example of, "Yes, Minister". When such a benefit extends to a third of the population, it seems to have engendered a remarkable expansiveness. Of course, housing benefit will be a welcome addition to the income of those who are relatively well off. I do not dispute that. I am sure that some of my constituents will nag me when they lose that benefit, but few of them would be content to be regarded as financially disadvantaged or poor. Indeed, some would be quite offended by that.

At present, real, personal disposable incomes are at record levels and, in all parts of the income distribution, standards of living are higher than they were in 1979. The Opposition may prefer to talk about cuts rather than targeting. I agree that savings of £640 million are implicit in the measure. That too has to be set in the context of an increase in social security expenditure of 35 per cent. since we came to power in 1979. Of course, some of that will be demand-led but a large proportion of it is due to real increases in benefits to those in need.

The Opposition have said that pensioners will be hit, particularly those with capital of £6,000. I was surprised that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) defended the income rule instead of the capital rule. That would mean that a pensioner could have £100,000 underneath his or her bed and still get housing benefit. What kind of Socialism would that be?

Mrs. Beckett: I am not sure that I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly. Did he understand what my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) was saying? My hon. Friend said that people with large sums of capital should have the income from that capital taken into account. It would be unlikely, unless he had an extraordinarily unwise adviser, that anyone with £100,000 would have so little income that he was entitled to housing benefit.

Mr. Butler: In that case what is the objection to a capital rule? If income is to be taken as a strict analogue of capital, why was the hon. Gentleman pressing for an income rule?

I would have more sympathy with the Opposition if they concentrated on those deeply in need of benefits and if, instead of belabouring my hon. Friend for taking away benefit from the relatively well off, they belaboured him perhaps for not targeting these benefits more precisely.

I am the son of a general practitioner. He has undertaken a large number of assessments for attendance allowance. I have read many of those assessments and I have been greatly moved by the dedication and selflessness of the families of the claimants. Year after year they show altruism that makes me proud to be a human being. They save the National Health Service millions, or perhaps billions, of pounds a year. I shall regard my work in the House as incomplete if at the end of my days here attendance allowance does not reflect more closely its deserts. I hope that I shall always be careful to distinguish between defending benefits for the better off and the sensitive prioritisation of expenditure on those who desperately need it.

7.42 pm

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): The regulations have to be judged by the House against two crucial tests—who will gain and who will lose, and what general effect will the change have on the provision of decent housing for those in housing need? As to who will gain and who will lose, the Government must concede that when more than £500 million is taken out of the system some groups will lose. One group that has been discussed in detail is the elderly who may have problems following retirement.

In that context I should like to quote from a letter from Mr. Michael Corp, the group director of Anchor, a housing association, a body which has a fine record in providing suitable houses for the elderly. So far as I know, Mr. Corp has no connection with the Labour side of the House and has no political axe to grind. He felt moved to write to hon. Members in these terms:

> "We estimate that at least 50 per cent. of our 22,000 tenants (a far from wealthy group as you may know) will lose benefit entirely or suffer a considerable reduction in entitlement. Unlike those in employment older people have no option or opportunity to increase income to meet the shortfall."

That is an objective comment by someone who is heavily involved in providing housing for the elderly. I find that comment disturbing. The Government have to be more convincing about who will lose, particularly among the elderly, before they will get sympathy for the changes in the regulations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) has described vividly the effect of the change on the residents of Manchester. Knowsley and Manchester are not dissimilar. We have unemployment, urban deprivation, low incomes and all the usual desperate

[Mr. George Howarth]

problems that urban areas have been confronted with since 1979. I have done research on the effects of the change on the people of Knowsley. I want to give two examples, although I shall not give the names. A couple of pensioners on a small occupational pension which brings their overall income to £1·03 above the supplementary benefit level will lose £5·98 a week. Another single parent with two children and a net income of £81·44 a week will lose £5·19 a week.

Of the 30,000 people in the borough of Knowsley currently receiving housing benefit at varying levels it is estimated that 7,500 will lose because of the changes in April. Of those 7,500, 2,000 are pensioners. That is the effect that the changes will have on people in the real world outside.

We have to be realistic about the situation nationally. About 1 million of the 7 million who receive benefit will be taken out of the system. The hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) talked with some pride about the fact that 7 million people receive housing benefit. Why have 7 million been drawn into the system? The truth is that poverty among the old, the low paid and the unemployed has increased inexorably since 1979. That is why 7 million people qualify for housing benefit.

I shall not shrink from dealing with one further subject in detail. One cannot consider housing benefit without contrasting it with the system of mortgage tax relief which runs parallel to it. Currently £4·75 billion of revenue lost to the Exchequer is spent on mortgage tax relief for owner-occupiers. Fifty-five per cent. of those who receive mortgage income tax relief earn between £10,000 and £20,000 a year. Worse still, 26 per cent. of those who receive mortgage subsidy through the tax system earn over £20,000 a year. That is the reality of the two systems that are operating side by side.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Is the thrust of the hon. Gentleman's remarks that the Labour party is now advocating the removal of mortgage tax relief?

Mr. Howarth: I will state my opinion on that in a moment. I do not purport to speak officially for the Labour party on this subject.

It is incredible that the two systems operate in parallel and that the major benefit of the two systems goes to high earners. Basically that is the reality of the statistics. I am in pretty good company for a change in my views on this subject. The Archbishop of Canterbury's report "Faith in the City" recommended a total and thorough-going review of the whole system of housing subsidy, and the National Federation of Housing Associations' inquiry into British housing made similar recommendations. Indeed, that inquiry was chaired by Prince Philip.

In response to the point raised by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), I support the proposals of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and that is not a great revolutionary or Left-wing body. It recommended that mortgage income tax relief should be phased out and a single universal system of housing allowance phased in. Sooner or later this Government—like a future Labour Government—will have to bite on that bullet because of the growing and spiralling costs of mortgage tax relief. Any Government of whatever political complexion will have to consider that proposal seriously.

My next point relates to the effect that the proposals will have on the provision of good quality housing for people with housing needs. We must consider what the experts have said. The Merseyside regional council of the National Federation of Housing Associations—a group of professional people who are concerned about the provision of decent housing—stated:

> "Associations will be looking at levels of Housing Benefit payable over the next 5 years, and what tenants can afford to pay. With private finance, the level of voids and fear of losing resources, associations will be looking for safer tenants, those able to pay."

In other words, because of these and other measures in train, instead of seeking to help people in greatest need, the housing association movement will be looking for those who can afford to pay for housing that was originally designed for people in need. That is rather strange.

Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have applauded the development of housing co-operatives around the country and particularly on Merseyside for providing good quality housing for rent. Indeed, they have applauded them because there is an element of self-help and they claim that co-operatives are wonderful since they enable working class people to have the opportunity to design, run, manage and maintain their own homes. I agree with that praise. I am very concerned about that issue.

However, the National Federation of Housing Co-operatives is also concerned about the regulations. It is concerned because housing co-operatives do not have the resources of housing associations or local authorities and the delays that the system will inevitably introduce in terms of registration will lead to difficulty in planning, and uncertainty and difficulty for housing co-operatives. The federation also believes that the confusion over the reasonableness of market rents and the effect that that will have will cause problems in attracting private finance for new schemes. The proposals are set out in the White Paper shortly to be presented to the House in the new Housing Bill. Those bodies are deeply concerned about providing rented housing. They are desperately worried about the consequences of the regulations and the proposals in the impending Housing Bill.

The regulations and the proposed Housing Bill are shoddy measures. The regulations will affect the old, the poor and the low-paid very greatly. By continuing to subsidise those who do not need assistance in terms of mortgage tax relief and withdrawing subsidy from those in need through the housing benefit system, the Government are operating a shoddy system that discriminates against those in need in favour of those who need less. The regulations are disgraceful and they deserve to be thrown out by the House. Sadly, that probably will not happen.

7.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): This debate takes place against the background of a topic that is very seldom discussed in the House — the doctrine of relative deprivation. It is perfectly true that there are psychological disadvantages when one's neighbours can afford rather more this year and even more next year than oneself. That is clearly difficult to put up with. However, the introduction of the doctrine of relative deprivation—and when I used to teach social policy, relative deprivation was a great talking point among the students—has meant that without fail there will be a block of the poor so defined because there is a moving boundary.

It is very important for us to remember that, as one of my hon. Friends has already explained, by and large there is growing prosperity and there are more prosperous people in this country than ever before. In those circumstances it is entirely absurd to have one household in three, some 7 million people, drawing a benefit that was clearly designed to ameliorate some of the difficulties encountered by what was always imagined to be a small minority of people in a hostile housing market.

Mr. George Howarth: Is it not equally implausible to have a benefit through the tax system for owner-occupiers which is equally undiscriminatory?

Mr. Rowe: I believe that it would be good if the Conservative party could return with more zeal to the pursuit of what the party originally came to power to achieve, the removal of all forms of perk. All perks distort the working of the economy and I have often said in this House that I believe in a guaranteed minimum income which would remove many of those specific allowances and grants — for example, mortgage relief or housing benefit — the effect of which is always to distort the market. Given that we are a long way from achieving that now, I want to support the tenet of my hon. Friends to reduce the number of households dependent on housing benefit.

The rates payment is particularly absurd. The idea that one should meet public expenditure costs out of public expenditure by paying for it through an administrative system which adds enormously to the cost of the whole system is wholly absurd. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) said that the cuts in housing benefit will affect the quality of housing provision. One of the most disquieting features of the housing benefit system as a whole is that many people are making a very fat living out of providing substandard housing, simply because they know that the state will meet the cost. This is not the debate in which to try to work out ways of preventing that, but I consider it one of the weaknesses of the system.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made much of the poverty trap in which the young may find themselves. In my view, people over 50 or 55 who decide, with perfect rationality, that it is not worth getting up early, waiting for a bus and paying a large fare to go to a job that will yield them only £5 or £6 a week more than they would receive on benefit are fully entitled to remain at home. However, that is surely the worst decision that young people can make. Hon. Members who tell them that they have no need to go to work and that it is disgraceful to expect them to do so, because they will receive only £5 or £6 more than the benefit level, are doing them a serious disservice.

I realise that, in some parts of the country, young people experience enormous difficulty in finding work. In my part of the world, however, work is plentiful at present. Young people who decide to work, even if it is for a very small net reward at the beginning, frequently rise quickly to a level of wages considerably higher than the level on which they began. They also find it very much easier to move from one job to another. It is the old story: it is far easier to get a job from a job. It may sometimes be very tempting for young people not to work, because they are told by their elders, and by those who ought to know better, that it is not worth it because the differential between wages and benefit is not enough. Such people are doing themselves and their future careers considerable harm.

A curious outcome of the widespread and radical reforms gradually being introduced in the system of income support, rating and so forth is that some of the poorest of my constituents will receive considerable benefits. By a strange quirk, when the community charge is introduced, they will be reimbursed on the average level for the 20 per cent. they are expected to pay. That is because the frugal local authorities, which are very well run in my part of the world, have succeeded in keeping down their expenditure to a remarkable degree. I realise that that does not operate throughout the country, but it nevertheless underlines the enormous benefits to be derived from living in an area with a good record of frugal local government.

We are aiming not only for clarity, but to reduce the number of people in the trap — for trap it is. While, as always happens, some unfortunate families and individuals will lose considerably, and others will lose slightly, the majority of those who will be excluded from housing benefit will find that they can survive far better than they ever expected. One of the emasculating effects of a large benefit programme is that more and more people are sucked into it, because it becomes less and less attractive to make the effort to avoid it. I do not blame them; it seems an entirely sensible thing to do. Nevertheless, it is a worrying phenomenon that the number of people eligible for housing benefit is rising, at a time when unemployment is falling sharply.

I remind hon. Members that, although the capital sum is low, it is higher than it was before the introduction of the regulations. One of the hardest questions of public policy is, "How do we look after the frugal ant, rather than the frivolous grasshopper?" How do we persuade those who have carefully set aside — often with considerable difficulty — a proportion of their earnings over many years, and built up a small sum against a rainy day, that it is just to give virtually the same benefit at the end of the day to someone who has not done that, and may even have gloried in not doing it?

The more that my hon. Friends can do to secure a higher capital sum over the years, the better I shall be pleased. I agree with Opposition Members that £6,000 is not a very large sum, although many more people now have such a sum, partly as a direct consequence of the present Government's taxation policies. I shall be delighted if I discover that the new-look Labour party's policy is so to operate the taxation system that it too will increase the number of people who find it relatively easy to build up substantial lump sums. We have already heard that the Opposition's target would be a much higher sum.

I should prefer to move in one fell swoop to a guaranteed minimum income, of which housing benefit would be just a part, rather than an entirely separate benefit. However, I support the regulations.

8.7 pm

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): Before I discuss the regulations in detail, let me make one or two comments about the surprises I received from the Minister's opening remarks. For instance, I was surprised that the hon. Gentleman suggested that the measures would simplify the previous system, without pointing out that it was the present Government who caused chaos

[Mr. Keith Bradley]

throughout the country with the regulations that they brought in in 1982-83. They are responsible for the misery that many claimants suffered in my city of Manchester at that time.

I believe that the new regulations will again cause misery and chaos, because not enough time, thought and effort has been allowed for local authorities to introduce them properly.

I was also surprised that the Minister tried to isolate housing benefit from housing policy in general. Only recently, the Minister for Housing and Planning, when discussing the move to deregulate all rents in the private sector, said publicly and openly that he would turn to the Department of Health and Social Security to support that deregulation through housing benefit. The Minister denied any relationship between housing benefit and the Tory Government's general housing policy.

I was surprised to hear that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) believes that, if one has £6,000 in the bank, one should not receive any benefit from the state. Does she say that, if one has £6,000 in the bank, one should not receive mortgage tax relief? It is exactly the same. She wishes everyone to have an open-ended commitment to mortgage tax relief, but she denies poor people's rights to housing benefit if they have £6,000. What hypocrisy we hear from the Tory Government.

I distance myself from the comments that were made by the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell), who said that one goes cap in hand to receive benefit if one is poor. Before I was elected to the House, I worked for the Stockport health service. I saw the poverty and the needs of the people of Stockport. To make ends meet, they rely on income support through the housing benefit. It is deplorable for the hon. Gentleman to represent such people, claim that they go cap in hand, and, at the same time, accuse Manchester of helping needy people. We should dissociate ourselves from such remarks.

I shall identify the proposed changes in the backdating arrangements for housing benefit, the provision for extra housing benefit in exceptional circumstances, and the abolition of the local housing benefit scheme. Before I refer to them in detail, I associate myself with remarks made by the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), who made a strong case for Manchester. I also represent a Manchester constituency. My hon. Friend said that the cuts, which are estimated at £500 million—the Minister admitted that we are talking about £640 million—will seriously affect the people of Manchester. On the basis of the £500 million cut, we estimated that nine out of 10 Manchester claimants will lose some of their housing benefit, and that one in 10 such claimants will lose the benefit altogether. The Government claim that the combination of the changes in income support, family credit and housing benefit will alleviate the effects of the cuts and that no one will be made worse off. The Minister admitted that his figures do not give a realistic impression of the amount that will be cut from housing benefit.

We in Manchester computed the effects of the combination of the changes to family credit and housing benefit. We found that practically all low-income families will be no better off and that many will be worse off. Taking into account different combinations of family types, incomes, rents and rates, we found that there were poverty traps. No one on a low income will gain anything from the changes. Also, taking into account the Government's unforgiveable decision to limit free school meals to families who receive income support, the effect of the changes will be even more dramatic. In Manchester, families will lose £2·25 per child each week. We have estimated that 11,000 children will suffer. That will compound the effect of the cuts that we are discussing.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who believes that benefits should be paid in cash and not in kind?

Mr. Bradley: We are talking about income support for all families. A crucial element of income support is free school meals. Up to 80 per cent. of schoolchildren in my constituency rely on free school meals. The cuts will cause them severe hardship. Free school meals will be denied to them.

Furthermore, housing benefit claimants will be the only ones to suffer no transitional protection from benefit cuts. That will seriously undermine the budgetary arrangements of many low-income families.

Pensioners will be seriously affected by the cuts. One in five people in my constituency are pensioners. Many of them live on state retirement pensions. Many of them have been thrifty and have managed to put a little money in the bank. Conservative Members claim that £6,000 is a lot of money. It is not a lot of money for pensioners who have worked throughout their lives. Their benefit will be removed and they will suffer because they have put some money in the bank for emergencies or for peace of mind in old age. The Government are attacking the peace of mind of old people in my constituency of Manchester, Withington.

The regulations presently allow a local authority to backdate a claim for housing benefit for up to 12 months, if, in its opinion, the circumstances are exceptional. The regulations allow authorities a wide discretion for backdating to alleviate hardship. I have sat on numerous housing benefit review boards. They have used that discretion to ensure that people who are entitled to their benefit receive it. We have used it to ensure that their hardship is alleviated. From April 1988, when the regulations come into effect, backdating may be used only if the claimant proves that there is good cause for his failure to make that claim throughout the period for which the backdating is sought. That is a much more restrictive measure.

Many of the circumstances that are currently used for backdating will be denied. Many local authorities will not be able to use the circumstances that now constitute the interpretation of good cause. For example, ignorance of entitlement—I stress the word "entitlement"—will not be considered to be good enough cause for backdating. Matters such as illiteracy or limited English in respect of the interpretation of forms will no longer qualify a claimant for backdating. I hope that the junior Minister will say that backdating will be used as widely as it currently is used by local authorities.

It is hard to understand why such restrictions are considered to be fair when they refer to a person's legal entitlement to benefit. For example, a taxpayer is allowed seven years in which to rectify the backdating of his income tax assessment. So he may refer back seven years.

without penalty, to receive the income tax refund to which he is entitled. We are talking about restricting housing benefit for 12 months. It is another example of the Government looking after the rich and denying the rights of the poor.

Backdating is further exacerbated by the change in subsidy arrangements. Currently, backdating attracts a 90 per cent. subsidy. From April 1988, it will be cut to 25 per cent. The Government have stated that their objective is to encourage responsible administration by local authorities. The effect of the subsidy change will be precisely the opposite. It will discourage authorities from carrying out their legal duty to pay backdated benefit, even when the regulations require it.

I now refer to the extra housing benefit for exceptional circumstances. Currently, extra housing benefit can be paid to cover all general and water rates. With the draconian decision to force all claimants, however poor, to pay water rates and 20 per cent. of eligible rates, it is not clear to me whether local authorities will have an opportunity to give extra help to poor people who cannot afford such bills. If this facility is not made available, many more people will suffer severe hardship. But if it is, since no subsidy is payable on such extra help, the cost to hard-pressed local authorities to alleviate such hardship will be astronomical and prohibitive because of the cuts in support that they have suffered. I hope that the Minister will clarify what is eligible for housing benefit payment over and above the 20 per cent. that local authorities now have to pay.

My next point, which is crucial to Manchester, concerns local housing benefit schemes. The present legislation allows local authorities to operate schemes on a more generous basis than the national model scheme. Since 1984, Manchester has used that power to enhance standard housing benefit claimants, thus benefiting such claimants. In 1986-87, it cost £1 million. It did not attract subsidy, but we considered it essential to eliminate hardship among low-income families and to allow local needs to dictate how we interpret and use the housing benefit scheme. That power is removed by these regulations. The loss of such a local scheme will increase the general losses of claimants in Manchester. We have estimated that over 30,000 claimants will be worse off and will lose benefit because of the abolition of the local scheme.

In Manchester we shall publicise these changes because we believe it right that people should know what their entitlements will be. We know that the Government will support that view because we have seen, time and time again, how keen they are to publicise changes in legislation. They spend thousands, if not millions, of pounds on advertising new policies such as the right to buy or those in other sectors of social security payments. Will the Minister confirm that the Government will spend the same amount of money to tell people exactly how much benefit they will lose under these regulations?

We have been told that we should not consider these changes in isolation, and I certainly will not. I was elected as the Member of Parliament for Manchester, Withington, in June. It was a seat that we won for the first time, and that was precisely because over the past eight years many people have been ground down by cut after cut in pensions, benefits and housing benefit. Cut after cut of housing benefit has ground them into poverty, so they reacted by kicking out the Tory at the election.

Since I have been in the House I have witnessed a continuation of that policy. In the past few weeks there have been further miserly increases in pensions, the freezing of child benefit and cuts in the real value of benefits. We are now debating the introduction of further cuts in benefit. People in Manchester have said that enough is enough. We shall oppose the Government all the way on these issues. We in Manchester will ensure that people understand that when their rents or rates increase and they are in financial hardship, the blame should be placed squarely on the shoulders of the Tory Government.

8.23 pm

Mr. James Arbuthnot (Wanstead and Woodford): I have enjoyed the style of Labour Members' speeches, but I have been increasingly surprised by their content. Nobody could deny that the existing rules on income-related benefits are anomalous and odd. The rules on eligibility for supplementary benefit say one thing and those for housing benefit say another. For supplementary benefit, investment income is ignored, but more than £3,000 of capital deprives one of benefit altogether. For housing benefit, capital is ignored but investment income is taken into account. That is not particularly sensible, and it creates anomalies. However, just as important, it creates confusion in the minds of people who need housing benefit. We must remember that we are talking not of want but of need. People at the poorest end of the income scale are not often best placed to be able to understand the welter of different regulations that apply to different benefits. I can say with confidence that few people understand the differences between these regulations and still fewer understand any need for them.

I welcome these new regulations because, by drawing together income-related benefits, the differences disappear and the rules are simplified. They are welcome and long overdue. However, there must be a rider to that. Confusion can be created not only by regulations, which themselves are complicated, but by frequent changes to them. The more the law is changed, whether by statute or statutory instrument, the more those who need benefits and those who administer them are kept in a state of bewilderment. It is all very well to have a new law that is simpler but it does not help if the people who administer it have just caught up with the old one.

Frequent changes generate a cost in themselves, even if in the long run they are simpler and cheaper to administer. They need new books and forms, and extra training for those who administer them. That extra cost must be taken into account and cannot be ignored.

While I welcome the new regulations, I hope that they will be the last changes for a long time. There may be imperfections in them—no law is perfect—but as long as we can live with them we should leave well alone.

I welcome the regulations for several reasons. The main one is that they concentrate available resources into the hands of the poorest of our society. In that regard, the Government have two duties. The first speaks for itself—to provide support for those who cannot provide it for themselves. The second duty is just as important—not to provide support to those who can support themselves. They have a duty not to provide support to those who can rely on their own resources. If we provide support to those who have their own resources and for those who do not need it, we create a dependence on that

[Mr. James Arbuthnot]

support and on Government. I congratulate the Government on being the first to have the courage to challenge that dependence.

Protests will be made about these regulations — we have heard some this evening. The reason for them is that dependence on Government support has already gone too far and continued for too long. There will be protests from those who feel that the Government should give an ever-increasing amount of money to an ever-increasing number of people. In a sense one can accept that the motives and intentions of those people are good. However, one must remember that the Government have provided more money for social benefits than any other in history. Increased money for social benefits is a commodity that is more valuable than the promises of Labour Members. Further, the extra money that the Government provide is valuable in itself.

Broken promises and promises that cannot be kept — one has to be fair about this: promises have been broken by the Labour party whenever it has formed a Government — are not only valueless but are cruel and disillusioning. Unkept promises of extra money build expectations that cannot be fulfilled. They create hopes and spending patterns. They lead to dashed hopes, debt, disillusion and misery. That is why the Government's approach, an approach of cautious support for the poorest in our society and a support that can be delivered, is one that I welcome. It is in the interest of our society. It is the right approach, it is valuable and it works.

8.30 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I was interested in the remarks about debt made by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot). None of us likes the idea of people getting into debt. The hon. Gentleman might be interested to know that under his Government the situation in my constituency is such that the citizens advice bureau has told me that the biggest increase in the category of advice being sought is that related to debt. Therefore, I suggest that he should have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends on that matter.

We have had a bracing doctrine advocated by Conservative Members. It is the doctrine that, by making people worse off, we are spurring them into action. That doctrine was advocated by the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford and by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), who represents what must be the one constituency in the country where work is plentiful. That bracing doctrine seems to overlook the fact that, of the 5 million households that will lose money, over half are pensioner households. I wonder what extra efforts Conservative Members intend to spur those pensioners to — or are they not being considered in the matter? Perhaps they are being overlooked by Conservative Members. I suggest that they should brief themselves a little better on that subject. When they do they will learn in addition that 300,000 pensioners will lose all their housing benefit. Therefore, that bracing doctrine is faulty.

During his opening speech, the Minister was asked two questions by one of his hon. Friends. As they were asked by one of his hon. Friends, I listened hopefully with the conviction that they would be answered. However, they were not. I want to return to those questions in the hope that the Under-Secretary of State will answer them in his reply. The first was: what is the maximum amount that will be lost? We did not receive any answer to that. I do not know whether the Minister has not bothered to work it out or whether he did not want to tell us. The Minister said that, however much people were losing, they would be the better off among claimants. He brought forward no evidence to substantiate that. We are entitled to ask the Minister to take the question more seriously.

The second question was: what would be the Minister's answer to a thrifty pensioner with £6,000? Again, there was no reply. There was an attempted justification for the capital cut-off, but there was no answer that hon. Members on either side of the Chamber could use as guidance when approached by constituents on that matter. My answer to such constituents will be that they should blame the Minister and the Government for taking a wholly unreasonable attitude. The Minister asked what our cut-off point would be. He was told that it is not necessary to have a cut-off point, because the income from capital is taken into account. That is by far the most sensible, flexible and reasonable way to approach the matter. It obviates the need for constantly looking at rigid capital values and altering them through the House or by ministerial diktat. We have not heard a word as to what is wrong with the present system of taking income from capital into account rather than having a draconian cut-off point.

Instead of answering the questions, the Minister engaged in some diversity tactics. He talked about complexity, especially the complexity of housing benefit supplement. We all know about that complexity. We are not saying that housing benefit supplement is the perfect answer to the problems of our constituents. In fact, we object to housing benefit supplement. Although I was not a Member at the time, I have no doubt that my right hon. and hon. Friends fought it at the time on the grounds that it was wholly unreasonable and far too complex.

Conservative Members like to engage in simplification processes, but with the result that people always lose money. There are always more people who lose than gain from their simplification. It is handy to have simplification, which saves having to give housing benefit at the present level to 5 million households and saves having to give housing benefit at all to 1 million households. What a handy disposition of events. I am sure that the people in those households would swap simplification for a little more complexity giving a little more money in their pockets.

Another red herring was the statement that implied that the coming of computerisation justified these regulations. I am waiting with fascination to hear the reply to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who said that local authorities' computer programmes will not be working in time to operate these complicated matters. I remind the Minister of that question because I am interested in the answer.

We have heard a lot about the fact that somehow people are well off, that they should not need the benefit, that, if they do, it is because they are in some way feckless and that, if they pulled their socks up, they would see that everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. I do not know what sort of problems are taken to Conservative Members when they hold their advice sessions. I can tell them that in Preston one of the biggest problems is that of fuel poverty. I think that that is the case in most of the constituencies represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends. Fuel poverty is a real killer, and it will be exacerbated by the provisions in the regulations.

Rent arrears are a difficult problem for local authorities, and it is a fact that the incidence of rent arrears will increase, because of the regulations. I wait with interest to hear the Minister's answer to those points.

Conservative Members repeatedly say that there is no bottomless pot. They examine stringently the benefits that go to the poorest members of the population and engage in the fine tuning of such benefits. They are perpetually changing the regulations. The hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford, who said that he did not want many changes, must be sorely disappointed in the Government whom he supports, because they produce changes every year in Bills of greater and greater complexity, as some of us know to our cost.

Against that background, it is remarkable that for the Government there is an absolutely bottomless pot when it comes to mortgage interest tax relief. We have two kinds of income-related benefits in this country. We have the kind of benefit that is cut when one's income increases —the kind of benefit dealt with in these regulations— and the kind of benefit that increases when one's income increases. Mortgage interest tax relief falls into that category.

Let me make it perfectly clear that I do not advocate the abolition of mortgage interest tax relief, but that I certainly advocate that mortgage interest tax relief should be granted only at the standard rate. *[Interruption.]* The point is that it increases at a greater rate. One gets it at the top rate. If one's taxable income is more than £41,200 and one pays 60 per cent. tax, one gets mortgage interest tax relief at 60 per cent. The rate goes up. That position is untenable. I see the Under-Secretary of State nodding. I hope that he will have a word with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor about this.

Mr. Portillo: No.

Mrs. Wise: Oh, he is not nodding. I am disappointed.

Mr. Tom Clarke: He is just being rude, as usual.

Mrs. Wise: In that case, I shall take no notice.

Mr. Favell: Does the hon. Lady accept that while mortgage interest tax relief has been fixed at £30,000 for eight years, housing benefit has taken more and more people into the net?

Mrs. Wise: We have heard the figures relating to mortgage interest tax relief. Mortgage interest tax relief now costs £1,100 million more than housing benefit. The cost of mortgage interest tax relief has increased, and the gap between one kind of help and the other has widened at an enormous rate. I have the utmost confidence in the figures cited by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston. I shall be more than interested if Conservative Members wish to rebut those figures, but I doubt very much whether they will.

The fact is that the social policy that says that it is useful to help people to buy their own homes — I do not quarrel with that—is not extended to those people who cannot become owner-occupiers because they cannot take on the onerous burden of a mortgage. Those people must suffer the most. They are in a poverty trap so deep that when the regulations are introduced they will suffer a marginal tax rate of 91 per cent. if they get help with rent and rates only and of 98 per cent. if they also get family credit. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston pointed out, no hon. Member suffers a marginal tax rate of 98 per cent. or even of 91 per cent. Therefore, the Government's idea of targeting is partial.

In his opening remarks, the Minister appealed to us to consider the large issues and told us not to look at the detail. It is difficult to follow that advice because topics such as this involve a mass of detail — even after the Government's so-called simplification. It is especially difficult not to focus on the detail, given that the Minister's definition of detail includes the 20 per cent. contribution to be made to the rates. I know that he includes that in his definition because, when asked why he rejected the advice of his housing benefit review team, he said, "We cannot be expected to follow it in every detail." In the Minister's eyes, the 20 per cent. contribution to rates that is now to be levied as a minimum on all households is a mere detail.

There is something deeply sinister about the 20 per cent. proposal. All of a sudden, the Minister and his hon. Friends stop talking about targeting — a word that has dropped from the lips of Conservative Members over and over again during the debate but which does not seem to apply to the 20 per cent. rule. In relation to that rule, it appears that it does not matter how poor one is. One can be the poorest of the poor, but one still has to find 20 per cent. of the rates. With that proposal, targeting goes right out of the window. The Minister's justification for that is interesting — even threatening. He talks about the need to keep local government accountable and says that unless people pay towards the rates and feel the impact of the rates, local government will not be truly accountable. That is a dangerous doctrine, and it ignores the fact that one feels financial impact very differently according to one's income. I contend that the impact of having to pay 20 per cent. of rates, if one is extremely hard up, is much greater than the impact of having to pay 100 per cent. of the rates if one is comfortably off.

The yardstick that the Minister uses is extraordinarily crude. It becomes even more crude when the poll tax looms on the horizon. Then targeting goes even further into the distance because, no matter how well off one is, one will pay a flat rate. The idea that one should pay according to one's means and still have the Government accountable to one is abandoned at that stage. That doctrine is dangerous as well as unfair. Every hon. Member has been elected in part through the votes of those who do not pay income tax. It could therefore be held that there is not sufficient national accountability of Government to people.

The logical extension of their doctrine of accountability in local government is that only those who pay income tax should have a vote in national elections or alternatively that everyone, regardless of income, should be brought into the income tax act.—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about other taxes?"] There is, of course, indirect taxation, and even the poorest of the poor cannot escape VAT. That is one reason why Labour Members are hostile to indirect taxation and why it is always easy to obtain our support for pleas to the Government not to extend VAT to other goods and services or to increase its rate.

We dislike indirect taxation, but surely even Conservative Members would agree that the link in the public mind between the tax they pay on the goods they buy and Government policies is tenuous. Indirect taxes are popular on the Conservative Benches because they bear on

[Mrs. Wise]

the poorest, regardless of their ability to pay, and there is no direct understanding of the burden being placed on so many people by the Government.

If Conservative Members are saying that indirect taxation is sufficient qualification for people to fulfil some democratic criterion, why can they not stretch that to cover local government as well? Why do they say that there need be no minimum income tax payment in order to qualify for a vote, yet there must be a minimum payment of rates, or of poll tax when it comes, to ensure the accountability of local government?

This is an attempt to interfere with the results of local government elections. The Conservative party has tried time and again to bring local government into disrepute by focusing attention on the high rates that they have created by the withdrawal of rate support grant. Higher rates in Britain do not derive——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Lady is going very wide of the regulations before the House.

Mrs. Wise: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the Minister made a strong point that the 20 per cent. minimum payment, which is part of the regulations, is justified by the need to make local government accountable. In referring to the rating system, I am really only following along the track that was first opened for me by the Minister, and, indeed, by the regulations. I promise not to go too far along that track. I understand your worries and I do not intend to treat this as if it were the Second Reading of the Bill which will implement the poll tax, which I hope will be long delayed. However, the extent of the increase in rates, and the need to remind people of the fact that it is their local representatives who fix them, has all been brought into much higher relief simply because of the withdrawal of so much rate support grant. Had it not been for that, less attention would be placed on the rates and the position that we face would be quite different.

Local and national Government are accountable to people as citizens. They are accountable not to taxpayers and ratepayers but to those human beings who make up the community. It is disgraceful that the Government and the Minister should make accountability appear to depend on any other yardstick. In the future, can we expect a new Representation of the People Act entitled "Representation of the Taxpayers Act". Any move in that direction is retrograde.

The Conservative party should remember its own emphasis on the importance of targeting when it comes to rates payments. I wish that the Conservative party would realise that, without enough income, people will be unable to pay 20 per cent. of the rates or the poll tax. That is why there will be an increase in debt — an increase in fuel debts and in rates, rent and mortgage arrears. Even now people are unable to maintain their mortgage payments. That will be the result of our passage along the road on which Conservative Members are taking us tonight. It is extremely reprehensible and unfair, but I know that it is no use asking them to think again.

The Labour party will give any Conservative Members who are seriously interested in targeting — in particular, I have in mind the hon. Member who identified himself as a son of a general practitioner and who referred approvingly to the attendance allowance — an opportunity to improve targeting of the attendance allowance by extending it to babies, and perhaps some will join us on that particular issue, if not in our views on housing benefit.

We are entitled to answers to the questions which have been put to the Minister not only by ourselves, but even by some Conservative Members also.

8.55 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): I want to echo the concerns voiced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and I want to concentrate on one aspect of the regulations.

Aylesbury and Eastbourne are, comparatively, rich areas. My constituency of Walthamstow is not. It is getting more prosperous but it is not yet the Mayfair of the east end. Between 20 and 25 per cent. of my constituents are pensioners. The numbers of the elderly living alone are projected to increase. The numbers of the very elderly—those aged 85-plus—are also projected to increase.

Those pensioners have worked hard all their lives. Many of them have fought for their country. They have saved. They have a pretty poor view of those who do not work and who sponge off the state. They have retired, owning their own homes and with the income from their savings to supplement their pensions. Their savings will not be very great. They will not be greatly in excess of £6,000 but they will in many cases be more than £6,000.

So far, so good. But in April this year their friendly Labour council increased the rates by a disgraceful 62 per cent. The average rates per household soared from £450 to £720. Many people have been forced into accepting help and it is not surprising, with the increase in the pensioner population across Britain of over 1 million since 1979, and the enormous increase in rates in many Labour-controlled areas over the past 10 years or so, that the cost of housing benefit has soared.

The answer lies in the community charge, which will bring accountability to all the Labour-controlled areas. That is the short-term answer. In the long term, the answer lies with a negative income tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am getting a little lost. The hon. Gentleman is talking about the community charge and the negative income tax, neither of which is directly relevant to the regulations. I hope that he will address himself to those.

Mr. Summerson: I will return to the pensioners of Walthamstow who have looked to the Government with hope and confidence to shield them from the effect of the rate increases. Many of my constituents have been hit hard, but they will now be hit again by the changes to housing benefit. They do not want supplementary benefit. They do not want income support. All they need is help with their rates. But now the Government are going to take that away. The community charge will help them, but that is not due until 1990. There is a gap of two hard years which will cost them dearly. How is that gap to be filled? I ask the Minister for an assurance that that limit of £6,000 will be reviewed at the earliest available opportunity.

8.59 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): This evening we have been treated to two appalling displays — first, of ministerial incompetence, and secondly, the violent prejudice of the Champagne Charlies on the Conservative Back Benches. The Minister so comprehensively rubbished his own legislation that I thought that I was listening to an Opposition Front Bench spokesman. In comprehensively rubbishing his own policies and regulations, he then twisted the knife because, in outlining the changes that were necessary — the so-called simplifications — he indicated that those simplications are not to assist those on benefit, but to assist the Government in taking benefit from 1 million people and substantially reducing the right to benefit of a further 4 million people. The agument is not about simplification for those entitled to housing benefit but about the ability of the Government to use regulations to reduce the rights of many households.

It is not the first time since 1982 that the Government have tampered with passported housing benefit. This is the seventh attempt by the Government to cook housing benefit resources. It is also their second major attempt to transfer responsibility for administering housing benefits to local government, not to improve administration or to make it easier for claimants, but to put local government at the sharp end of the Government's attempt to reduce resources in the public sector and to those most in need. It is the local authorities that will face the brunt of those changes. The Government have not even got the courage of their own convictions to tackle the system of benefits and to administer that themselves. Through the regulations, they are trying to pass on the responsibility for the shambles that will ensue.

The Makerfield constituency is situated in the south Lancashire coalfield and for historical reasons has a large number of people who rely on housing benefit. In some estates, between 70 and 75 per cent. of households are on some form of housing benefit. We have the highest number of sickness benefit claimants in the United Kingdom. It is those people that the Government will affect most by the changes announced in the regulations. There has never been a Government who have made so many attempts to transfer responsibility for administering poverty from central to local government. The Government are in the business of divesting themselves of their social and moral responsibilities. Having first created massive unemployment and pools of pensioners who live in poverty, they seek to transfer responsibility for that to local government. In doing that, they hope that local government will be blamed for the loss of income, the loss of resources and the chaos that will ensue.

Conservative Members — who have shown so much prejudice this evening—have suggested that some of my constituents are frivolous grasshoppers. There are imperfections, but people go cap in hand. A Conservative Member even suggested that the lash of poverty will somehow give them the opportunity to do something better with their lives. The reality is that the lash of poverty does not provide opportunities but denies opportunities to thousands of people in my constituency. My constituents do not want to live on benefits, they want the opportunity of jobs, a decent pension and to live in dignity in their old age. We do not want to have to go through complicated legislation or continual attacks on housing benefit.

We want dignity, the right to equal opportunities and to fairness. The benefit regulations attack that. On the one hand, there are unfettered allowances for mortgage tax relief, but the benefit regulations attempt further to erode the rights of the poor in our communities. I believe that the Government will return later in this Parliament to erode even further people's rights to housing benefit. They will do so because they will have to tackle the problem of the continuing bill for mortgage tax relief. I should like that benefit to be scrapped and replaced by a universal benefit that is related to housing need, whether one lives in private or publicly owned housing.

Four groups of people in my constituency will be affected by the regulations. The first such group are low-paid single people, many of whom have been on YTS and, having come off that scheme, are now working in low-paid jobs and receiving between £70 and £80 per week gross. Such people live in housing that is hard to heat, often on council estates. As they have come off YTS after a certain date, they are now not entitled to heating allowances and, because their properties are difficult to heat, a large proportion of their income is taken up in heating costs. However, that group will be further attacked and their income further eroded.

Secondly, I should highlight the fact that in my constituency a huge proportion of families who are on benefit will receive a cut in their rights to free school meals some time in April. That will amount to a loss of about £1·80 in real benefit per week per child to families who need that service.

The third group are pensioners on occupational pension schemes. They include miners and people who have worked for Heinz and the other big manufacturers in Wigan. Those people's rights to benefit will now be severely curtailed and they will lose benefit because of their occupational pension schemes.

The fourth group has been much discussed this evening — persons with capital above the £3,000 and £6,000 limits. At present rates, £6,000 results in about £12 per week interest. In my constituency many people of pensionable age have that so-called little nest egg for two reasons. First, they use it to help the family, to help with the grandchildren, with Christmas presents and holidays. That is something simple which, in the last years of their lives, gives them a little dignity for all the work and effort that they have put in over the years, often in industries that have exploited them throughout their working lives.

The second reason why they keep their little nest egg is to pay for their funeral. I have seen many people at my surgeries, both when I was a councillor and since I have been a Member of Parliament, and one of the concerns of many elderly people involves the changes in benefit that erode their little piece of capital and thus the possibility of them having the dignity of proper funerals at the end of their lives. When one considers that the average cost of a funeral in the Greater Manchester area is over £1,000, the limit of £3,000 does not go a long way. However, the Government are attacking the whole concept of maintaining that allowance.

The invidious and insidious part of the legislation is that the Government are attacking the concept of those people having capital in the first place. The Government are forcing them to get rid of that capital and until they do so their rights to benefit will either be eroded or taken away altogether. That is an insidious attack on a group of people who have contributed so much to our society in terms of wealth creation, and by their ability to fight for our freedoms in the second world war.

The taper system is an infamous piece of legislation. There is a real attempt to use it in a sharp way so that people, by the smallest change in their personal

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

circumstances, will either lose their rights to benefit or suffer some reduction. By that simple change in the mechanism, a huge number of people will lose their right to benefit. It has been calculated that about 700,000 pensioners will come into that category. In April next year, more than 1 million people will lose their right to benefit altogether — about one in seven of all claimants. The Minister has already said tonight that the loss of overall benefits will accumulate to £640 million — £140 million more than my hon. Friends and I had calculated. So the Government have admitted that the reductions in benefit are even more severe than we had at first thought.

Contrast this with the Prime Minister's ability to earn a great deal of tax relief on her mortgage and to enjoy a £40 a week reduction in her rate bill with the introduction of the poll tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) went into great detail about the way in which the taper operates and forces people into the poverty trap, forcing them into a marginal rate of taxation in excess of 90 per cent. That is a real attempt to change the balance of wealth in this country. It is part of the Government's overall policy to take away from the poorest members of the community and redistribute the money to those who already have so much.

Some of the other provisions locked away in the regulations are probably some of the most insidious of any with which we have had to deal—for example, amenity charges in sheltered accommodation. Such charges are now included in some certificated cases, but, following the introduction of the regulations, fixed charges for heating and water will be phased out. That is an attack on pensioners because it is they, almost exclusively, who are in sheltered accommodation, public or private.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) highlighted the way in which the regulations will affect water charges. From 1 April, people on supplementary benefit will be unable to have them taken into account. On the issue of unreasonable costs, I recently received a letter from the director of housing of Wigan metropolitan borough council, who said that the authority is concerned about these changes, because they take into account the Government's changes brought about by the deregulation of rents in the private sector. The private sector landlord will allow rents to rise to such a level that the claimant will be penalised, because the landlord will be able to charge whatever market rent he can get.

According to the regulations, claimants will have to pay rent levels that the local authority will not be allowed to cover because of unreasonable rent levels. So the Government are reducing people's rights in the private sector to have a fair rent fixed and, by means of another piece of legislation, they are trying to prevent local authorities from taking account of the fact that landlords are unleashing market rents on us. A large number of young people in the private sector will be affected by that.

I turn now to local government administration, which will be a shambles, just as it was before. Local authorities will be short-changed by £25 million for the introduction of the new scheme. They will spend £50 million on introducing computer systems and training staff, yet their reimbursement will total only a maximum of £25 million. Rent and ratepayers in the local authority areas will have to make up the difference.

Furthermore, the draft regulations were originally six weeks late. Then the guidance notes were a month late, and the regulations have only now reached us. Yet local authorities will have to implement them by 1 April next year. It has taken the Government two years to reach this point, but they expect underfunded and under-resourced local authorities to make this major change so quickly. They are doing it in such a way as to blame the local authorities if difficulties arise. I say to rent and ratepayers: "Do not blame your local authorities — blame the Government for their incompetence and malevolence towards local authorities, tenants and ratepayers."

In my constituency, part of the Wigan metropolitan borough council, the authority stands to lose something like £40,000 because of the total cost of the introduction of the scheme. That £40,000 will be borne by the local ratepayers. The people stand to lose between £900,000 and £1 million a year because of changes in the benefit regulations. That represents a massive reduction in the resources available to my constituents. It is totally unacceptable and unrealistic that Wigan should bear such costs and it represents a major attack on local government finance. At the end of the day, those least able to pay and least able to gear themselves to the changes will be most affected. Those on low incomes and young people trying to make a start in life and trying to make something of their lives will be handicapped by the introduction of the regulations.

Conservative Members will be condemned by the introduction of the legislation. We shall not let them forget what they intend to do to pensioners. We shall ensure that the constituents of every Tory who has spoken today will know what they have said about pensioners and the so-called workshy, lazy young people. We shall make sure that, back home in their constituencies, the constituents know what their Member of Parliament thinks about them.

9.15 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I shall be brief. First, I must say that some of the comments by Opposition Members appear to be from people still fighting not only the election of 1987, but that of 1983, and even as far back as 1935.

The hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) suggested that we are trying to bring local government into disrepute. I totally reject that. However, the Labour party has managed to do that extremely successfully.

The policies that have initiated the regulations were established in the Social Security Bill in 1986 and were put to the electorate this year. Those policies were well understood, both in general concept and in practical effects. The simplification that has undoubtedly been brought about is important. People can now understand far better how their housing benefit will relate to them. The assimilation of the various housing benefits on to the same base is important. It is also important that those benefits will be on a net base rather than a gross base. That will give help to many people.

Although with any changes it is right to say that there will be losers and gainers, within the proposed Social Security Act there will be a considerable number of gainers. It is not surprising that the Opposition have almost totally ignored the fact that many disabled people will gain as a result of the Act and as a result of the housing benefit regulations. It is also not surprising that the

Opposition easily omit the fact that the family credit system that we have introduced will also extend help to far more people than was expected or was available under FIS. It was necessary to do something about housing benefit. My hon. Friends have said several times that, with one third of households receiving that benefit, it had got out of hand.

Some people may suggest that the large number of recipients of that benefit was due to our economic policies, but they should consider the economic policies that were followed in the late 1960s and between 1974 and 1978. Those policies were likely, at some point in the future, to bring about a significant and dramatic change in the industrial life of our community. The effect of those policies was to bring about redundancy and unemployment. That was the catalyst that led to great change in the amount of social security benefits that had to be paid.

Various Acts have tried to bring about the best results and the necessary targeting of those benefits in the best way. The social security measures which will be implemented in the spring next year will achieve that to some extent, although not to the extent that many of us would wish. They do not go far enough. There are certainly some reservations about the £6,000 capital limit. It is strange that Opposition Members who once said that £1·80 was a lot of money now say that £6,000 in capital is not. Surely there is a contradiction somewhere along that line.

If we sensibly examine further attempts to put money where it is most needed, housing benefit, with some reservations, is the target at which we were aiming. I know that the House will give it the support which it deserves.

9.20 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I concur with the last few words of the speech of the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens). I wish that the House would give the regulations the support that they deserve, which is to be roundly defeated.

The Minister of State expressed the hope that Opposition Members would set these provisions in the wider context of the whole policy. I shall try to oblige the Minister by examining in a wider context the Government's claims that these regulations and the framework of changes target help on those in greatest need. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who no doubt we shall see in her place shortly, asked, in the bewildered manner that suits her so well, how anyone could oppose such a goal. I will tell the hon. Lady, and she can read it in the *Official Report*.

It is a question of how such groups are defined and where such a policy leads. The Second Reading of the Social Security Bill revealed that those excluded from the hon. Lady's category of needs include epileptics, the young unemployed, those with small occupational pensions and others. We accept meekly the accusation that some of our categories of need are, by her standards, far too wide. Indeed, we thank God that it is so. I shall examine what the Government said about targeting.

Several hon. Members spoke about the early years of the housing benefit scheme. Few Conservative Members have examined its wider context, as the Minister suggested. When the Government came to power, they expressed all the concern that Conservative Members could want about what they called the indiscriminate subsidy to public sector housing. They announced their intention to reduce that subsidy—and, indeed, the Government have been as good as their word. The subsidy to council housing has fallen by more than £1,500 million, and the figure must now be substantially more. When the Government made that commitment, it was pointed out that if the subsidy for council housing were reduced, council house rents would rise and that might cause problems to those in the community who are less well off. Indeed, that was the result. Equally, at the time, we were reassured that, as rents rose, those in need would be protected through housing benefit. We were told that it would be all right because housing benefit would be targeted on those in greatest need and they would be protected against rent rises.

My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley), in what I understand was an excellent speech, which I regret I did not hear, said that he had heard the Secretary of State for the Environment talk about housing benefit as a cushion against rent rises. Many Conservative Members argued against the cushion of housing benefit protecting those in the greatest need, and asked how it came about that still, today, 7 million households receive housing benefit. They suggest that the fact that 7 million households receive housing benefit proves that the scheme is over-generous. I can understand how hon. Members find it strange that 7 million households should still be getting housing benefit when the Government have made seven attempts during the past few years to cut housing benefit, yet so many people remain entitled to it. The answer to hon. Members' questions—which, unaccountably, the Government did not offer—is that they appear to have failed to notice that, while council house subsidies have been withdrawn, council house rents have increased by 155 per cent.

During that period when the withdrawal of the public sector housing subsidy gave rise to this colossal increase in council house rents, not only have the poorest not been protected by the targeting of housing benefit, but steadily, year in year out, and occasionally even twice a year, the Government have cut housing benefit.

As rents rise, more people become entitled to housing benefit—more money—and the Government have used the consequences of their cut in general subsidy as an argument for cutting the specific subsidy that is supposed to help the poor. That, indeed, puts the Government's devotion to those in greatest need in the wider context. That leaves aside the impact of the rise in rents, the impact on those who are entitled to housing benefit, and the effect on the millions of people who can no longer afford to pay their rent at all because they are unemployed. We have seen the numbers of such people rise substantially in recent years. Under this Government, targeting has proved to be a euphemism for cutting public support.

I shall now turn from the main issue of targeting to some of the details of how the Government are targeting in these regulations. A number of those details have been highlighted in the debate. There is the bar, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) spoke, to meeting the cost of alarms that are intended precisely for those who are living independently and who are unable to take advantage of sheltered housing which, because of the way that the Government have cut housing subsidies, is in short supply. Those people are living independently in the community. That is what the Government say they wish to see, but now those people face the prospect of the withdrawal of support for the provision of the alarms that will help them to remain independent. By living

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

independently, those people save the community hundreds, if not thousands, of millions of pounds, because that is what it would cost if such people lost their cherished independence and had to go into homes or hospitals. The loss to those people could well be about £5 a week, because that is the amount of the payment for such alarms.

The Minister of State talked about the treatment of lone parents. He spoke with what appeared to be some pride about the way in which lone parents have a slightly higher premium in housing benefit than in income support. For some reason he did not think it necessary to say that the increased housing benefit premium under the new system in no way compensates for the loss to those people of having the same base for the treatment of benefit as a couple. That applied under a previous scheme.

There is the treatment of what are known in the Government's scheme as non-dependants. A non-dependant is somebody who is not of school age or in full-time education but who is in work. He will now be expected to contribute £8·20 a week to rent alone, and that amount will be deducted from his family's housing benefit. The total contribution that such a non-dependant would have to make on rent and rates together means that two working teenagers would probably be expected to contribute almost the whole housing cost for their family home. That is the proposal by a Government who say that they believe in the unity of the family. The Under-Secretary of State told us the other night that the Goverment believe in giving the family moral support. No doubt that is in lieu of any other kind of support.

Some hon. Members drew attention to the difference between the way the Government treat those who seek public support through housing benefit and those who seek it through the subsidy given in mortgage interest tax relief. I have just highlighted the way in which the non-dependants of people drawing housing benefit are treated. One of the issues not mentioned in the debate is that there are about 1·25 million non-dependants in households that receive mortgage interest tax relief, but those non-dependants are not liable for a single penny.

Some hon. Members spoke about the recommendations of the housing benefit review team. The Minister of State was rather misleading when he spoke about that. It is from the work of that team that these proposals stem. His comments were a little misleading, although my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in an intervention corrected him in two respects. He omitted to mention the complete opposition of the review team to the suggestion that 20 per cent. of rates should be payable by those on even the lowest income. The review team said:

> "it would be unrealistic to suppose that even a small proportion of housing costs could be met at the expense of other personal requirements. We believe that 100 per cent. help with housing costs for those on the lowest incomes is the only fair way of meeting their needs".

That could scarcely be more at variance with the Government's proposals.

I listened with astonishment to the hon. Member for Edgbaston when she suggested that people on income support should be grateful that 80 per cent. of their rates were being contributed. Presumably she had not studied with care the comments of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the housing benefit review team. That review team was handpicked by Ministers and given a remit of no increase in the scheme, so it was not falling over backwards to be generous to claimants.

Hon. Members have referred with approval to the way in which the rates taper is being increased and asked why owner-occupiers with an income or a small occupational pension should be protected in this way. I would like to — I hesitate to say remind — draw hon. Members' attention to the fact that the housing benefit review team, which studied these matters in detail, was not as restrictive as Conservative Members have been this evening. It recommended a rates taper along the lines of the Government's proposals, but it did so in the context of another recommendation—that the Government should explore the possibility of extending housing benefit support to those very individuals towards the cost of their mortgages. It was a quid pro quo that there should be support through housing benefit for those with mortgages and that, therefore, it would not be so harsh if the rates taper were at the level proposed. Again, we have deviated substantially from the Government review team's suggestions, although I recognise that the Government were not bound by those recommendations. They have taken only the less generous recommendations and ignored all those that might have been more generous.

There have been some references to the thresholds at which housing benefit ceases to be payable. I want to make just one comparison because so many others have been drawn tonight. Before April 1983, a single pensioner would have lost entitlement to housing benefit when he had an income of £94·35 a week. From next April, he will lose entitlement to all housing benefit when his income reaches £64·51 a week. The level of income at which housing benefit is payable has fallen in cash terms, never mind real terms, by £30 a week during the past few years in which the Government have been steadily cutting housing benefit.

In some cases, the marginal tax rate of households paying tax and national insurance and receiving rent and rate rebates would rise by 90 per cent., and even up to 97 or 98 per cent.—a 97p or 98p in the pound withdrawal for every pound increase. I would like to contrast that with the highest rate of tax payable at 60p in the pound and with the fact that it is paid only on taxable income above £41,200 per year. That is an interesting contrast with the level at which a single pensioner begins to lose rebate—£3,354 gross, not taxable, income per year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wigan asked what would happen to the housing benefit scheme in the future. Like other hon. Members, I have been contacted by a number of housing associations and by the National Federation of Housing Associations. As the Minister of State asked, I am considering the wider context of these regulations. Those organisations are desperately worried that the combination of the Government's proposals to force them to raise money on the private market, and therefore to raise their rents will seriously disadvantage the very people whom they exist to serve.

We have a couple of interesting examples of what housing associations fear will happen once they have to charge the rents that they expect to have to charge if this package of measures goes ahead. They suggest that a London bus driver on average rostered earnings for driver-operated buses, aged about 30, married, with two children aged 7 and 11, with no other earned household income and paying the rent that they expect to have to charge of about

£45 a week, will get no assistance in rent or rate rebate. In the context of the remarks made by Conservative Members about the scheme being too generous, that is a most interesting comparison.

The housing associations also use the comparison of a nurse who similarly would lose all entitlement to support at a gross wage of £158 or £159 a week. They point out that, in the case of the bus driver, the amount he is expected to contribute has gone up from 12 per cent. to 22 per cent. of his income since 1982, and, in the case of the nurse, from 20 per cent. to 38 per cent. Those figures put in clear focus the observations of Conservative Members about the over-generosity of the housing benefit scheme.

There has also been reference to the lack of transitional protection. In the income support scheme the Government made much of the fact that transitional protection will be offered and that those drawing benefit at present will continue to receive the same cash sums. Of course, that does not apply to housing benefit where, in the overall package and in the wider context, some of the worst losses will arise. I remind the House that in 1983, when the scheme was introduced, because it involved substantial taper changes and losses of £1 or £2 a week in some cases, the Government thought it right to introduce transitional safeguards. Today, when some individuals are facing losses as large as £10 and more a week, no transitional safeguards are offered. That is because the Government think they can get away with having a saving as their overall target.

Apart from the uncomfortable facts of what the Government are doing in the regulations under the cloak of targeting, a second major question arises in the wider context — the direction in which the pursuit of this policy is slowly but inexorably taking us. I want to set it clearly on record that that direction is no less than the demolition by stealth of the welfare state. The hon. Member for Edgbaston and other Conservative Members continually ask in these debates how we can object to the theory of targeting help on those in greatest need. What they seem not to appreciate is that they are targeting help not on those in need but only on those in the greatest need.

I understand that the hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Arbuthnot) favoured the House earlier with a definition about giving cautious support to the very poor. It is that which sets apart Conservative Members from hon. Members on the Opposition Benches and which sets apart a welfare state that tries to prevent poverty and enhance independence from a scheme of poor law relief.

Those schemes of the past in their many forms were based on excluding from help all but the destitute and refusing help to the merely desperate until they became destitute. The hon. Member for Edgbaston talked about it sapping human initiative if someone else paid the bills. Had the hon. Lady been here for the end of the debate —she was not here for the opening—I could have told her that it saps human initiative to see everything that one has worked for and achieved—in the case of a pensioner for the whole of his life—stripped away bit by bit by bit in the name of targeting help only on those in the greatest need.

The hon. Lady referred to the old Labour party and wondered what it would think of us criticising the Government for a cut-off rate for capital of £6,000. One could see the hon. Lady on a board of guardians. Of course, it was the meanness of the means test and the effect it had on families to which the old Labour party objected so much. The hon. Lady and any other hon. Member who attempts to make a similar observation should realise that the old Labour party, today's Labour party and any conceivable Labour party exists because its members reject with every fibre of their being that tight, narrow, smug, vicious definition of means. The echo of those definitions which created humiliation and fear for so many in generations past, makes us certain that we are right to reject the regulations.

9.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Michael Portillo): My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled opened this debate by posing a series of questions to the Opposition and hoping that they would contribute by spelling out some of their proposals. My hon. Friend the Minister is an incorrigible idealist because, unfortunately, we have listened very carefully and hearkened to what the Opposition have said, but we have been disappointed.

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) informed us that he had proposed some negotiations between the Opposition and the Government. I assumed that he was indulging in some kind of fantasy. He seemed to believe that the election had resulted in a hung Parliament and that we were in some sense negotiating the Government's policy. The Government's policies are quite clear. However, the Opposition's policies are unclear.

While I am on the subject of the fantasy of a hung Parliament, I want to welcome back in his absence the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy). He has returned to our debate having lost his leader and his party. He was therefore unmuzzled and his contribution was all the more interesting for that.

I notice that the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is in the Chamber. My hon. Friend the Minister said that he would ask me to comment on concessionary coal. The position with regard to all the benefits that we are aligning is that if the family or person concerned receives cash, that should be taken into account in assessing their resources over and above the various levels of disregard that are set down. It has long been the case that concessionary coal delivered in kind has been disregarded, and it will continue to be disregarded under the new system. However, if the payment is made in cash instead of in kind, it will be treated as a resource and taken into account.

That seems to be absolutely right. Why should there be an advantage for one group of people who receive cash and no advantage for another group? The anomaly is that the coal is not valued and taken into account. However, the hon. Member for Normanton will realise that there are good reasons why valuing it would be very complex.

Mr. O'Brien: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for replying to my question. Will he also consider the fact that some of the chronically sick and disabled people from the mining industry who receive payments in lieu of fuel receive it because of their chronic illnesses? Those illnesses do not qualify for additional payment through the DHSS. Therefore, it is important that the payment in lieu of fuel sustains additional health care for retired miners and their widows. Will the Minister have some compassion for those people?

Mr. Portillo: There is no shortage of compassion. However, we must be concerned with fairness. If money is received by one set of people that is not available to others be disregarded, it is very unfair.

My hon. Friend the Minister asked that hon. Members should not treat housing benefit in isolation during the debate. Some hon. Members were good enough to follow that good advice. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Bradley) offered us some figures which he said took account of overall effects. We shall be interested to see them, but I have some doubts about them. The hon. Gentleman embarked on a discussion about family credit in which he referred to the ending of free school meals, yet he did not mention the fact that we are building into the family credit rates of compensation for the loss of free school meals which are more generous than the free school meals. The hon. Gentleman's starting point for his argument was extraordinary.

As a number of hon. Members did not take the good advice offered by my hon. Friend the Minister and consider all the benefits together, perhaps I should remind them of the figures. We have been perfectly frank. We have set out all the figures in tables. Taken together, the reforms will produce about 3·65 million losers, of whom about 2 million are pensioners. On the other hand, they will produce nearly 5 million who will either gain or experience no change, and about 2·32 million of those are pensioners. Whether we take pensioners as a group, or take all claimants as a group, there will be more gainers than losers. Let us therefore nail the Opposition's assumption that the reforms will produce more losers.

The hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) wanted to know what advantages he could offer his constituents. The expenditure reduction in housing benefit is matched by new money going into income support and family credit and many claimants will gain more from those benefits than they lose from housing benefit. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the difficulties that his constituents face, not only in claiming housing benefit but in claiming other benefits. The new capital rules are more generous to those on supplementary benefit, and to those on housing benefit with only smaller amounts of capital, whose investment income will be ignored for the first time. Moreover, an extra £220 million will go into family credit. The hon. Gentleman can tell his constituents about that, as he specifically said that many of them were on very low wages.

The steeper rent taper, which has been discussed a good deal in today's debate, must be seen in context. The Opposition Front Bench looked a bit puzzled when my hon. Friend made this point. It must be seen alongside the fact that the starting point for calculating rents under the new system is 100 per cent., whereas under the present system it is only 60 per cent. That is a crucial difference. It means that, even with the steeper taper, those with unavoidably high rents—for example, twice the national average — will receive more help all the way up the income scale, and poorer households, below the current needs allowance, will receive more help, even at below average rents.

The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), in her wind-up speech, produced a document from the National Federation of Housing Associations. The document, I am afraid, is entirely wrong, because it misses that crucial point. It applies the taper which will be introduced in April as though the starting point for rents were still 60 per cent. I am sorry to say that the hon. Lady's examples, gripping though they were, simply are not correct. The changes that the people whom she cited will actually experience are minimal.

The hon. Member for Livingston came up with his own example. He talks about a couple in Newcastle with, I believe, two children, and the loss that they would sustain on housing benefit. The hon. Gentleman has fallen into the trap of regarding housing benefit in isolation. He clearly did not bear in mind the family credit advantage that that family is likely to have.

Mr. Robin Cook: That family's current income is £110·90 net. Taking account of housing costs, loss of free school meals — that is perfectly fair, as the Minister mentioned an offset in family credit—and family credit entitlement, its net income on 1 April next year can be estimated at £99·54. That is a loss of £10·40, even allowing for the other elements of the package, and taking account of the fact that its housing costs will rise by some £3 on top of the present level. Not only does that family face a savage loss in housing benefit; it also faces a savage loss in net income.

Mr. Portillo: If, by any chance, those figures were calculated for the hon. Gentleman by the National Federation of Housing Associations——

Mr. Cook: They were not.

Mr. Portillo: —they may be open to a certain amount of doubt. But we shall examine them carefully.

Mr. Cook: They were provided by Newcastle council.

Mr. Portillo: I am afraid that Newcastle council has not put me entirely at ease on the matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. One hon. Member at a time.

Mr. Portillo: Many Conservative Members were extremely interested and concerned about capital. My right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Raison) and my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) were concerned about the capital limit. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) asked how the Government will explain to the thrifty that money will not be payable to them through their housing benefit if they have more than £6,000 in the bank. That is a real dilemma. If we have a system that gives money to people in need, how do we ensure that giving it to people who actually need it does not then discourage people from being thrifty?

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) made the point to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne that we must ask how we justify to taxpayers, many of whom may be extremely poor and have nothing in the bank, the proposal that they should pay money to provide benefits to people who have more than £6,000 in the bank. The Government have got that balance just about right. Some of my hon. Friends have asked us to look at that level. Of course, in common with all other aspects of the reforms, we shall be sensitive to the way in which they apply in practice.

I found it difficult to take the criticisms from the hon. Members for Livingston and for Preston (Mrs. Wise). They elucidated the principle that we should take account only of people's investment income. I am bound to ask why, under a Labour Government, for supplementary benefit purposes, any income over £1,200 was assessed on a tariff income — not on the basis of what people actually earned — of 25p for every £50 that people had in the bank. That is a much higher rate of tariff than we are assuming in the regulations. Of course, we are operating from a much lower level of capital.

Mr. Robin Cook: Not for housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member says, "Not for housing benefit." My goodness, we invited him earlier to tell us whether he believed in aligning the benefit. I, possibly wrongly, inferred from his silence that he wants to align benefits. If he wants to align benefits and he sticks by what his Government did when they were in office, which is to have the crippling tariff income system, he must be confused.

The hon. Member for Withington had a similar shot at his own foot. He vigorously complained that, with the housing benefit, we are introducing an overpayment restriction for back claims for 12 months, and that we are introducing the concept of needing to show good cause. If he wishes to find the inspiration for that, he will find that the concept is perfectly clear in the Social Security Act 1975. We have simply extended that principle into the present housing benefit regulations.

In his thoughtful remarks, the hon. Member for Livingston was a trifle disappointing in regard to marginal tax rates. He seems to ignore the basic dilemma. If one is trying to direct help to the people at the bottom, establish a family credit system that helps people who are in work, and target any of the benefits, one will end up with high marginal rates of withdrawal. We recognise that. That is the dilemma with which we have had to wrestle. In wrestling with it, we have achieved a great deal, but the hon. Member for Livingston did not care to refer to that.

We have abolished marginal rates of withdrawal of over 100 per cent., with which the hon. Gentleman's Government happily lived. I can see no defence for withdrawing more than the amount that people are receiving in benefit, thus making them worse off as they earn more money. However, that is a position that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends put up with. After April, rates of withdrawal of more than 100 per cent. will have been abolished, and overall the total number of people with marginal tax rates over 90 per cent. will fall from 112,000 to about 70,000, which is a cause for some congratulation.

The hon. Member for Livingston referred to three creatures that crawled out of the legislation when he shook them. For the sake of hygiene, as much as the hon. Gentleman's enlightenment, we should knock some of them on the head and deal with them. Help with service charges for people in rented accommodation can be provided through the housing benefit system. The regulations do not change the conditions that presently exist. The only confusion that may have arisen is if local authorities have not been applying the regulations as they exist.

The majority of people, including pensioners who live in the community, are owner-occupiers and, by definition, qualify for any help with service charges under the rules of rent rebates or allowances, which is the main source of help within the public sector. In providing help for people on low incomes in rented accommodation there has been scope for including, within the eligible rent service charges, four amenities that are an essential part of the accommodation. Such amenities may include heating and lighting and communal sectors of maintenance such as lifts. Our policy has been to include alarm systems within this provision, where they are an essential part of the accommodation. That is carried forward in these regulations.

For those who do not live in such accommodation, but who may have a special need for alarm systems and other personal services, the main source of help, as with owner-occupiers, must come from local authorities.

Mrs. Beckett *rose*——

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Member for Livingston mentioned help with heating charges, which he claimed were being excluded from housing benefit. The hon. Gentleman should look more carefully at the regulations. Heating charges are not generally eligible for help under housing benefit. The current scheme gives help to some people on supplementary benefit who pay fixed fuel charges with their rent. People on standard housing benefit receive no help with fuel charges.

Thus, apart from anything else, an important matter of equity arises — the unfairness between one set of people and another. If some people in accommodation are being forced to pay unusually high charges for electricity or heating, it cannot be right to increase subsidy through housing benefit. The important aspect must be to deal with the root causes of why the charges are high and to introduce new systems so that electricity and heating are not wasted. That is why we are phasing out these benefits over a five-year period.

The hon. Member for Livingston was wrong in his sweeping generalisation about the effect on housing benefit of a period spent as a patient in hospital. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has understood the present provisions or those that we are discussing. It is not an unthinking alignment with income support. It has been recognised — this is what I said to him from a sedentary position — for 40 years that, where the state is providing for a patient in hospital and for that person's maintenance, double provision should not be made from the public funds for that maintenance.

That has been a long-established principle, and if the hon. Gentleman looks at the regulations he will see that housing benefit will not be automatically withdrawn. If the patient is receiving income support there will be no change in his housing benefit. I think that he was far too sweeping in his assumption in that regard. Those who are not receiving income support will have their entitlement reassessed and single claimants will usually find that their benefit reduces but, because the new assessment takes account of reduced social security benefit, couples where one partner is in hospital will also find that their housing benefit does not change.

I said at the outset that I was disappointed by the fact that the Opposition did not tell us what they would do about housing benefit. They have not set out their stall for us at all. All we have heard is a good deal of whingeing about the cuts that the Government are allegedly making. We have heard a whole load of hyperbole, a great deal of wrongly directed comment and a refusal on their part to look at the reforms in social security as a whole. Those reforms are putting as much money back into the system as they are taking out. They are giving a better deal to

[Mr. Portillo]

people and are directing money to those who are most in need. It is for those reasons that I commend the regulations, which are the final element of the three packages we are putting before the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 188.

Division No. 75] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Allason, Rupert
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Rydale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon *(Bury St E')*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(Newbury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Miss E. *(Devon W)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Chris *(Bath)*
Patten, John *(Oxford W)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John

Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Miss Ann
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cummings, J.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alastair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunnachie, James
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry *(Falkirk E)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Galbraith, Samuel
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Garrett, Ted *(Wallsend)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Ms Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Henderson, Douglas
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hood, James
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Miss Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Tom
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McTaggart, Bob
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael *(Springburn)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliott
Morris, Rt Hon J *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Mrs Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, John
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Ms Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dafydd Elis
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wall, Pat
Waller, Gary
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon A. J.
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Anthony
Wray, James
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 3rd November, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

COMPANIES

Ordered,

That the draft Companies (Mergers and Divisions) Regulations 1987, which were laid before this House on 9th April, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

SUPREME COURT

Ordered,

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges Order 1987, which was laid before this House on 26th October, be approved.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Sir Peter Hordern be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Tim Smith be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

Question agreed to.

Gipsies (South Leeds)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle.]*

10.18 pm

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): I have 15 minutes in which to raise a matter that is of the greatest concern to my constituents. I have agreed with my hon. Friends the Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) that they may intervene briefly, because the matter does not concern just south Leeds. I seek not publicity, but change. The publicity has existed for over 25 years. The Morley part of my constituency is not affected. To put it bluntly, the people in south Leeds have had enough. They think that nobody in authority cares. The consensus in south Leeds is that if those in authority lived in south Leeds, something would be done. I warned that there was a danger of violence, and there was recently. I warned that we were on the brink of violence. I will not go into it, but there was such violence.

I have chosen the title for this Adjournment debate carefully. I have chosen not only the word "gipsies" but

"travelling people, itinerants and tinkers"

because all sorts of words are used. My first question to the Minister is, "What is a gipsy?" I do not know what a gipsy is, although I remember that years ago I thought I knew what a gipsy was. However, these people in my constituency have JCBs, E-registration cars and patio furniture, but they do not pay taxes. They do not fit into the category of gipsy that I thought I knew about years ago.

What is the law? I have received letters from the Secretary of State saying that local authorities have a duty to provide areas, but for what? How is a gipsy defined? Is it anybody who does not want to live in a house? If a person goes to an area, does the local authority have a duty to provide the encampments—or whatever they are called? I know what the word means because we have one in south Leeds.

I can tell the Minister what the problem is because I have gone through all my correspondence. The problem is the illegal extraction of electricity from lamp posts; the illegal extraction of the water supply; refuse; lavatory use; defacation outside the windows of ordinary people; JCBs breaking down the mounds that have been put there by the local authority; the clean-up costs of moving the tarmac; the smell and the causes of the smell that I encountered on the West Granges in the summer, and the ruination of a new rugby league pitch on which the local authorities have spent money. If anybody else had dug up that pitch there would have been hell to pay, but because it was done by gipsies nothing happened. I can tell the story of the Hunslet athletic institute. Parents are not keen on young girls going there in the evening and if they do so they must be accompanied. I can tell of packs of dogs, and of factory owners who have told me about break-ins. Shop stewards have banded together to tell me that something must be done. I can tell also of the noise from generators. Something must be done.

The local authority's job is to remove the gipsies under certain conditions. However, these days when in Hunslet in south Leeds, the local authority seeks to remove "the people"—the itinerants and the travelling people—to a site a solicitor steps in because those people have their own lawyers. They then go to court and the judge, of course, knows exactly what he is doing, but he does not know much about Hunslet and it is two, three or four weeks before anything is done about the problem. Imagine what the people around there think when they see what is happening. They say to me, "If we park a car on a pavement somebody tells us that we must move it, but this lot can stay here for weeks on end before anything is done." The problem is more difficult on private sites than it is on public sites—whatever is meant by that—although there has not been such a case recently, because to all intents and purposes British Rail property is private.

In a letter the Secretary of State has told me that it is

"a duty on local authorities to make adequate provision for gipsies residing in or resorting to their areas."

That is what the law says about gipsies, but I do not know what it means. The letter went on to state:

"The Leeds City council are at present pursuing a programme of site provision to cater for the large numbers of gipsies illegally camped in the area".

That does not mean a thing. I quite understand that when Leeds city council, which is Labour-controlled, comes up with a scheme for sites in all parts of the city, those parts of the city do not want to know. I can understand that and can understand why, at local elections, people say, "Keep them in Hunslet where they have been for 25 years. The people of Hunslet do not count. The people in south Leeds—the old industrial area—can lump it." In effect, that is what has happened and the people in Hunslet and in south Leeds have had enough.

My neighbour north of the river—the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) — told me something that I did not know. There is a site in the old city of Leeds—in south Leeds. It is a designated area, and there are stronger controls on gipsies there. You could have fooled me, Mr. Speaker. If the gipsies move in and camp in the new parts of the city, there are now powers to remove them because there are no sites there. I did not know that. In the Morley part of my constituency, and, I suspect, in the Rothwell part of the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton—which is the new part of the city—since 1974 the powers available have not been strong enough to remove them.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for allowing me this brief intervention. The description that my right hon. Friend has given of these people exactly fits those in my area—the Bell Hill site in Rothwell. They, too, destroy fields of vegetables, and the area is blighted by their destruction and despoliation. The people in my area are fed up to the teeth with the impression that is being given to people who enter Rothwell from the motorway and the city of Leeds. So I concur with everything that my right hon. Friend has said. It is time there was some action on this issue.

Mr. Rees: There is enormous anger in Hunslet about this matter. As I have said, I understand why nothing is done in the rest of the city. There are arguments in the city council, so there is no movement. Nevertheless, something will have to be done.

We need more small sites. We have done everything possible in south Leeds and people there have had enough. People do not bother about us about education or anything else in south Leeds. We are not a middle-class area in which people write letters to the papers about education. We get the fag-end of the stick on everything in Leeds, and the gipsies are part of that. If there are extra sites in other parts of the city, they come out of Government grants. If Leeds spends money on gipsy sites, there is less money for other things. It is important there should be a separate grant for gipsy sites, because that is a national problem. The money should not come out of Leeds' budget.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): The situation in south Leeds is deplorable. People elsewhere in the city can see the circumstances that the right hon. Gentleman and his constituents have had to face. That is why, when the city council proposes to put a large gipsy site into the green belt in my area—in Meanwood—there is so much opposition and anger because of the intrusion into a beautiful area. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, as the city council has met the statutory requirements for the provision of sites, we are possibly in danger now of appearing to be an authority that is so positively geared to providing help for these people that we are attracting more and more of them? The more we provide sites, the greater the problem becomes.

Mr. Rees: That may be so in the future. However, there is only one site in the constituency of the hon. Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson). The reason why the itinerants are attracted to my area is that it has eight or nine unofficial sites, and, because of a weakness in the law, nothing is done about that.

My second point concerns police powers, about which the Leeds city council will have to do something. The other evening I praised the work of a woman police inspector when we were heading for real trouble. Six weeks ago the position was reminiscent of Juliet Bravo. In a letter to me, the Home Secretary pointed out that there are new powers under the Public Order Act 1986. He said:

> "The new power applies only to trespassers who intend to reside on land"

—the travellers or gipsies certainly intend to reside on land. They are not just popping in for an evening.

> "The police can only act after the landowner has requested the trespassers to leave and they have refused. In such cases if the police reasonably believe that damage has been caused"—

that is not difficult to come by—

> "that the landowner or his family or employees have been threatened, or that 12 or more vehicles have been brought on to the land"—

Twelve vehicles? We have had 60 or 70 vehicles. The police, because of shortage of manpower, have not been involved because they have been waiting for all the legal stuff to go through the courts. It goes on and on. The Home Secretary continues:

> "even if the trespass itself is not in breach of the criminal law the police can still take action if other offences are likely to be committed."

I should have thought that that is pretty difficult to prove.

I had a letter from someone in Surrey who told me that when a camp was established in his area the police went in one evening and found 21 stolen vehicles. That is the nature of the problem. These people are not the gipsies for whom I want to do something. There is a real problem for the people who live near such camps and police powers are insufficient. I am asking for the necessary powers for the local authorities and for the police.

On 13 October 1987 one of my councillors, Ian Hugill, wrote to Leeds council. He pointed out that the gipsies had been camped in eight areas all through the summer. He wanted to know what would happen at Hunslet Grange where houses have been knocked down and the ghastly blocks of flats have gone. What would happen at the waste ground at West Grange, the waste ground at Stourton Grange and the land adjoining Lakeside court? What would happen to the land at the station at Hunslet Moor and the space behind the properties 319-327 Hunslet road? What would happen to the waste land adjacent to Middleton Broom tip? My hon. Friend the Member for Normanton will know that area, because a colliery used to be there. Ian Hugill also asked about the spare land adjacent to the industrial estate in Government street. I checked with the council last Saturday and it said there were no travellers on those sites except at Bell Hill, which is on the edge of the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton. However, what will be done? All my people say that the so-called gipsies will come back to those areas and nothing will be done by the local authority and the police. The problem will go on and on.

Will the Minister meet all the parties of Leeds city council and ask what they intend to do? I hope that there can be a meeting of all the councils in west Yorkshire because when the so-called gipsies leave my area they will probably move on to the area of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West. They have speed of movement on the motorway so while we are shot of them for a short time the problem still goes on.

This week I was given a document from local councils, parish councils and similar bodies. It contains a list of what they want the Government to do. In conclusion, that document states that the minimum requirement is the rapid provision of suitable sites. However, there is not the faintest chance of the rapid provision of such sites. Therefore, I hope that there may be a meeting in west Yorkshire to discuss this matter. I do not want to be vindictive, but these people with their money and cars are not gipsies and I want to be absolutely sure that the people of Hunslet should not face the same problem with those people year after year.

A few weeks ago the vicar of Hunslet wrote to me and said that Hunslet is under siege and that he and the councillors had done all that they could. That is a cry for help.

This is the first time in 25 years that I have had an Adjournment debate. I have sought the debate because something must be done, yet nobody has bothered about the problem. I ask the Government to do something quickly because those eight sites will fill up extremely quickly. There ought to be small sites in different parts of the county. However, there should be no more sites in south Leeds at Hunslet. We have had enough. I ask the Minister to listen sympathetically to what I have said.

10.34 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) for allowing me to contribute to the debate.

In April, I led a delegation from Bradford to see the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey). He wrote to me in May and his letter says:

> "You raised the question of whether other Districts in West Yorkshire were making adequate provision for gypsies. The 1968 Act requires that each Metropolitan District should provide adequate accommodation for gypsies residing in or resorting to their areas. The minimum requirement is that each District should provide not more than 15 caravan pitches . . . The Regional Office has, however, already written to both Kirklees and Calderdale seeking details of their proposals to make adequate provision for gypsies."

[Mr. Max Madden]

Coincidentally, the present Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who is to reply to this debate, wrote a letter to me which I received this morning. Her letter says:

> "As a follow-up to your meeting with Dick Tracey earlier this year the Department's Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Office wrote to the Districts of Calderdale and Kirklees about the provision of gypsy sites in their areas. Their responses indicated that both Councils are currently considering the provision of sites;".

I can tell the Minister that they have been considering sites for a very long time. I repeat what my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South has said, that there is an urgent need for Kirklees and Calderdale to make some provision. If those councils would make that provision, it would alleviate the pressures on Bradford and Leeds and on the other districts that have complied with the law. The authorities in west Yorkshire that have flouted the law that has been in existence for 20 years, are intensifying the problems in areas that have made provision and have complied with the law.

10.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Marion Roe): I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) for raising the issue of gipsies in the south Leeds area. I know that it is a subject close to his heart and one that he has raised before in the House, in correspondence with my Department and other Government Departments, and elsewhere in his local press. I have also noted the contributions to the debate by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and by the hon. Members for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien).

I share wholeheartedly the right hon. Gentleman's concern for the residents of south Leeds and for the need to ensure that public order is maintained and the law upheld. It is common ground between us that gipsies, like any other people, must comply with the law. I hope that it is also common ground that the way forward is through the provision of adequate sites for gipsies. The Government are fully committed to this approach. Indeed, we see the adequate provision of official sites as the key solution to resolving problems of the sort raised by the right hon. Gentleman.

This debate comes at an opportune time, because it was only last February that my right hon. Friend announced his conclusions following the review of policy for the provisions of gipsy sites. He concluded, after a painstaking examination of responses to a consultation letter and after considering the analysis of those responses by an independent adviser, Professor Gerald Wibberley, that the way forward was to continue for the time being with the present legislative duty to provide sites coupled with the additional controls available through designation. This was also the consensus, but we accepted that there was a need for better information on gipsies in order to establish better targets at which authorities could aim. We intend to tackle this vigorously as soon as we have the necessary research facilities.

However, I am convinced that already in the last six months we have become much more aware of the situation regarding gipsies and other groups, not only in south Leeds but elsewhere in the region and nationally. This improved information will be of great use in our discussions with the relevant local authorities on the provision of sites. I must say how grateful I am to the right hon. Member for providing much useful information to my Department, not only in this debate, but on the other occasions on which he has raised this issue with us.

I think it might be helpful if I were briefly to outline what the law has to say on the subject of gipsies. County councils, London borough councils and, as in this case, metropolitan district councils, all have a duty to provide sites for gipsies in their areas. In London boroughs and the metropolitan districts, that duty is restricted to a duty to provide for up to 15 caravans at a time. However, it is the case that in a number of London boroughs and metropolitan districts there are many more than that number of gipsies who have by long custom been encamped in those areas. Where this is so, and authorities can arrange for their accommodation, they should do so.

When my right hon. Friend can be satisfied that adequate provision exists for the accommodation of gipsies in a particular area, or that in all the circumstances it is not necessary or expedient to make adequate provision, he will be able to consider an application from the local authorities who have the statutory duties to provide accommodation that the area should be designated under the provisions of the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Designation gives the authorities greater powers to control unauthorised camping by gipsies in their areas.

We recognise that there is a problem of interpretation of the statutory definition of gipsies. The Act defines them as

> "persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin".

Local authorities have generally been able to decide who meets this statutory definition for site provision, but the definition is wide and there is increasing concern that other groups may seek the benefits which the Act provides.

Dr. Hampson *rose*——

Mrs. Roe: I am sorry; I cannot give way. I have a lot to say in a short time.

We are committed to examining the scope for further clarification of the issue and we are at present working on a circular which we might issue, after consultation, to local authorities to give them further advice on this and other matters. But I have to stress that the onus of deciding who is a gipsy for the purposes of the statutory duty will have to rest with the local authorities themselves, in the light of the statutory definition.

The question was raised whether gipsies with flashy cars are gipsies. The statutory definition does not make a distinction but authorities providing sites can, and do, make charges for rent and rates.

I do not wish to minimise the difficulties that exist in some areas, but I think it would be right that the House should recognise the progress that has already been made in the provision of sites. At the beginning of this year, there were about 245 local authority sites in existence, providing approximately 4,000 pitches for gipsy caravans. Additionally, we believe that at least 2,000 pitches are being provided on private sites. We recognise, however, that there is still a need for as many as 3,000 to 4,000 pitches to accommodate the considerable number of gipsy caravans for which there is as yet no legal provision.

It is also relevant to refer to what the Government already do to help local authorities to carry out their statutory responsibility. I must draw the right hon.

Gentleman's attention to the fact that we make 100 per cent. Exchequer grant available for sites provided by the local authorities, and we have currently set aside £5 million this year for that purpose. We have issued advice to local authorities, in circulars and in research reports, as a result of which there is now a considerable weight of advice on the location, design and management of sites, as well as on the promotion of private site initiatives.

We supplement the formal advice with regular and informal liaison between my Department and individual local authorities, as they may require, to help them to move towards the fulfilment of their statutory duty. We shall be ready to offer such informal advice to any of the west Yorkshire authorities which seek it regarding the adequacy of their proposals for sites, but we cannot set arbitrary quotas for individual districts.

In short, we have a legislative package which balances a duty to provide sites with the availability of special controls on unauthorised camping. We try to operate it sensibly, and we are convinced that it can be made to work, if there is the will to make it work. As I have said, we are considering what further general advice we can give to local authorities to help them to do the job; and we shall continue to examine within the Department the procedures that are operated, in order to see how we can make them operate more smoothly and efficiently in support of the work that local authorities have to do in this matter.

Unfortunately, the position in south Leeds is complicated, as we have heard from the right hon. Member. There is a history of conflict in the area and an unmet demand for further sites in the city. Partly for historical reasons, only the old Leeds county borough area has presently designated district status.

I understand, firstly, that Leeds city council is pursuing a programme of site provision for the large numbers of gipsies currently illegally camping in the south Leeds area. This extra provision, together with the 36 pitches already being provided at the authorised site at Cottingley Springs, could bring the overall position up to a level where a designation order for the whole of Leeds might be considered. If this is granted, Leeds will be in a much stronger position to deal with illegal encampments and sudden increases in the numbers of gipsies. I say this, of course, without prejudice to any decision that my right hon. Friend takes, should an application for designation come before him.

The House will be aware of my earlier statement on the effectiveness of the current legislation in controlling gipsy sites in local authorities designated under section 12 of the 1968 Act, in the answer I wrote to my hon. Friend, the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) set out in *Hansard* of 13 July.

The provision of official sites by the private and public sector is also crucial in helping to identify quickly the circumstances in which eviction and possibly legal action might be appropriate. I have already explained that designated district status would help to take more effective action on illegal camping.

On the more specific charges of breaches of the law and public order, the right hon. Member has, to my knowledge, already sought advice from my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. The Government's attitude on this is quite clear and firm. We fully understand the annoyance and nuisance that can be caused by itinerants and other trespassers. We are well aware of the general distress that can be caused to ordinary citizens by groups of people who have scant regard for the laws of our society.

The new powers introduced in the Public Order Act 1986 may be relevant for the circumstances outlined by the right hon. gentleman, although I have to say that, in general, we consider that the powers available under the caravan sites legislation are the proper solution to unauthorised camping by gipsies, since they are coupled with provision of sites. Just as clearly, the onus is on the landowner to consider whether such trespassers should leave their land. On those sites owned by Leeds city council, where illegal camping occurs, it clearly falls to the council to consider whether to instigate such action or decide whether there are other temporary measures that could be taken to ease matters. The right hon. Member will no doubt be taking this point further with his friends and colleagues on the city council, where such circumstances exist.

The right hon. Member has referred to vacant sites in south Leeds which are attractive to gipsies. He mentioned the site of the former Hunslet Grange flats. Leeds city council intends to carry out an open space scheme. It also intends to use a site in Middleton, where some Reema blocks are to be demolished, for further open space schemes to improve the environment of the surrounding estate.

Consequently, I trust that the right hon. Member will accept my contention and belief that there are grounds for optimism, although we all recognise the real problems that are occurring in south Leeds. I have set out how we have fairly and squarely faced up to making adequate provision for gipsy sites, not only in south Leeds, but throughout the city and also nationally.

The current framework for provision allows suitable sites to be set up with little financial cost to the local authority, and our experience is that well run sites, meeting the likely demand generally, do not give rise to conflict in the way that unauthorised sites do.

That conflict occurs now on illegal sites is undesirable. We have heard some evidence of the types of real problems facing the residents of south Leeds. Conflict, of course, adversely affects not only the permanent residents in conventional housing. I am also concerned that the vast bulk of the gipsy community, who are as law-abiding as the average citizen, should also have the opportunity to live in a safe and ordered environment.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes to eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 20 November 1987

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr. Secretary Baker, supported by Mr. Secretary Walker, Mr. Secretary Ridley, Mr. Secretary Rifkind, Mr. John Major, Mrs. Angela Rumbold, Mr. Bob Dunn and Mr. Robert Jackson, presented a Bill to amend the law relating to education: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Monday next and to be printed [Bill 53].

Coalfield Communities

Relevant documents: First Report of the Energy Committee, Session 1986-87, on the Coal Industry and the Memorandum setting out the Government's Response to that Report (House of Commons Papers Nos. 165 and 387).

9.36 am

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I beg to move,

That this House recognises the specific problems of the coalfield areas, the high levels of unemployment, lack of job opportunities, falling investment and increasing poverty; regrets the Government's failure to respond to the plight of people as described in the Shelter report on housing, entitled Pits and Mortar; and calls on Her Majesty's Government urgently to look at ways of helping the coalfield communities as recommended by the Select Committee on Energy in its report on the Coal Industry, of Session 1986-87 (House of Commons Paper No. 165).

I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House have read the motion in great detail. It is not about the coal industry—it is about the effects of changes in the industry and, more importantly, the effects on coalfield communities and the villages that surround coal mines that are working now or that have closed in the recent past. Not only Opposition Members represent people in coalfield communities. At the moment, 105 hon. Members represent constituencies that have coal mines, or have had them in the past five years.

The motion is critical of the Government's lack of action and of an economic policy that is adequate to sustain the coalfield communities after the rapid changes of the past five years. In 1981, 6·5 million people lived in coalfield areas of the United Kingdom. In each area, there are substantial local concentrations. The heaviest concentration is to be found in Yorkshire, where more than 1·3 million people live in coalfield areas.

The coalfields are unique in many senses. Mining has been highly localised in areas that have become almost exclusively dependent on this single form of employment. Close-knit communities have grown up alongside it, and the environment of our communities has been determined by the nature and history of the coal industry. The communities of the coalfield have relied on work in that industry being passed on from generation to generation, because there is not always diversity of industry in the coalfields.

Anything that affects the industry affects the whole community. In the areas in which the coal industry has declined irrevocably, new opportunities for work must emerge, but that will not happen as long as the environment is not conducive to the growth of new enterprises. There must be suitable sites, adequate services, good access to motorways and good living conditions—for homes, schools and leisure. There must be people with appropriate skills, and positive support for new industries.

In most of the older coalfields, these conditions do not exist. In 1981, about 250,000 people were directly employed by the industry. In addition, there were 70,000 to 100,000 jobs in related service industries. The severity of job losses in recent years has been unparalleled in the history of the coalfields. In recent years there has been a rapid acceleration in colliery closures. Between 1982 and 1987, 23 collieries have closed in the Yorkshire coalfield alone and in the six years from 1981 to 1987, 50 per cent. of total jobs nationally have disappeared.

Obviously, different regions have suffered different levels of job loss. In those few years Scotland has lost 72 per cent. of all its mining jobs, Kent has lost 70 per cent. and Wales has lost 55 per cent. That has left many areas with substantial unemployment problems. In my Rotherham area, more than one out of two coal mining jobs have been lost since March 1978. There are currently about 5,600 mining jobs in the Rotherham area. The threatened closure of the Manvers complex and the rundown of the Treeton colliery in my constituency will push employment in the industry down to below 4,600.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): My hon. Friend will be aware that originally British Coal wished to close the Kilnhurst part and reduce the Manvers part to single-face working, with a substantial job loss. Is he aware of the recent suspicion that British Coal now wishes to close the whole of the Manvers complex?

Does he feel that that is perhaps due to British Coal's displeasure at having to have an inquiry? Will he ask the Minister to respond to the proposition that the devastated Dearne valley area should not have to bear further cruel and bitter loss, further destruction of hope and the corrosion of the very lives of our communities?

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) for that intervention. I concur with everything that he says. The Dearn valley area is one of the worst unemployment black spots away from inner cities — if not the worst. The Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area that I shall mention later in my speech has been devastated by the rundown of basic industries. Obviously any closure of the Manvers complex on that scale, in addition to the closure in the last 10 years of the five coking plants in the Manvers complex, would devastate that area.

In my constituency, unemployment increased by 12·8 per cent. in the two years from February 1985 to February 1987. Nearly all of that can be attributed to cuts in the mining industry. Not only are unemployment levels rising, but, because of the nature of coalfield communities, there is a high and rising level of long-term unemployment. Over 45 per cent. of those out of work in my constituency have been jobless for more than one year.

provision available for management training under the LEA training grant scheme, for which he announced in August an increase in funding.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the capital allocation to each local education authority for each of the past eight years, in real and in cash terms.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Higher Education Institutions

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to grant charitable status to these higher education institutions due to be taken out of local education authority control.

Mr. Jackson: We intend that the forthcoming legislation transferring the polytechnics and other major colleges of higher education from LEA control should enable them to acquire charitable status.

Polytechnics

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will place in the Library those responses received from polytechnic directors to his proposals to change polytechnics' control and organisation.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) gave the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) on 21 October 1987, at column *736*.

Books and Equipment

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 3 November, at column *645*, if he will set out the planned expenditure for pupils in books and equipment for 1988-89, and the planned figure for 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: Planned expenditure on school books and equipment for 1988-89 takes account of the actual outturn for expenditure in 1985-86 and, in accordance with the local authorities' forecasts, allows for real increases in spending per pupil of 10 per cent. in 1986-87 and a further 5 per cent. in each of the years 1987-88 and 1988-89. Allowing for reducing pupil numbers, cash provision in 1988-89 in each of the primary and secondary sectors is some 37 per cent. higher than actual spending in 1985-86.

Secondary School Libraries

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) of 3 November, at column *645*, if he will set out the details of the additional sum which has been provided for secondary school libraries.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have provided £10 million within the 1988-89 plans to cover the costs of additional librarians and new stock for secondary school libraries.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) of 3 November, at column *645*, if he will indicate the amount of money which will be provided in 1988-89 for equipping schools for the new general certificate of secondary education courses; and what was the equivalent figure for 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: The plans for 1988-89 allow for £87 million to be spent on non-teaching costs associated with the introduction of the GCSE. The equivalent figure for 1987-88 was £100 million. In both years the provision is in line with what local authorities collectively forecast would be needed.

PRIME MINISTER

Basingstoke

Q66. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next intends to make an official visit to Basingstoke.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

EC (Internal Market)

Q87. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to discuss the European Economic Community internal market with the Council of Ministers.

The Prime Minister: The European Council regularly reviews progress on the internal market at its six-monthly meeting. No decisions have yet been taken on the agenda of the next meeting in Copenhagen on 3-4 December.

South Africa

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Prime Minister if, in the light of her statement at the Commonwealth conference in Vancouver on 17 October that she would not invest in South Africa, she proposes to give the same advice to British companies and citizens; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In the interview to which the hon. Member refers I distinguished between acts of Government and the judgment of the market place. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade explained in answer to the hon. Member's question on 23 July 1987, at columns *305-7*, the Government have fulfilled their commitment on new investment in South Africa by the introduction of a voluntary ban.

Government Purchasing

Mr. Wood: To ask the Prime Minister what progress is being made on implementing the report on Government purchasing of December 1984.

The Prime Minister: Following "Government Purchasing" a central unit on purchasing was established. The Treasury is publishing tomorrow the unit's report on 1986-87, its first full year of operation. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House.

The unit's roles is to provide advice and assistance to Departments in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of their purchasing and supply activities. Mr. Michael

Willacy is director of the unit on secondment from Shell UK. About half its small staff are similarly on secondment from private sector companies.

A target was set to achieve value-for-money improvements of £400 million a year from Government Departments' purchasing and stockholding by April 1987. The unit records that in 1986-87 central Government Departments (excluding the Ministry of Defence, which is not covered by this report) achieved value for money improvements totalling £286 million, equivalent to 4·7 per cent. of total expenditure on purchases of goods and services of some £6 billion in that year. The report also notes that Departments are becoming more aware of the potential of small firms to provide value for money in purchasing and supply, and that some Departments have taken worthwhile initiatives to encourage small firms.

For 1987-88 Departments (again excluding Ministry of Defence) have set targets for value-for-money improvements totalling £388 million, and for 1988-89 targets totalling £447 million, equivalent to some 7 per cent. of forecast expenditure on goods and services in that year. The report emphasises that a great deal remains to be done, including taking better advantage of the potential of small firms to provide value for money. But the achievements to date and the more ambitious targets Departments are now setting themselves for the future are encouraging.

Engagements

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 10 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Embassies and Consulates

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the total expenditure in the past financial year for Her Majesty's Government' sembassy in Paris, and for each consulate and honorary consulate in France, broken down by salaries, accommodation and other expenses; and what is the budgeted total expenditure for each in the current year.

Mr. Eggar: The running costs for 1986–87 for the FCO posts in France are as follows, together with the estimated total costs for 1987–88. The costs of honorary consulates cannot be identified separately, but are included in the cost of relevant supervising posts.

	1986–87				*1987–88*
	[1]*Salaries* *£'000*	[2]*Accommodation* *£'000*	*Other expenses* *£'000*	*Total* *£'000*	*Estimated costs* *£'000*
Paris including Cherbourg, Le Harvre, Nantes and St. Malo	4,498	2,181	942	7,621	7,744
Lyon	363	82	47	492	498
Marseilles including Nice and Perpignan	326	92	63	481	487
Strasbourg	241	137	50	428	437
Lille including Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk	269	101	46	416	420
Bordeaux including Toulouse	254	57	38	349	353

[1] Salaries and allowances for United Kingdom staff and locally-engaged staff.

[2] Accommodation includes office and residential costs.

NATO Meeting (Moscow)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation meeting following the meeting in Moscow between Mr. Shultz and Mr. Shevardnadze.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Shultz briefed the North Atlantic Council on 24 October on his discussions in Moscow as part of the process of regular and close consultations between the United States and its allies. He focused particularly on developments in the United States/Soviet arms control talks.

UNESCO

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if in the light of the election of Professor Mayor, as director general, he will make a futher statement about Her Majesty's Government's policy towards membership of UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: As I told the House on 21 October, we welcome the election of Professor Mayor, whose appointment was confirmed by the General Conference of UNESCO on 7 November.

Professor Mayor's experience in the field of education, science and culture, and his detailed knowledge of UNESCO, equip him well for his new responsibilities. We wish him well. But we have made clear that we would need clear evidence that substantial reform had been achieved in UNESCO before we could reconsider our membership of the organisation. We will be watching developments closely and keeping an open mind.

ENERGY

Coal Reserves

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is British Coal's assessment of coal reserves at *(a)* Munton mine, *(b)* Dawden mine, *(c)* Vane Tempest mine and *(d)* Easington mine.

Mr. Michael Spicer: That is a matter for the British Coal Corporation. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Select Committee Reports (Government's Response)

Sir Ian Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether he will publish the Government's response to the Energy Committee's report on the effect of oil and gas prices on activity in the North sea, HC 175, Session 1986-87;

(2) whether he will make a statement on Magnox decommissioning costs in response to the recommendation in paragraph 34 of the second report from the Energy Committee, Session 1986-87, HC 88.

Mr. Parkinson: I have placed copies of the Government's responses to the previous Energy Select Committee's reports on Magnox decommissioning costs and the effects of oil and gas prices on the level of North sea activity in the Library of the House.

EMPLOYMENT

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Ashton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why Mr. John Rimington, Director General of the Health and Safety Executive, sent out a letter dated 17 September to staff warning them not to talk to hon. Members or journalists about the crises facing the Health and Safety Executive if it did not secure the level of funding for 1988-89.

Mr. Nicholls: I understand that Mr. Rimington took the view that the interview to an MP and journalist given by one of his staff on a matter currently under discussion between the Health and Safety Commission and Ministers breached the normal rules of discretion to which civil servants are subject.

British Shipbuilders

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to holding answer of 26 October to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, if he is yet in a position to provide a substantive answer concerning the test case involving former employees of British Shipbuilders Ltd.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 5 November 1987.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects his working party's report with guidelines on public protection against chemical attack; if such guidelines will be made available to authorities charged with a duty to plan for the protection of the public in war; and if such guidelines will form the basis of advice for distribution to the general public.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the absence of a ban on chemical weapons, the Government are conducting a variety of studies into their effects and protective measures against them. This work is continuing and consideration of guidance must await its outcome.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when authorities charged with a duty to plan for the protection of the public in war may expect guidance on the identification of suitable public places for shelter in war.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: "Emergency Planning Guidance Handbook 2: Communal Shelters" was issued to local authorities in 1985. A pilot communal shelter survey has been undertaken in selected areas, and supplementary advice on survey methods will be issued in the new year.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the annual throughput of students at the Civil Defence College for each of the last five years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following numbers of persons attended courses and seminars at the Civil Defence College:

	Number
1982	2,140
1983	2,710
1984	2,896
1985	2,868
1986	2,892

Scientific Advisers Training Manual

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will revise his Department's 1977 scientific advisers training manual to include new data from his Department's scientific research and development branch which predicts increased deaths and injuries from nuclear blast.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Advice on blast casualty calculation taking account of the review of the blast casualty rules applicable to United Kingdom houses was issued to local authorities in October 1986 and forms the basis for training scientific advisers; it will be incorporated in a revised training manual for scientific advisers in due course.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently held in *(a)* police cells and *(b)* magistrates' court cells in the London area; and what is his estimate of these figures in the event of normal working by all prison officers in the London area.

Mr. John Patten: On 4 November the numbers of prisoners held in police cells and magistrates' court cells in the Metropolitan police area were 161 and 82, respectively. Now that industrial action at the prisons involved has been suspended, we aim to move them all into prison.

Nationality Registration

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a reduced concessionary rate, together with payment by instalments, for supplementary benefit claimants applying for nationality registration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. The Government believe that it is right that those who wish to become British citizens should meet the cost of processing their applications, and concessions to one group would only increase the cost to others.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the public relations branch within his Department.

Mr. Hurd: The complement for the public relations branch of the Home Office, listed by grade, is as follows:

Grade	*Number*
Grade 4	1
Grade 6	1
Grade 7	2
Senior Information Officer	9
Information Officer	14
Assistant Information Officer	3
Executive Officer	1
Personal Secretary	3
Administrative Officer	2
Administrative Assistant	5

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of maintaining the public relations branch within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hurd: The annual budget for the Home Office public relations branch since 1979 has been as follows.

	£000
1979-80	374
1980-81	478
1981-82	448
1982-83	429
1983-84	545
1984-85	569
1985-86	646
1986-87	704

These figures include salary, accommodation and service costs.

Mr. Ahmad Babolhavaeji

Miss Fookes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Office Department if he is yet in a position to finalise the case of Mr. Ahmad Babolhavaeji, details of which were sent to him by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake on 30 September 1986.

Mr. Renton: I have written to my hon. Friend today.

Murder Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer of 5 November, he is now in a position to say how many persons have been convicted of homicide in the period since 1965 who had previously been convicted and sentenced for homicide; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Since 1965, 49 people originally convicted of homicide have been subsequently reconvicted of homicide. Thirty-six of them, 11 of whom were murderers released on life licence, committed the subsequent offence after release from prison in England and Wales. Of the remaining 13, seven committed the subsequent offence while in prison or mental hospital; one while on bail for the first offence; and five had been originally convicted outside England and Wales.

Child Abuse

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide that all courts take all necessary measures to protect children giving evidence in sex abuse cases from seeing the defendants and from experiencing the formalities of the court.

Mr. John Patten: In England and Wales, clause 30 of the Criminal Justice Bill will permit a child to give evidence at the Crown court by closed circuit television in sex abuse cases. The position in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Advocate; but I understand that the Scottish Law Commission is considering the law of evidence in criminal proceedings, and that the Lord Advocate has asked it to look at the giving of evidence by children in sex abuse cases, including the possible use of closed circuit television.

Earl William (Detention Centre)

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he proposes to renew the charter of the Earl William at Harwich as an immigration detention centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The lease for the charter of the Earl William at Harwich as an immigration detention centre was initially for a period of three months from early May. It was extended in July for a further period of three months, which expires on 30 November. I have decided not to exercise the options in the contract for further possible extensions beyond that date.

Social Workers (Criminal Records)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many officers form the present complement of that section in the Metropolitan police checking the existence and content of any criminal record of applicants for posts with social services departments with access to children in accordance with Home Office circular HOC(86)44; what was the complement of this section in 1985 and in 1986; what is the average length of time currently taken in responding to a request for a check from a social services department; and how many boroughs in London are currently operating the terms of the circular and requesting checks.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the staff complement for the section within the Metropolitan police charged with checking the existence and content of any criminal record of applicants for posts with substantial access to children was as follows:

	Number
1985	4
1986	6
1987	8

Until July 1986, the scope of such checks was limited to those seeking specific posts within the probation and social services. The arrangements announced in the Home Office circular 44/1986 widened the scope of these checks to include all those seeking local authority posts which involve substantial access to children, and the complement of the section has been increased to reflect the additional work load. The complement will be increased to 12 from January 1988.

The average time taken to process checks of this kind is six weeks, although this should be reduced when the additional staff are in post. Twenty London boroughs currently make use of the arrangements.

TRANSPORT

Pedal Cyclists (Helmets)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the types of helmets for child pedal cyclists which comply with the British Standard and are currently available in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no formal record of helmet types complying with the standard. We are taking steps to ensure road safety officers and others engaged in road safety work bring the new standard to the attention of schools, parents and children.

Tourism

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of tourism signposting.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The new system of white on brown traffic signs for tourist attractions in England was announced in April 1986 following successful experiments in Kent and Nottinghamshire. The English tourist board has publicised the scheme with the tourist industry. We have produced an explanatory leaflet which is being distributed to the public by the motoring organisations and tourist information centres.

More than 2,000 attractions have now had signs approved under the new arrangements. Many local authorities have prepared comprehensive tourist signing plans for their areas; other authorities are dealing with signing requests as they arise.

The new signs have now appeared on the roads in many parts of the country and I expect even more to be in place before next summer's tourist season. The signs have been well received by both the public and the tourist industry.

M1 Motorway

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions have taken place between officials of his Department and officials of Bedfordshire county council regarding the signposting of an alternative route for traffic prevented from entering the closed southbound slipway on junction 10 of the M1.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been regular and frequent meetings to discuss traffic management, including the signing of diversionary routes.

Mr. John Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects work to be completed between junctions 9 and 10 on the M1.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contractor hopes to complete the work within the next few days.

Transport Developments

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's involvement in developments in the United Kingdom in recent years with respect to trolleybuses, tramways, rapid transit and light railways.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has been involved in the approval and financing of the Docklands light railway and the Tyne and Wear metro. The Department is also closely involved in studies of further light rail proposals for London and is in touch with a number of authorities which are proposing such systems elsewhere. I shall write to my hon. Friend with further details.

British Airways

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet made his decision on whether to approve British Airways' recent application for fare increases on its European routes.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that British Airways recently applied for increased fares to almost all of its European destinations. Applications are considered by the Civil Aviation Authority in relation to data about the airline's costs on the routes in question. The authority has disapproved the increased fares to Greece and Spain as being unjustified in relation to costs. It is still considering proposals affecting club and Eurobudget fares to Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway and Sweden and to southern France, and economy fares to Nice. It has approved the increases proposed on the airline's other routes to Europe.

Travellers Fare

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any information on the employment implications of the privatisation of Travellers Fare station catering.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board is currently undertaking a competitive tender exercise for station catering sites operated by Travellers Fare. Any employment implications would be matters for the board.

British Rail

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ask the chairman of British Rail for an annual report showing for each region the number of instances of engine failure.

Mr. David Mitchell: We monitor the general reliability of British Rail's passenger services. But the particular causes of cancellation or late running are operational matters for the board.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1970, at 1970 prices *(a)* total capital expenditure approved for British Rail and *(b)* total capital expenditure for electrification of British Rail services.

Mr. David Mitchell: Figures for investment (on revenue and capital account) in the railway are not readily available before 1974. Corporate investment includes investment in the subsidiary businesses at the time: ownership of these businesses has changed in some cases. Figures for investment in electrification exclude rolling stock. The figures are:

Capital and revenue account corporate investment by the British Railways Board is as follows:

(£ million at 1970 prices)

Year	*Total BRB investment*	*Railway investment*	*Investment in electrification*
1970	79		2·5
1971	85		7·8
1972	92		10·8
1973	97		6·4
1974	86	76	2·2
1975	93	81	5·0
1976	94	76	3·2
1977	89	75	1·9
1978	91	72	3·1
1979	98	74	3·5
1980	91	77	3·1
1981	75	64	2·6
1982	61	53	1·8
1983	60	52	2·0
[1]1984-85	83	77	3·6
1985-86	80	73	11·8
1986-87	77	71	12·8

[1] 15-month accounting period.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the annual central Government subsidy to British Rail in each of the past 15 years; and if he will express these figures as a percentage of the total expenditure of British Rail in each year.

Mr. David Mitchell: Figures for Government support for British Rail since 1972, in cash and expressed as a percentage of rail operating expenditure, are as follows.

The present grant system began in 1975, and figures for earlier years are not comparable. Figures for 1972 to 1974 include grants for unremunerative passenger services under section 39 of the Transport Act 1968, surplus track grants under section 40 of the 1968 Act, and revenue deficit grants. From 1975 they include grant in compensation for the public service obligation under EEC regulation 1191/69 and section 3 of the Railways Act 1974, level crossings grant under EC regulation 1192/69, and grants in respect of the non-passenger railway from 1975 to 1978.

Figures are taken from final grant claims and from the BRB annual report and accounts. 1984/85 is a 15-month period reflecting a change in the British Railways Board's financial year. The figures for 1985/86 and 1986/87 remain provisional; final claims have not yet been agreed. All figures are cash.

	Grant (£ million)	*Per cent. of Rail expenditure*
1972	127·0	20
1973	136·4	20
1974	354·7	40
1975	369·7	32
1976	348·5	28
1977	397·8	28
1978	410·2	25
1979	498·1	26
1980	591·4	26
1981	766·6	31
1982	835·6	33
1983	873·0	32
1984-85	1,088·9	31
1985-86	839·7	29
1986-87	733·4	26

Second-hand Tyres

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received from trading standards departments and other interested organisations on the sale of second-hand tyres; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to seek to introduce legislation governing the sale of second-hand tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Trading standards authorities in West Yorkshire and Warwickshire have suggested that their officers need more powers to control effectively the sale of second-hand tyres. We are considering what might be done.

Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each year since 1970 the estimated number of taxis or private hire vehicles in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

Figures for taxis in England and Wales are set out in the table

Licensed Taxis *Thousands*

	London	*England and Wales outside London*
1970	8·7	n/a
1971	9·6	n/a
1972	10·1	n/a
1973	10·4	n/a
1974	11·0	n/a
1975	11·3	n/a
1976	11·8	15·2
1977	12·5	15·5
1978	12·5	16·0
1979	12·3	16·7
1980	12·4	17·0
1981	12·6	17·4
1982	12·8	17·7
1983	13·1	18·1
1984	13·6	18·4
1985	13·8	18·9
1986	14·2	21·1

In Scotland, there were 5,188 licensed taxis in 1984 and 6,360 in 1985.

It is estimated that there were 20,000 hire cars in London in 1969, 27,000 in 1975 and about 35,000 in 1985. There were 19,300 licensed hire cars in England and Wales outside London in 1980 and 25,780 in 1985. This increase was, however, largely explained by the extension of licensing. There were 2,960 licensed hire cars in Scotland in 1985.

Minibuses

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the total number of minibuses registered for public service operation in each of the years from 1982 to 1986 and for the latest available date in 1987.

Mr. David Mitchell: The available information is as follows:

Hackney vehicles with 9 to 16 passenger seats: stock end of year
Great Britain

	Number
1982	6,305
1983	6,[illegible]
1984	6,3[illegible]3
1985	6,766
1986	7,854

Source: DVLC

Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Stage Carriage Services

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the total number of operators of stage carriage services in the United Kingdom in each year since 1965.

Mr. David Mitchell: In each of the years 1982 to the financial year 1985-86 there were about 1,300 operators of stage services in Great Britain. Results for earlier years are not available. Comparable results for 1986-87 have not been finalised, but the available evidence suggests that there has been a substantial rise in the number of operators of local services since deregulation.

Railway Line Closures

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total number of miles of *(a)* passenger line and *(b)* freight line closed by British Rail in each year since 1970.

Mr. David Mitchell: The total number of miles of passenger line closed by British Rail in each year since 1970 is as follows:

Year	*Miles closed*
1970	290·5
1971	23
1972	51
1973	56·25
1974	—
1975	15
1976	—
1977	24
1978	—
1979	—
1980	—
1981	0·75
1982	1·25
1983	41·5
1984	—
1985	4
1986	2·5

Similar figures for freight lines closures are not readily available.

Bus Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of *(a)* bus route miles operated and *(b)* bus passengers carried in the United Kingdom in each year since 1970.

Mr. David Mitchell: Information on bus vehicle miles and bus passengers carried for the years 1970 to 1985-86 is published in "Transport Statistics Great Britain: 1976-1986"; (tables 2.33 and 2.37). Results for 1986-87 are to be published in a statistical bulletin later this year. Results for bus route miles are not available.

Subsidies

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for each year since 1970 *(a)* the profit or loss, *(b)* central Government subsidy and *(c)* local authority subsidy of the former London Transport Executive and of London Regional Transport;

(2) if he will list, for each year since inception, until privatisation *(a)* the profit or loss, *(b)* the control Government subsidy and *(c)* central authority subsidy of each National Bus Company subsidiary.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

A6121 (Speed Limit)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will request a senior representative of the East Midland regional office to visit Essendine, Leicestershire, to observe traffic conditions there and advise them on the desirability of introducing a 40 mph speed limit on the A6121 road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A senior representative of the East Midlands regional office has already visited Essendine and given advice. It is still clear that a 40 mph speed limit would not contribute to road safety.

Lorries (Regulation)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the regulations which apply to United Kingdom-based lorries and drivers which do not apply to lorries and drivers travelling to the United Kingdom from other countries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[holding answer, 6 November 1987]*: Foreign lorries and drivers coming into the United Kingdom for a period of more than three months must comply with all relevant United Kingdom legislation. Vehicles brought into Great Britain for a period of less than three months are exempted from customs duties, and from certain of the vehicle lighting and the construction and use regulations.

Foreign vehicles carrying dangerous goods must comply with United Kingdom regulations on the carriage of such goods, unless they meet the provisions of the UN agreement on the carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR).

WALES

School Meals

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children in Wales are in receipt of free school meals, by district authority; what percentage of the total number of children in each group this represents; and what are the comparable figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information by district authority is not available.

Careers Advice

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to encourage the improvement of careers advice offered by schools in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government recognise that it is of vital importance that the best and most up-to-date guidance on careers is brought to young people. That is why, last April, my right hon. Friend, in conjunction with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Employment, issued a document entitled "Working Together for a Better Future" to local education authorities, educational institutions and careers officers in England and Wales. Its aim is to raise the effectiveness of work in the careers education and guidance field generally.

Authorities have been asked to review their current arrangements and policies for careers education, and to make an interim report to the Secretaries of State by 31 December 1987, and a written policy statement by 31 October 1988.

School Rolls

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report*, by education authority, those primary schools in Wales having fewer than 100 pupils, showing the school roll in each case.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not readily available in the form requested. Summary information showing the total number of primary schools with 100 pupils or fewer and the number of pupils in those schools, for each county as at January 1987, is given in the following table.

Welsh counties	*Number of primary schools with 100 pupils or less*	*Number of pupils on roll*
Clwyd	94	4,912
Dyfed	199	9,511
Gwent	57	3,446
Gwynedd	125	6,623
Mid-Glamorgan	56	3,854
Powys	82	3,979
South Glamorgan	15	1,154
West Glamorgan	24	1,703

Child Abuse

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what extra resources his Department is making available to deal with the problem of child abuse.

Mr. Grist: Expenditure on services for children, including child abuse work, is discussed each year in the social services expenditure sub-group. The sub-group's report is taken into account in the annual rate support grant settlement. Expenditure on these services is, however, a matter for local authority decision in the light of local needs and priorities. The Department will shortly be discussing with directors of social services in Wales the extent of training needs for staff dealing with child abuse.

Mental Illness

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many women patients were resident in mental illness hospitals in Wales in each year from 1980.

Mr. Grist: A census of the residents of mental illness hospitals and units is undertaken only every second year. The available information is as follows:

Number of female residents in mental illness hospitals and units on 5 April

	Number
1981	2,542
1983	2,405
1985	2,363
1987	2,272

NHS (Ward Closures)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many National Health Service hospital wards have been closed either permanently or temporarily in Wales in each of the years since 1979; and whether these closures were due to *(a)* shortages of medical staff, *(b)* shortages of equipment or *(c)* lack of funds.

Mr. Grist: This information is not available centrally. I must point out, however, that the growth in the recurrent revenue resources available to health authorities in the period 1978-79 to 1987-88 is over £172 million after adjustment for inflation and this represents a growth rate of almost 32 per cent. in the period. In addition, there are 13.3 per cent. more doctors and dentists and 10·7 per cent. more nurses than there were in 1979.

There has also been a substantive investment in new and updated equipment. Throughout this period there has also been a very substantial programme of new hospital building.

AIDS

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what funds are being made available to meet the costs of services for people with AIDS or HIV infection.

Mr. Grist: Since 1 April 1985, the Welsh Office has spent £920,000 on AIDS-related activities, mostly in the blood transfusion service. In addition, £300,000 is being provided on a recurrent basis to support district health authorities' efforts in prevention, testing and counselling. So far, the incidence of AIDS in Wales has been relatively low and DHAs have been meeting the costs of treatment. The implications of AIDS and of HIV infection for service provision will be kept under close examination in the light of the specific operational plans that DHAs are currently preparing.

Primary Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the organisations which have so far commented on the consultative document regarding primary education in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Consultation documents were issued on the following proposals, all of which affect primary as well as secondary education in Wales:

Grant Maintained Schools
Admission of Pupils to Maintained Schools
Financial Delegation to Schools
Collective Worship
National Curriculum 5-16
Charges for School Activities

My right hon. Friend has discussed the proposals with representatives of the Welsh Joint Education Committee and with the Welsh Consultative Council on local government finance. A number of organisations which were consulted were invited to discuss the schools proposals at the Welsh Office and 14 organisations had meetings with Welsh Office officials as a result:

National Association of Headteachers (Wales)
Parent Teacher Association of Wales
Professional Association of Teachers (Wales)
National Union of Teachers (Wales)
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association (Wales)
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (Wales)
Welsh Secondary Schools Association
Welsh Language Education Development Committee
Secondary Heads Association (Wales)
Society of Education Officers (Wales)
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru
Parents for Welsh Medium Education (PWE)
Welsh Joint Education Committee/Directors of Education
Welsh Counties Committee

Written responses were received from the following organisations:

Archdiocese of Cardiff
Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
Association of History Teachers (Wales)
Bangor Diocesan Council for Education
BBC Education Department
Church in Wales — Education and Communications Centre
Christian Movement in Wales
Clwyd Area Teachers' Association
Cymdeithas Ymgynghorwyr Cymraeg Cymru
Farmers Union of Wales
Gwent Health Authority
Gwynedd Health Education Department
Llandaff Diocesan Council for Education
Manpower Services Commission
Merched y Wawr
Methodist Church North and South Wales
Methodist Church, South West District
Monmouth Diocesan Council for Education
Museums and Galleries Commission
National Advisory Panel for Religious Education (Wales)
National and Local Government Officers Association
Socialist Educational Association
Society of Education Officers (Wales)
Sports Council for Wales
Tabernacle Congregational Church (Haverfordwest)
Trinity College (Lampeter)
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru
Union of Welsh Independents
Urdd Gobaith Cymru
Voluntary Organisations Liaison Council for Under Fives
Wales Assembly of Women
Wales Association for Teachers of the Deaf
Wales Association of Community and Town Councils
Welsh Trade Union Congress
Welsh Counties Committee
Welsh Language Education Development Committee
Welsh Language Society
Welsh National Centre for Religious Education
Welsh Secondary Schools Association
National Association of Headteachers (Wales)
National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (Wales)
National Consumer Council
National Federation for Education and Research
National Federation of Women's Institutes
National Union of Teachers
North Wales Arts Association
Oxfam Education
Parents Teachers Associations of Wales
Plaid Cymru (Bro Maelog)
Pontypridd Family Protection Group
Porth Resources Centre
Professional Association of Teachers—Wales Committee
Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg
School Curriculum Development Committee (Wales)
Secondary Heads Assocation (Wales)
West Carmarthen Association of Congregational Churches
West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education
Yr Academi Gymreig
Clwyd County Council
Dyfed County Council
Gwent County Council
Gwynedd County Council
Mid Glamorgan County Council
Powys County Council
South Glamorgan County Council
West Glamorgan County Council
Numerous School Governing Bodies

Health Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has made an assessment of the high rate of bronchitis and high blood pressure in Wales as reflected in the health and lifestyle survey published in April of the current year; and what steps they are taking to reduce them.

Mr. Grist: The Department is aware of the assessments made in this survey and in others not only of the incidence of bronchitis and high blood pressure but also of other diseases where an individual's lifestyle can play a part. The Welsh Health Promotion Authority was established earlier this year with a general remit to complement efforts to promote good health and prevent ill health in Wales. The authority is currently preparing a strategic plan designed to help in targeting its contributions most effectively.

Cancer Screening

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many laboratories test for cervical cancer in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Fifteen laboratories in Wales conduct cervical cytology tests.

Family Planning

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total annual cost of National Health Service family planning services for each of the years 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table sets out the information currently held by the Department.

NHS Family planning services: Wales[1]

£ thousands

	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
District Health Authority Community Services[2]	1,052	1,116	1,278	1,308
Family Practitioner Services[3]	2,187	2,263	2,478	2,463
Total	3,239	3,379	3,756	3,771

[1] The costs of family planning in respect of hospital services are not included as they cannot be separately identified in the annual accounts.

[2] District health authorities community services exclude Gwynedd health authority whose community services expenditure is only available in total for all services.

[3] The figures included in family practitioner services consist of general practitioners' fees for contraceptive services and the costs to the pharmaceutical services in respect of contraceptive substances and appliances issued free to women. The latter is based on a 2 per cent. sample of the chemist accounts in Wales.

Sources:

Health Authorities Annual Accounts.

Family Practitioner Welsh Pricing Committee.

Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a list of the annual Government contributions to Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

	£
1979-80	95,000
1980-81	117,000
1981-82	259,000
1982-83	278,000
1983-84	292,000
1984-85	310,350
1985-86	326,400
1986-87	363,800
1987-88	383,700

Roads (North Wales)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made as to the relative long-term consequences for the future development of Clwyd, South-West and north Wales generally of *(a)* improvement of the A5 and *(b)* completion of the A55.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The A55 is of considerable importance to the whole economy of north Wales. Its improvement will provide added incentives to tourism and industry and bring substantial traffic relief benefits to communities on the existing road. The A5 will also continue to have an important role. But bearing in mind that it passes through the Snowdonia national park and that traffic patterns may well be modified when work on the A55 is complete, our present policy for it is to limit improvement to relieving pressure points.

Women (Public Appointments)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all women who have been appointed to public bodies for which he has responsibility since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Connahs Quay High School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will increase the funding of Clwyd local education authority with a view to keeping open the Connahs Quay high school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am aware that Clwyd education authority is considering a reorganisation of its secondary school provision but no statutory proposals have yet been published by the authority. It will be for the authority to determine its own priorities within the resources available to it.

Coal Mining, Cheapside, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will refuse planning permission to the Open Cast Coal Executive to mine coal at Cheapside, Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend cannot give any such assurance. He will make his decision on the planning appeal following a public local inquiry and a report to him by the inspector.

Schools (Statistics)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names of all schools in the Alyn and Deeside constituency which have closed or are proposed for closure or change of description since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Schools in the constituency which have closed since 1979 are Bistre county infants' school and Shotton nursery school. There are currently no published notices proposing closure or change of description in that area.

Clwyd (Teachers)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers are employed by Clwyd local education authority (i) full-time and (ii) part-time in *(a)* nursery, *(b)* primary and *(c)* secondary schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information for teachers in service, in January 1987, is as follows:

	Nursery	Maintained schools Primary	 Secondary
Full-time teachers	10	1,467	1,859
Part time teachers[1]	—	228	104

[1] Part time teachers are expressed in terms of whole numbers and not in full-time equivalent terms.

Deeside Community Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his earliest estimated date for the start and completion of the proposed Deeside community hospital; what is its estimated cost; what are the estimated number of beds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I understand that the current plans of Clwyd health authority, in respect of the proposal to provide a community hospital in Deeside, are to commence construction in September 1989 and to complete it by April 1991, at a total estimated cost of £2·98 million. The development currently envisaged by the health authority makes provision for 28 beds.

The Department is awaiting receipt of a final revised capital programme from Clwyd health authority, which I understand will include the above development.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of public moneys spent under separate headings by the Welsh Development Agency since 1980 on *(a)* Deeside industrial park, *(b)* Engineer park, Sandycroft, *(c)* Clay industrial estate and *(d)* Pinfold lane, Buckley, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my answer in the Library of the House.

Alyn and Deeside (Grants)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the amount of urban aid and similar grants under separate headings Her Majesty's Government have made available to Alyn and Deeside council in each of the years since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The allocations made by the Department each year since 1979-80 are as follows:

£000's

	Urban programme	*Urban development grant*	*Total*
1980-81	—	—	—
1981-82	130	—	130
1982-83	430	—	430
1983-84	410	—	410
1984-85	590	62	652
1985-86	550	—	550
1986-87	820	653	1,473
1987-88	400	—	400
Total	3,330	715	4,045

We are currently considering the district council's urban programme applications for 1988-89 and will be announcing our decisions in due course. At present there are no urban development grant applications before us from Alyn and Deeside district council.

Dee Road Crossing

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with Clwyd county council and Alyn and Deeside council concerning their objective of a new road crossing of the River Dee in Alyn and Deeside; what his estimate is of the earliest date when a new Dee road crossing may be started; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I met a deputation of local authorities led by the hon. Gentleman the Member for Alyn and Deeside in February of this year. However, any proposals for a new road crossing of the Dee estuary is the responsibility of Clwyd county as the local highway authority. All matters concerning its preparation and timing are for it.

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names and addresses of all those clinics which are currently licensed for the performing of abortions in Wales, giving in the case of each clinic the number of licensed beds.

Mr. Grist: Termination of pregnancy in private nursing homes, hospitals and clinics may be carried out only if the premises have been approved by the Secretary of State for that purpose. My right hon. Friend has approved the BUPA hospital, Croescadarn road, Pentwyn, Cardiff, in respect of six beds.

Care in the Community

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made with local authorities and area health authorities to promote care in the community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: All local authorities and health authorities are required by statute to form joint consultative committees whose role is to advise their respective authorities on the joint planning and operation of community care services. In addition to the generality of moneys made available to local authorities through rate support grant and to the health authorities, my right hon. Friend supports care in the community developments with earmarked central funds and will continue to do so.

Euston-Holyhead Rail Service

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will discuss with him the board's initiatives to improve the Euston to Holyhead rail service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of British Rail he would, of course, wish to discuss with him all major rail issues of concern to Wales.

Crew-Holyhead Line

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if Her Majesty's Government are currently considering any proposal to electrify the Crewe to Holyhead railway line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming Subsidies

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the overall amount of annual subsidy made available by the Exchequer to the British farming industry.

Mr. MacGregor: Latest available figures for public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies in the United Kingdom for the last three years, (as shown in the 1987 annual review) were:

	£ million
1984-85	1,706
1985-86	2,160
1986-87	[1]1,577

[1] Estimate.

Pesticides

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to introduce a centralised system for co-ordinating the reports on pesticides poisoning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: A number of recording systems exist which include reports of pesticide poisoning within their terms of reference. This reflects the different objectives of arrangements concerned with, for example, employment-related incidents, hospital admissions, and the advisory work of specialised poisons units. I am asking the advisory committee on pesticides to consider whether any improvements need to be made to such arrangements.

Farm Waste Unit

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the level of staffing at the Ministry's farm waste unit; and if he intends to maintain in post the workforce presently employed at the farm waste unit.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I attach high importance to my Department's advisory work on farm waste which I am anxious should be carried out as effectively as possible. The current balance between central and local advisory resources is being reviewed to make ADAS' expertise as accessible as possible to the farming industry and this will have implications for the size and role of the farm waste unit itself. However, there will be no reduction in overall effort.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response his Department has made to the representations by the National Farmers Union, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the British Veterinary Association, for steps to be taken to limit the risk to animals posed by used condoms being left in fields.

Mr. Donald Thompson: None.

THE ARTS

Office of Arts and Libraries

Mr. Buchan: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total Office of Arts and Libraries' expenditure for every year from 1977-78 to 1987-88, showing within that total Office of Arts and Libraries' expenditure on capital projects and Office of Arts and Libraries expenditure on revenue grants, respectively.

Mr. Luce: The Office of Arts and Libraries' expenditure since 1983-84 when the OAL was established as a separate Department, has been as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	210·3
1984-85	228·5
1985-85	236·0
1986-87	285·7
[1]1987-88	292·7

[1] Estimate

The bulk of this represented the OAL's grants to its sponsored bodies for revenue purposes.

Expenditure on the building programme of the national museums and galleries and the British Library St. Pancras project has been met from the Votes of the Property Services Agency during this period.

CIVIL SERVICE

Women

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will give *(a)* the total number of Government committees currently chaired by women, *(b)* the percentage of Government committees currently chaired by women, *(c)* the total number of women currently on boards of directors of nationalised industries, and *(d)* the number of women currently on boards of directors of nationalised industries as a percentage of the total number of members of boards of directors of nationalised industries.

Mr. Luce: On 1 April 1986, women chaired 58 of the committees and other advisory bodies appointed by Ministers and listed in "Public Bodies 1986". This represented 5 per cent. of the advisory bodies listed. On the same date 33 women were members of the boards of directors of nationalised industries, representing 9 per cent. of board members.

Figures for 1987 will be published later this year.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many forestry development schemes in the United Kingdom have proceeded without a Forestry Commission planting licence in each of the last three years and in 1987 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There have been two cases during this period of large-scale planting taking place without approval under a Forestry Commission grant scheme. Both of these were in 1985. Some small-scale planting without grant will also have taken place, but the commission does not necessarily know of all such cases. Estimates of the amount of planting without grant are published in the commission's annual reports.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the policy of the Forestry Commission towards the erection of electric fencing around forest plantations by *(a)* the commission and *(b)* private landowners; what provision is made for (i) warning notices to be clearly displayed and (ii) stiles or gates to be established, in circumstances where electric fencing is erected; and whether any conditions relating to the safety of the public in circumstances where there is electric fencing are attached to grant aid for forestry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A small amount of electrified fencing is in use in some commission forests, but only on a trial basis. The commission's general policy is to refuse grant aid for private forestry schemes where the use of electrified fencing is proposed. It is fully accepted that wherever such fencing is in use adequate warning notices and crossing facilities should be provided.

Sport (Violence)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines have been issued to procurators fiscal concerning the investigation of on-field incidents at football matches and other sporting occasions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is a matter for my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate. He has not issued such guidelines, nor does he consider them to be necessary. Incidents involving criminal conduct on the field of play are treated in the same way as offences committed elsewhere.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of *(a)* professional and *(b)* amateur sportsmen successfully prosecuted in each of the past 10 years for offences committed during the course of their sporting activities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As regards professional sportsmen, the information is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate costs. As regards amateur sportsmen, the information is not available.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with *(a)* the Scottish Football Association, *(b)* the Scottish Professional Footballers' Association or *(c)* any other body over the guidelines which should be applied in considering whether a prosecution should arise from incidents during football matches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is a matter for my noble and learned Friend, the Lord Advocate, who I am told has had no such discussions. The procurator fiscal at Glasgow has, however, agreed to meet the secretary of the Scottish Professional Footballers' Association, on Monday 9 November to discuss matters arising from the Rangers *v* Celtic football match on 17 October.

Waiting Times and Lists

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the external members of his Department's working group studying methods of reducing waiting times and lists; and when he expects the group to report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The working group consists of departmental officials, whose proposals will be the subject of discussion with health boards. I have asked for an early report.

Disabled People

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to complete his consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the Disabled Persons (Service, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986; when he expects to implement the sections appropriate to disabled and mentally handicapped pupils leaving special schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Current consultations with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities relate solely to the section on handicapped pupils leaving special schools. I hope that it will be possible to implement this provision, section 13 of the Act, later in the current financial year. As was made plain during the passage of the Bill through Parliament, the timing of implementation will depend on the availability of resources. Clearly, some of the provisions not yet commenced carry substantial implications for local authority services. I shall keep this matter under review, but I have no plans at present to consult the convention on a possible programme for commencing further provisions.

School Days (Duration)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has as to the average length of the school day in Scotland in *(a)* maintained schools and *(b)* independent schools in 1957, 1967, 1977 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The average length of day, excluding breaks, in 1984 in education authority primary schools was 5·01 hours and in education authority secondary schools was 5·48 hours. This information is not available centrally in respect of independent schools or education authority nursery and special schools for any years nor for education authority primary and secondary schools in the years requested.

Benefits

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to reimburse in full the payments made by local authorities under sections 12 and 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 where they were made because persons were denied their statutory benefit by reason of recent Department of Health and Social Security industrial action.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are no statutory powers available to my right hon. and learned Friend for this purpose. Reimbursement at his hand had not been sought nor do I consider that it would be appropriate. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has, however, asked that its recent expenditure on this account should be disregarded for grant penalty purposes. My right hon. and learned Friend has undertaken to consider this request carefully and awaits further detailed information from the convention. Meanwhile, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, has included in the Social Security Bill provisions enabling local authorities and other bodies to make payments on his behalf when social security payments are prevented in an emergency, and providing for reimbursement of the payments made together with reasonable administrative costs.

Abortions

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers of abortions carried out in Scotland in the years 1980 to 1986 for the age groups under 16 years, 16 to 21 (or 18) years, and over 21 (or 18) years, by the length of gestation and in particular, between the 18th and 24th week, and 24th and 28th weeks, listing the reasons for abortion in the latter groups.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the tables:

Table 1

Abortions by Age and Gestation—Scotland 1980-1986

Year and Age	*Gestation (Weeks)*				
	up to 18	*18-24*	*25-27*	*Not Known*	*Total*
1980					
up to 16	221	15	—	—	236
16-21	3,004	100	1	—	3,105
Over 21	4,424	137	3	—	4,564
Total	7,649	252	4	—	7,905
1981					
up to 16	192	10	—	—	202
16 to 21	3,575	82	2	—	3,659
Over 21	5,023	119	3	1	5,146
Total	8,790	211	5	1	9,007
1982					
up to 16	229	17	—	—	246
16 to 21	3,355	98	2	1	3,456
Over 21	4,613	109	1	—	4,723
Total	8,197	224	3	1	8,425
1983					
up to 16	217	23	—	—	240
16 to 21	3,343	94	—	—	3,437
Over 21	4,657	124	1	—	4,782
Total	8,217	241	1	—	8,459
1984					
up to 16	305	15	—	—	320
16 to 21	3,805	99	2	—	3,906
Over 21	4,824	103	2	—	4,929
Total	8,934	217	4		9,155
1985					
up to 16	290	14	—	—	304
16 to 21	3,758	71	—	—	3,829
Over 21	4,959	95	2	—	5,056
Total	9,007	180	2	—	9,189
[1]*1986*					
up to 16	298	9	—	—	307
16 to 21	3,807	57	—	—	3,864
Over 21	5,284	92	2	—	5,378
Total	9,389	158	2	—	9,549

[1] Provisional.

As more than one statutory ground can be recorded the following figures show the number of occurrences of each statutory ground

Table 2
Abortions at 18+ weeks gestation by statutory grounds—Scotland 1980-86

Year and Grounds	*Gestation (Weeks)*		
	18-24	*25-27*	*Total*
1980			
1	3	1	4
2	165	1	166
3	12	—	12
4	96	2	98
5	1	—	1
6	—	—	—
Total	277	4	2,811
1981			
1	—	—	—
2	132	2	134
3	5	—	5
4	79	4	83
5	—	—	—
6	—	—	—
Total	216	6	222
1982			
1	—	2	2
2	162	—	162
3	6	—	6
4	68	1	69
5	—	—	—
6	—	—	—
Total	236	3	239
1983			
1	1	—	1
2	163	—	163
3	9	—	9
4	84	1	85
5	—	—	—
6	—	—	—
Total	257	1	258
1984			
1	1	—	1
2	163	—	163
3	10	—	10
4	63	3	66
5	—	1	1
6	—	—	—
Total	237	4	241
1985			
1	—	—	—
2	123	1	124
3	3	—	3
4	61	2	63
5	—	—	—
6	—	—	—
Total	187	3	190
[1] *1986*			
1	—	—	—
2	103	—	103
3	3	—	3
4	63	1	64
5	—	1	1
6	—	—	—
Total	169	2	171

[1] Provisional.

Key to statutory grounds

1. Risk to life of pregnant woman.
2. Risk to physical or mental health of pregnant woman.
3. Risk to physical or mental health of existing children.
4. Risk of abnormality to foetus.

Emergency:

5. To save life of pregnant woman.
6. To prevent permanent injury to physical or mental health of pregnant woman.

Hospital Building

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many private hospitals were built in Scotland during 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all proposals for nuclear waste disposal sites in Scotland will be subject to a public inquiry.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Any proposal for the construction of a nuclear waste disposal facility in Scotland will be subject to a public inquiry. The procedures to be applied to proposals for preliminary investigations — for example, into the geological characteristics of a site—remain to be determined.

Health Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what savings have accrued to each health board through efficiency schemes in each of the past three financial years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The savings achieved through efficiency schemes in 1985-86 and 1986-87, and the targets set for 1987-88, are as follows:

£ thousand

Health Board	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*
Argyll and Clyde	515	1,724	1,651
Ayrshire and Arran	805	1,137	1,209
Borders	144	221	353
Dumfries and Galloway	344	686	590
Fife	394	583	1,134
Forth Valley	421	957	1,083
Grampian	589	1,009	2,093
Greater Glasgow	1,670	9,725	5,998
Highland	334	658	861
Lanarkshire	1,570	1,488	1,881
Lothian	2,894	2,778	3,702
Orkney	38	57	64
Shetland	45	68	76
Tayside	1,274	1,999	2,135
Western Isles	48	108	118
Total	11,082	23,198	22,948

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the revenue expenditure allocated to Lothian health board for 1987-88; and what was the comparable figure for 1986-87.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is set out in the table:

Year	£ million
1986-87	[1]234·4
1987-88	[2]251·5

[1] Board's final net revenue allocation; includes end-year adjustments to take account of a variety of factors such as the carry-forward of an underspend from the previous year.

[2] Board's provisional net return, subject to end-year adjustment.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average waiting time for National Health Service hospital beds for non-urgent operations in the Lothian health board area and Scotland respectively, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information distinguishing urgent and non-urgent cases is not held centrally. The mean waiting times (in days) for operative treatment in the Lothian health board area and Scotland up to 1985 (the latest year for which statistics are available) were as follows:—

Year	Mean waiting time (days) Lothian health board	Scotland
1979	92	86
1980	73	79
1981	64	76
1982	63	70
1983	88	101
1984	72	85
1985	66	76

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of people on hospital waiting lists in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested, which relates to 30 September in each year, is as follows:

Year	Number
1979	71,247
1980	67,387
1981	65,228
1982	86,365
1983	88,338
1984	83,077
1985	77,677
1986[1]	80,708

[1] Provisional

Health Authorities (Review)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements have been or are being made to consult trades unions, local health councils and local authorities on the report of the Scottish health authorities review of priorities for the eighties and nineties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 October 1987, at columns *138-39*, and to the hon. Member for Clydebank (Mr. Hood) on 28 October, at columns *329-30*.

Ford Motor Company

Mr. Gould: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any *(a)* financial and *(b)* other assistance was given to the Ford Motor Company to help with the establishment of its plant at Dundee.

Mr. Lang: Under the terms of the Government's regional policy the Ford Motor Company has accepted an offer of financial assistance. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, the amount is not made public at this stage but will be published in "British Business", normally in the first quarter after the first payment of grant has been made. Considerable non-financial assistance was given to the company in relation to such matters as finding suitable sites, arranging meetings with potential supplier companies and providing information about the business environment in Scotland.

Electricity Boards (Financial Targets)

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has agreed a financial target for the Scottish electricity boards for 1988-89; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have agreed with the boards that they should achieve a current cost return on net assets of 2·8 per cent. for the financial year 1988-89. This compares with the target agreed for the current year of 2·7 per cent. It is for the boards to decide how the financial target will be met but I am confident that any electricity price increases in Scotland next year will be significantly lower than those forecast for the industry in England and Wales. This reflects the different circumstances of the industry in Scotland. For example, with the completion of Torness there will be no need for significant investment in new generating capacity for some time.

Open-Heart Surgery

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients from the City of Aberdeen and Grampian region each year since 1978 have been required to attend hospitals outside the area of Grampian health board for open-heart surgery; what has been the average waiting list for each quarter of the year; and what has been the average waiting time of patients awaiting such surgery.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: This information is available only from 1983 (when the cardiac surgery register was established), and for patients resident in the whole Grampian health board area. Information on this basis is set out in the table.

Cardiac surgery patients resident in Grampian health board area

	Receiving surgery outwith Health Board area	Number on waiting list	Average wait (in days)
1983 (total)	29	—	—
Quarter ended			
31 March	7	37	97
30 June	7	47	81
30 September	6	42	11
31 December	9	45	63
1984 (total)	79	—	—

	Receiving surgery outwith Health Board area	Number on waiting list	Average wait (in days)
Quarter ended			
31 March	13	44	94
30 June	27	40	98
30 September	27	17	132
31 December	12	9	127
1985 (total)	43	—	—
Quarter ended			
31 March	4	13	83
30 June	10	32	36
30 September	9	43	51
31 December	20	43	62
1986 (total)	105	—	—
Quarter ended			
31 March	23	41	111
30 June	24	84	121
30 September	35	65	111
31 December	23	79	137

Nurse-Patient Ratios

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the nurse-to-patient ratio in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: A simple ratio of nurses to patients does not measure service provision because of the differing requirements of care and treatment in different sectors of hospital care and in different specialties and because the total workload in hospitals includes out-patients and day cases where it is impossible to relate numbers of attendances to individual patients treated. The whole-time equivalent number of qualified nurses employed in NHS hospitals in Scotland on 31 March 1987 was 28,713 and the number of in-patients, measured by the daily average number of occupied beds in the year ending on the same date, was 45,148. On that basis the nurse-to-patient ratio is 1:1·57.

Prevention of Crime Act

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of convictions in Scottish courts for contraventions of section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act in the last three years for which such information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 November 1987]*: The information requested is given in the table below:

Persons with a charge proved under Section 1 of Prevention of Crime Act 1953

	Number
1984	966
1985	1,022
1986	972

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bidston Steel

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what payments were received by the Department of Trade and Industry, following the closure of Bidston Steel plant in 1985, from *(a)* Allied Steel and Wire and *(b)* the European Community fund, to enable former employees of Bidston Steel to embark on training courses;

(2) how many of those made redundant from Bidston Steel received their training benefit exclusively from the iron and steel employees readaptation benefit scheme; and how many received some or all their benefit from monies made available by Allied Steel and Wire.

Mr. Atkins: Twenty-three ex-Bidston steel workers have been approved for training exclusively under the normal iron and steel employees readaptation benefits scheme—(ISERBS)—cost-sharing arrangements between the Department of Trade and Industry and the European Commission. For the remaining 143 men, only training costs falling within the statutory ISERBS entitlement period were similarly funded. The Department has claimed from the European Commission half of the £1·2 million paid out. Most but not all of this sum has now been received.

In addition, costs of exceptionally providing training beyond entitlement periods, amounting to around £1 million (to end September 1987) have been paid by the Department of Trade and Industry. No contribution from the European Commission is anticipated but Allied Steel and Wire has agreed to pay up to £200,000 towards these costs.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many of those made redundant from Bidston Steel subsequently received training benefit; and for how many weeks in each case.

Mr. Atkins: One hundred and sixty-six ISERBS beneficiaries were approved for training. The number of weeks training in each case is as follows:

A Number of weeks training approved	*B* Beneficiaries
50 to 52	83
45 to 49	7
40 to 44	60
35 to 39	3
30 to 34	1
25 to 29	1
15 to 19	1
10 to 14	4
5 to 9	1
1 to 4	5
	166

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Government policy on promoting the export of computer technology to South African companies and institutions.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government's policy is that within the limits of our international obligations and undertakings, the same assistance is provided to exporters of computer technology to South Africa as to other overseas markets.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Government policy on the export of safety and security equipment to the South African Security Federation.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is the Government's policy that civil trade with South Africa should, within the limits of our international obligations and undertakings, be determined by the commercial judgments of those engaged in it.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if Her Majesty's Government have issued any guidelines on the advertisement of South African manufactured arms in British publications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what function the market report on computer technology published by his Department has in the encouragement of the sale of computers to South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: The aim of this report is to assist British exporters by providing factual information on recent developments and other market factors affecting the computer market in South Africa. Similar support for exporters is provided by my Department in many markets.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the implications of the sale of computer technology to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research of South Africa by British firms for the implementation of United Nations Security Resolutions 418 and 558.

Mr. Alan Clark: We continue to abide by our international commitments on South Africa, including United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the British Government's policy regarding the export of Land Rovers to South Africa for use by the South African military and police.

Mr. Alan Clark: Military and paramilitary versions of the Land Rover are subject to export licensing. Any application to export such vehicles to South Africa would be likely to be refused. However, the basic Land Rover, which has a widespread civilian and commercial use in South Africa, can be freely exported. To prohibit their export would be unreasonable interference with normal civil trade with South Africa.

Airbus

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to how many European Airbus aircraft (stipulating each marque) have been sold to airlines operating from the United Kingdom; what has been the total cost of these aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: British Caledonian has ordered 10 A320s, which are due to be delivered starting next spring. The two Airbus A310 aircraft sold to British Caledonian in 1984 were resold last year because of reduced demand on certain routes. Three A300-B4s were sold to Laker Airways, and these aircraft were disposed of when the airline ceased to operate. The cost of all these aircraft is commercially confidential.

Condoms

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any information about the level of quality control involved in condom manufacture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The level of quality control involved in condom manufacture in respect of products which bear the BSI Kitemark is that prescribed by BSI's certification arrangements. The manufacturers licensed to use the Kitemark are required to maintain quality systems complying with British Standard 5750.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total amount of retail condom sales in each of the last 24 months in *(a)* cash value and *(b)* unit supply.

Mr. Butcher: I regret that this information is not available.

European Regional Development Fund

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the northern region's percentage share of European regional development fund grants made to the United Kingdom so far during 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: The northern region's percentage share of ERDF grants made to the United Kingdom so far during 1987 is 0·7 per cent. The figure is, however, misleading, in that only about half this year's grants have so far been announced. Further grants for the northern region are expected. Grant decisions rest with the European Commission.

Venture Capital (Tax Incentives)

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration Her Majesty's Government have given to the introduction of tax incentives to encourage corporate venturing with a view to encouraging research and development and introducing further venture capital for innovation in British industry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom tax system already provides considerable support and incentive for research and development spending, particularly by way of the special scientific research allowances. Significant advances have also been made on the venture capital front by (1) the publication in May this year by the British Venture Capital Association of guidelines (which were prepared with the help of the Inland Revenue and DTI) on the use of limited partnerships for venture capital finance, and (2) the extension of the business expansion scheme to assist companies engaged in research and development.

The prime need now that industry is making record profits is for industry itself to make its own investment in the future by spending more on research and development. The cost effectiveness of tax reliefs in this area is at best uncertain. A joint Inland Revenue and Her Majesty's Treasury study of international fiscal incentives for R and D ("Fiscal Incentives for Research and Development") published on 20 July—a copy was placed in the Library—suggested that only about one half of tax revenues forgone by Governments under such schemes is actually spent by companies on additional R and D.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Waiting Lists

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the total average waiting time for National Health Service in-patient treatment in each specialty in England and Wales in each year since 1979 and *(b)* the average waiting time for all specialties in England and Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Newton: The estimated median interval in weeks between the date an in-patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission for patients discharged in England since 1979 is given in the table. Reliable figures could not be produced for specialties having small numbers of patients. Comparable information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Median waiting time (weeks) by specialty, NHS hospitals, England 1979-85[1]

Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
All non-psychiatric specialties	8	7	7	6	7	7	7
General medicine	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
Paediatrics	3	3	2	3	3	2	2
Thoracic medicine	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Dermatology	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Neurology	3	2	2	3	2	3	3
Cardiology	5	5	5	6	6	5	5
Rehabilitation	2	2	2	2	3	3	3
Rheumatology	4	3	4	4	3	3	3
Geriatric medicine	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
General surgery	6	5	5	5	5	5	5
Ear, nose, and throat	14	12	11	11	13	12	12
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	13	12	11	11	13	12	12
Ophthalmology	13	11	10	10	11	11	13
Radiotherapy	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Urology	8	7	7	7	8	8	8
Plastic surgery	14	13	12	12	11	11	12
Thoracic surgery	3	2	2	2	3	3	3
Oral surgery	13	11	11	12	14	14	15
Neurosurgery	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
Gynaecology	7	6	6	5	6	6	6
General practitioner (other)	12	8	7	5	6	4	5
All other specialist units	4	4	6	4	5	5	5

[1] The latest year available centrally.

Source: Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE).

Mental Health

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much his Department spent on research into schizophrenia in each of the last five years; and what proportion each figure was of expenditure on the Health Service research programme.

Mrs. Currie: In addition to expenditure by the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science, the Department's expenditure on directly commissioned mental illness research over the last five years is as follows.

Year	*Expenditure £000*	*Percentage of total budget*[1]
1983-84	970	8·7
1984-85	942	8·9
1985-86	899	8·4
1986-87	1,005	8·1
1987-88[2]	890	6·6

[1] For directly commissioned health and personal social services research.

[2] So far planned.

Family Credit

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much it would cost to use the family credit system to ensure that no family man returning to work pays a marginal rate of tax and benefit withdrawal in excess of 50 per cent.;

(2) what would be the cost in a full year if family credit were improved so that no family man taking up a job were to incur a tax and benefit withdrawal rate of more than 40 per cent.

Mr. Scott: To achieve these withdrawal rates it would be necessary to reduce the family credit taper to the point where a combination of tax, national insurance contributions and withdrawal of benefit produced the specific overall marginal tax rates. Overall, MTRs of either 40 or 50 per cent. would imply family credit taper rates which were so low that the coverage of family credit would be extended to include families with incomes subject to the higher income tax rates and therefore to withdrawal rates of more than the 40 or 50 per cent. from tax alone. It would also be necessary to increase the rates of credit to a point where, at the lowest levels of income, no recipient of family credit was also eligible for housing benefit. These increases would extend the coverage of family credit to even more families on higher incomes and already subject to higher rates of tax.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the current value of the illustrative rates of income support personal allowances in the technical annex to the White Paper "Reform of Social Security", uprated in line with increases in the retail price index less housing costs between May 1985 and September 1987 and adding the proposed compensation for the minimum contribution to domestic rates, together with the rates proposed for April 1988.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on 30 October 1987, at columns *467-68*.

Mobility and Attendance Allowances

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many applications for mobility allowance and attendance allowance have been made in the Easington constituency in 1985-86 and how many have been rejected; what was the average time of determination of such applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I regret that this information is not available.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current day-to-day bed capacity of hospitals in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in England during 1986 was 315,714. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Northern Ireland.

Alcoholism

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of the rise in alcoholism amongst young people, he will consider placing *(a)* a ban on the advertising of alcohol at sporting events and places of public entertainment and *(b)* a Government health warning on all advertisements for alcohol and alcohol-related products.

Mrs. Currie: The question of young people and alcohol and the factors which might influence their drinking habits are to be discussed by the ministerial group on alcohol misuse. At its first meeting on 3 November the group agreed that the reported level of drinking among young people was a matter for concern and should be addressed as a priority.

We await the outcome of the group's deliberations.

Doctors (Working Hours)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will instruct health authorities to place limits on the number of hours per day that doctors in the National Health Service can work, and to employ more doctors, so as to eliminate excessive and dangerous overtime working.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Members for Southport (Mr. Fearn) and for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) on 3 November, at column *706*.

Abortion

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his replies of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *567*, why information is not collected about the percentage of women referred for abortions by abortion agencies;

(2) pursuant to his replies of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *567*, why information is not collected centrally about the numbers of women dealt with by abortion advisory bureaux.

Mrs. Currie: We see no need to do so. The conditions already imposed on the private abortion sector are sufficient to ensure that abortions are performed in accordance with existing legislation. To collect the information requested would not add to these controls.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his replies of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *567*, why no information is collected about the total revenue from abortions upon foreign women.

Mrs. Currie: We see no need to do so. This information is a matter for the management of the hospital or clinic where the abortion is carried out.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total number of non-National Health Service abortions performed in England under the Abortion Act 1967, and what was the total number of abortions performed in non-National Health Service facilities in England in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that the full information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, my hon. Friend may be interested in the table, which shows readily available figures.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 in non-NHS premises in England 1974-86

Year	*Number*
1974	107,258
1975	88,696
1976	77,858
1977	80,801
1978	86,779
1979	92,376
1980	102,663
1981	101,203
1982	100,462
1983	99,264
1984	104,970
1985	106,510
1986	104,646

Figures prior to 1981 are based on notifications received; from 1981 onwards the figures are based on occurrences.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of beds in private clinics currently licensed for abortions in England.

Mrs. Currie: I refer my hon. Friend to my hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 26 October, at columns *170-75*.

Condoms (Disposal)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what advice his Department gives as part of its anti-AIDS campaign on the disposal of used condoms;

(2) what research has been undertaken by his Department into the health risks posed by different methods of disposal of condoms.

Mrs. Currie: The Department has issued no specific guidance nor sponsored research on the disposal of condoms. We are represented on the British Standards Institute Committee currently reviewing the standard for condoms (BS 3704), which will be considering manufacturers' instructions to users.

Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the change in the number of people entitled to means-tested benefits in consequence of the introduction of the proposed community charge; and what would be the number of their dependants.

Mr. Scott: Figure J9 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) estimated that the housing benefit caseload in Great Britain would rise from 6·49 million to 7·66 million when the community charge was fully in place. These estimates are derived from a computer model and are sensitive to assumptions made about community charge levels and to income support rates, and therefore give a broad indication only of the possible outcome. No estimate has been made of the number of their dependants.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Coventry are currently in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit, *(c)* housing benefit, *(d)* sickness benefit, *(e)* mobility allowance and *(f)* maternity benefit; and how many people have received single payments in each month of the current financial year.

Mr. Portillo: Social security benefits for Coventry are dealt with by the Department's local offices at Coventry (East) and Coventry (West), but their boundaries are not conterminous with the city.

The number of people receiving supplementary benefit, sickness and invalidity benefits, and maternity benefit on the latest dates for which information is available is as follows:

	25 August 1987	*20 October 1987*
Supplementary Benefit[1]	41,328	—
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit	—	6,822
Maternity Benefit	—	87

[1] *Source:* 100 per cent. of cases in action.

Information about housing benefit is not available in the precise form requested. In the current financial year the provisional figure for rate rebate recipients is 46,094. This figure is the normal pointer used for housing benefit recipients.

During the current financial year until 20 October 1987 the number of single payment decisions which resulted in either a full or part payment is as follows:

Four-week period ending:

	Number
5 May 1987	1,074
26 June 1987	1,565
30 June 1987	1,416
28 July 1987	1,698
25 August 1987	1,610
22 September 1987	1,474
20 October 1987	1,859

I regret that information about mobility allowance is not available.

Renal Dialysis Patients

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes he plans in the disability premium in order to improve the living standards of renal dialysis patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 2 November, at columns *564-65.*

Guardians ad Litem

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is prepared to provide extra funding for guardians ad litem in view of the representations made by the consortium of Bradford, Leeds and Calderdale authorities.

Mrs. Currie: The extra cost for local authorities of establishing the guardian ad litem service was taken into account in the rate support grant settlement for the year after the scheme was introduced. I am considering a letter from the chairman of Bradford metropolitan council's social services committee, and I shall send the hon. Member a copy of my reply.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to extend the period for which a person can be disqualified from receiving unemployment benefit on account of voluntary unemployment.

Mr. Scott: At present, section 20 of the Social Security Act 1975 provides that a person is to be disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit for a maximum of 13 weeks in various circumstances that fall broadly under the heading of voluntary unemployment. If the person receives supplementary benefit it is reduced, normally by 40 per cent. of the claimant's personal benefit rate, for the same period.

A main purpose of these sanctions is to discourage people from leaving jobs voluntarily without just cause. However, over the nine months from October 1986, when the maximum disqualification period was increased from six to 13 weeks, the number of claims from people leaving work for this reason has increased at a time when, thanks to falling unemployment and the strengthening economy, the total number of claims from unemployed people has significantly reduced. We therefore intend to extend the maximum period from 13 to 26 weeks from 11 April 1988—the date of introduction of income support. We shall be introducing an affirmative order and regulations to give effect to this change.

Multiple Births

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of sets of *(a)* twins, *(b)* triplets, *(c)* quadruplets, *(d)* quintuplets and *(e)* sextuplets born in England and Wales in each year since 1982; and what was the total number of maternities in each of these years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: The information requested is contained in the table.

Numbers of multiple maternities and rate per 1000 maternities: England and Wales 1982 to 1986.

	Year of occurrence									
	1982		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*		*1986*	
Maternity type	*Numbers*	*Rate*	*Numbers*	*Rate*	*Numbers*	*Rate*	*Numbers*	*Rate*	*Numbers*	*Rate*
Twins	6,201	9·95	6,293	10·05	6,321	9·97	6,700	10·26	6,969	10·60
Triplets	70	0·11	89	0·14	80	0·13	93	0·14	123	0·19
Quadruplets	6	0·01	4	0·01	5	0·01	7	0·01	10	0·02
Quintuplets	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	0·00	2	0·00
Sextuplets	—	—	1	0·00	—	—	1	0·00	1	0·00
Total maternities	623,511	1000	626,277	1000	633,965	1000	653,142	1000	657,308	1000

Note: Maternities with one or more stillbirths are included.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Incomes

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many tax units he estimates to have been in the income ranges £10,000–£15,000, £15,000–£20,000, £20,000–£25,000, £25,000–£30,000, £30,000–£40,000, and over £40,000; and what was the total amount of income from the units in each range, for *(a)* 1978-79, *(b)* 1982-83 and *(c)* the latest available year.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The information is given in the table. The data for 1978-79 and 1982-83 are from the surveys of personal incomes of these years. The information for 1987-88 shows the latest available estimates based on a projection from the 1984-85 survey of personal incomes and is therefore provisional.

	1978-79		*1982-83*		*1987-88*	
Range of gross income[1] lower limit (£ pa)	*Number of tax units[2] ('000s)*	*Amount of gross income[1] (£ million)*	*Number of tax units[2] ('000s)*	*Amount of gross income[1] (£ million)*	*Number of tax units[2] ('000s)*	*Amount of gross income[1] (£ million)*
10,000	720	8,500	3,220	38,800	5,220	63,800
15,000	150	2,500	890	15,200	2,520	43,400
20,000	50	1,200	320	7,000	1,030	23,[illegible]0
25,000	20	600	130	3,600	480	13,100
30,000	20	600	100	3,500	400	13,600
40,000	10	800	80	5,300	300	18,600

[1] Income before deducting tax reliefs and allowances.

[2] Counting married couples as one and combining their incomes.

Tax Returns

Mr. Wray: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will immediately set up a special division to inspect the tax returns of all people earning over £50,000 per annum between 1979 and 1986.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. These tax returns have already been — or will be — subject to scrutiny by the Inland Revenue under its normal procedures.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the poll tax payments by employers in respect of employees in tied accommodation will be treated as taxable income to the employee.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: It is intended that the community charge will — unlike rates — be a personal liability not related to the tied accommodation. If an employer pays the charge on behalf of an employee a benefit chargeable to income tax will arise for the employee whether or not he, or she, is living in tied accommodation.

Research Specialists

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total number of operational research specialists in his Department, for each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 4 November 1987]*: The figures for scientific staff employed as operational research specialists in my Department since 1979 are given in the table. The increase in 1982 resulted fom the transfer of certain functions and staff from the Civil Service Department. The reduction in 1985 was due to some staff in CCTA being reclassified as administrators.

Her Majesty's Treasury (including CCTA) operational research specialists—1 January 1979 to 1 January 1987

	Chief Scientific Officer (B)	*Deputy Chief Scientific Officer*	*Senior Principal Scientific Officer*	*Principal Scientific Officer*	*Senior Scientific Officer*	*Higher Scientific Officer*	*Scientific Officer*	*Total*
1 January 1979	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	2
1 January 1980	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	2
1 January 1981	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	2
1 January 1982[1]	2	1	3	9	10	—	2	27
1 January 1983	2	—	2	10	10	1	1	26
1 January 1984	3	—	1	10	5	2	1	22
1 January 1985[2]	1	—	1	4	4	3	1	14
1 January 1986	—	1	2	4	4	2	—	13
1 January 1987	—	1	1	4	5	1	—	12

[1] Increase in numbers due to transfer of staff from the Civil Service Department in April and December 1981.

[2] Decrease in numbers due to re-classification of specialists to administration grades in CCTA. Scientific staff in CCTA are primarily engaged on computing work.

Close Companies

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to amend the apportionment of profit provisions in schedule 16 to the Finance Act 1972; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue was generated in each of the last three years by the application of the apportionment of profit provisions in schedule 16 to the Finance Act 1972.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* The figures in respect of close company income are as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	[1]11·9
1985-86	6·7
1986-87	5·2

[1] Includes an estimate for part of the year as records of the tax receipts are available only from September 1984.

BP Share Issue

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of the banner unveiling outside the London headquarters of BP carried out by Royal Marines on 15 October.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The cost to the Government was about £65,000.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether bed-and-breakfasted part-paid BP shares sold or bed and breakfasted to establish tax loss positions will be eligible for repurchase by the Bank of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* Yes; the tax position of holders of BP partly-paid shares is not a relevant factor in respect of the bank's scheme.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action will be taken against small applicants of BP shares who cancel their cheques or withdraw their application: and who is responsible for taking action against those who refuse to pay the full price.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer to an earlier question I gave him on 9 November.

European Commission (Supply Contracts)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the European Commission's proposals concerning public supply contracts.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* The Government welcome the common position adopted by the Internal Market Council on 5 October on the Commission's proposal to amend the EC supplies directives. The common position is consistent with our policy of seeking value for money in the public sector and with our support for opening up the EC internal market to improve opportunities for United Kingdom firms. Under the Single European Act, the European Parliament now has an opportunity to consider the common position.

We also welcome the Commission's intention to improve compliance with the supplies and works directives but have difficulties with parts of the proposal on compliance which it has submitted to the Council, and which the European Parliament is now considering.

Income Tax

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue would be lost if there were no income tax rate higher than 40 per cent., with the current bands, calculating the full year impact on revenue and allowing for any administrative savings.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The direct revenue cost of abolishing rates of income tax higher than 40 per cent. would be £1,650 million in a full year at forecast 1988-89 levels of income. The cost assumes indexation of the current income tax bands and allowances to 1988-89 levels as in table 4.1 of the 1987 Autumn Statement. The estimate of revenue cost makes no allowance for possible changes in taxpayers' behaviour. Administrative savings would be negligible.

National Budget Deficits

Mr. Forth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give, for the years 1980 to date, the national budget deficit as a percentage of the gross national product, for the United Kingdom; and what equivalent information he has in relation to the United States of America, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Japan.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is set out in the table.

General Government Financial Balances
Surplus (+) or deficit (−) as a percentage of GNP

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
United Kingdom	−3·5	−2·8	−2·3	−3·4	−3·9	−2·9	−2·6
United States	−1·3	−1·0	−3·5	−3·8	−2·8	−3·3	−3·5
Japan	−4·4	−3·8	−3·6	−3·7	−2·1	−0·8	−0·9
Germany	−2·9	−3·7	−3·3	−2·5	−1·9	−1·1	−1·2
France	+0·2	−1·8	−2·8	−3·2	−2·7	−2·9	−3·0

Source: OECD.

Notes:

1. General Government covers central and local government but not public enterprises.
2. The Federal deficit, the more familiar concept for the United States, is higher (at 5 per cent. of GNP in 1986) than the general Government deficit because most of the individual states run surpluses on their own budgets. The PSBR, the main familiar concept for the United Kingdom, is lower (at 0·6 per cent. of GDP in 1986) than the general Government financial deficit, partly because of asset sales.
3. The figures are calculated on a standardised national accounts basis for Japan, Germany and France and on national definitions for the United States and United Kingdom.
4. Percentage of GDP (at market prices) for France and United Kingdom.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that none of the funds or moneys under the control, management or ownership of the Bank of England will be used to purchase any equity share capital in Eurotunnel or any other company involved in building the Channel tunnel.

Mr. Peter Lilley: There is no intention of using Bank of England Issue Department funds in this way. The deployment of funds controlled, managed or owned by the banking department is a matter for the Bank of England.

DEFENCE

Departmental Property

2. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide greater opportunity for people living in his Department's property to purchase their houses.

Mr. Freeman: Vacant service married quarters for which there is no further Defence use and which are suitable for individual sale are offered to service personnel under a discounted sales scheme. It is Ministry of Defence policy to offer civilian houses which are surplus to Defence requirements for sale to sitting tenants and licensees also at a discount.

Minesweepers

3. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many minesweepers or mine counter-measure vessels are immediately available for service within British territorial waters.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are currently 40 mine counter measures vessels, including minesweepers, in service with the Fleet of which 33 are operational or engaged in preparing for service or trials or training. Except for the four Hunt class MCMVs attached to the Armilla patrol, all these 33 vessels are available for NATO and national tasks within European waters in the normal way.

17. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress on the modernisation of the United Kingdom's mining and mine counter-measure capabilities.

Mr. Sainsbury: Since May 1979 the Government had carried out a comprehensive modernisation of the United Kingdom's mine counter-measures capability. We have ordered eight Hunt-class dual-role MCMVs, an entire new class of 12 River-class minesweepers, and five of the new Sandown-class single-role minehunters. We also retain a defensive mining capability.

Persian Gulf

14. **Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the arrangements for co-operation between the Royal Navy and other Western navies in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Satisfactory arrangements have been developed, both locally and between capitals, for co-operation. Although the Royal Navy's Armilla patrol remains a wholly national operation, the United Kingdom is committed to close co-ordination with other Western navies also working to preserve international freedom of navigation on Gulf waters.

31. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Royal Navy's mineclearing operations in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Four Royal Navy mine counter-measures vessels with afloat support arrived in the Gulf area in mid-September. They have carried out mine clearance operations at Fujairah, where they detected and destroyed five mines, and off Dubai. They are currently involved in a further mine clearance operation off Qatar.

34. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the number of British units and ships currently serving in the Gulf area and their length of service there to date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our general policy to give details of the operational deployments of Royal Navy ships. However, I can say that there are currently three destroyers-frigates, four mine counter-measures vessels and their afloat support in the area of the Gulf. Royal Navy ships have been serving in the area as part of the Armilla patrol since 1980; the MCMVs supporting the patrol arrived in the area in mid-September. Although there are no British military units currently in the Gulf area, a number of loan service personnel are serving in various countries in the region.

Type 23 Frigates

15. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place orders for the next four type 23 frigates.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, announced on 6 October that we were inviting tenders for up to four more follow-on type 23 frigates. Decisions will be taken on the precise timing and numbers to be ordered after tenders have been received, evaluated and clarified.

Ammunition Stocks

16. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to alter the level of army ammunition stocks.

Mr. Freeman: Army ammunition stock levels are kept under regular review. A review of ammunition usage rates in war and required war stocks is in progress which may eventually result in some changes to stock levels. Specific information on stock levels is classified.

HMS Victorious

18. **Mr. Richard Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs will be created by the placing of an order for HMS Victorious.

Mr. Sainsbury: At its peak, work on HMS Victorious, the second Trident submarine, is estimated to provide jobs for about 3,000 people at VSEL in Barrow, and about 2,000 elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Defence Missile Systems

19. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his Department is doing to provide point defence missile systems to protect all Royal Navy ships against anti-ship missile attacks.

Mr. Sainsbury: Seawolf and its variants is our principal point defence missile system and is entering service in increasing numbers. We are fitting conventional launch Seawolf to type 22 frigates and plan to fit vertical launch Seawolf to the type 23 frigates and AOR.

In addition to keeping under review the possibility of improvements and modifications, we are currently considering a lightweight version.

RAF (Plane Crashes)

20. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of Royal Air Force planes which have crashed in routine exercises since 1979 and their total value.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1 January 1979, 163 Royal Air Force fixed-wing aircraft have suffered irreparable damage in accidents in the course of routine operations. The purchase cost of all these aircraft was £420 million. To replace those aircraft which are still in production with similar models (that is to say Tornado, Harrier and Hawk) would cost approximately £500 million at current prices.

41. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of military aircraft accidents have occurred in Wales.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1 January 1979, 9 per cent. of the military aircraft losses in accidents in the United Kingdom and surrounding waters have occurred in Wales.

51. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate the number of aircraft and airmen lost in low-flying training exercises in each of the last three years for which figures are available; and if will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The table sets out the numbers of personnel killed, and aircraft lost, from 1 January 1985 to date during Royal Air Force fast jet operations involving low flying in the United Kingdom and surrounding waters:

	Aircraft	*Fatalities*
1985	3	3
1986	2	[1]1
[2]1987	9	[3]8

[1] USAF Pilot.
[2] To 5 November.
[3] Includes one USN pilot.

European Fighter Aircraft

21. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning progress with the European fighter aircraft.

53. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his latest proposals for investment into and the research and development of the Eurofighter project.

Mr. Sainsbury: Project definition was successfully completed last year and we are now in a definition refinement and risk reduction phase with activities aimed at stabilising the design of the aircraft and identifying high risk activities. Parallel negotiations on commercial issues are progressing between the prime contractors and NEFMA, the international management agency. Action is in hand to secure agreement from the individual national authorities to launch development. The United Kingdom aims to have completed this process by the end of the year and, subject to a satisfactory conclusion here and in our partner countries, we expect to begin development work early in 1988.

35. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will be in a position to place an order for the radar system for the European fighter aircraft.

Mr. Sainsbury: Eurofighter is currently running a competitive tendering exercise on behalf of the four EFA nations. Given the difficult task of assessing the information associated with the competition, I would not expect a decision to be made until early spring next year.

Staff Dispersal

22. **Mr. Fallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to move defence establishments to the northern region.

27. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any proposals to disperse to the Cleveland area sections or departments of his Department.

Mr. Sainsbury: As has been stated in the House on several occasions, we are keen to see a more even spread of defence employment across the regions. The scope for further relocation of defence establishments is currently the subject of several studies. However, all proposals must be justified on both economic and operational grounds.

Nuclear Weapons

23. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the military implications of prospects for reduction in the number of nuclear weapons in Europe.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The security of this country and that of its allies will continue to depend for the foreseeable future on the policy of deterrence based on a balanced mix of nuclear and conventional forces. We are confident that NATO's strategy of flexible response can continue to be implemented after the conclusion of the INF agreement now in prospect, an agreement which we fully support.

Procurement Procedure

24. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to review regional variations in defence procurement expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is our policy to place equipment orders, wherever practicable, by competitive tendering. This policy has brought significant benefit to the defence budget and to the taxpayer and has promoted the health and efficiency of the defence industry. Where appropriate, however, we do take into account wider, relevant factors, including local employment levels.

Battle Tanks

25. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place orders for more main battle tanks.

Mr. Sainsbury: Current production orders provide for tanks for the 5th, 6th and 7th Challenger regiments. British Army tank requirements thereafter are currently under review.

Harrier Aircraft (Loss)

26. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions he has come to in relation to the loss of a Harrier jump jet over southern England three weeks ago.

Mr. Freeman: A board of inquiry was convened on 24 October but no firm conclusions have yet been reached as to the cause of the accident. A marine salvage operation to recover the aircraft from the Atlantic is being attempted.

Low-flying Aircraft

28. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received regarding low flying over East Anglia.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 September and 31 October 1987 the Ministry of Defence received some 75 inquiries or complaints about military low flying from the East Anglian area. This compares with some 70 for the same period in 1986.

30. **Mr. James Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the ability of AEW Shackleton to detect fast low-flying Soviet aircraft.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The airborne early warning Shackleton aircraft of No. 8 Squadron at RAF Lossiemouth continue to contribute a useful capability to detect low-flying targets as part of the United Kingdom's overall air defence system. Our decision to purchase Boeing E-3 AWACS will ensure that the Royal Air Force has a modern and effective airborne early warning system for the 1990s.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received in the current year concerning low-flying aircraft over Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many representations he has received on low flying in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Between 1 January and 31 October 1987 the Ministry of Defence has received 709 inquiries or complaints from Wales about military aircraft flying, compared with a total of 733 for the whole of 1986. We will continue to do all we can to ensure that the disturbance caused by this essential training is kept to an absolute minimum.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in accordance with the Government's policy of avoiding large built-up areas when carrying out low-flying training, a decision has been reached in respect of the application of that policy regarding the new residential developments of Hardwicke and Quedgeley.

Mr. Freeman: A decision has not yet been reached. I hope to write to the hon. Member shortly.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying flights by the Royal Air Force have taken place over Clwyd in 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying administrative areas do not correspond with regional boundaries, and figures for Clwyd are therefore not available. However, the principality of Wales sees approximately 9 per cent. of all low-flying activity and we will continue to do all we can to ensure that the disturbances caused by this essential training is kept to an absolute minimum.

Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment Vessel

29. **Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the procurement of the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel.

Mr. Sainsbury: The first of class AOR is currently under construction at Harland and Wolff and a revised tender for the second was received yesterday from Swan Hunter Shipbuilders.

Amphibious Vessels

32. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the results of his feasibility study on amphibious vessels.

Mr. Sainsbury: Three parallel feasibility studies into the option of replacing the assault ships Fearless and Intrepid are due to complete in autumn 1988. These would then be considered alongside the earlier feasibility study into extending the lives of these ships. I would not expect to make further announcements on the way ahead before 1989.

NATO Nuclear Forces

33. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any decisions on the modernisation of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation nuclear capable forces which affect the United Kingdom have yet been taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No, apart from the decision to modernise our independent strategic nuclear deterrent with Trident.

Army Boots

36. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how long the current issue Army boot has been part of standard army equipment.

Mr. Freeman: The current issue army combat boot was introduced into service in May 1982 and initial issues to all regular and TA soldiers were completed by January 1985.

Civilian Jobs

37. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian jobs have been lost as a result of the contractorisation of defence services.

Mr. Sainsbury: Between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1987, the number of United Kingdom-based civilians employed by the Department fell by 9,101 as a result of work transferred to contract. It is not possible to determine the extent of any job losses, as the number of staff employed to perform tasks which have been contracted-out is a matter for individual contractors to decide.

Defence Contracts

38. **Mr. Mates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportions of defence contracts are placed on a cost-plus basis.

Mr. Sainsbury: In 1986-87, some 6 per cent., by value, of contracts were placed on the basis of cost plus percentage fee for profit. The proportion has declined from 22 per cent. in 1980-81 and reflects the aim of introducing cost incentives into defence non-competitive contracts.

45. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will consider compensation for Mr. Don Pitman, Mr. Jim Smith and Mr. Burgess Cooper for whistle-blowing on excessive profits on defence contracts.

Mr. Sainsbury: The cases referred to have been carefully considered by my Department and compensation would not be appropriate. My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement wrote to the hon. Member on 4 November 1986 explaining the background in some detail.

Helicopters

39. **Mr. Ashdown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of helicopter procurement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Helicopters to meet the established needs of the armed services will continue to be procured in accordance with our policy of obtaining value for money in defence equipment expenditure.

Cruise Missiles

40. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans for the deployment of British or United States submarines carrying cruise missiles in British waters.

52. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he now has any plans to deploy sea-based cruise missiles in United Kingdom territorial waters.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No decisions have been taken with regard to matters currently under consideration within NATO in respect of possible nuclear force adjustments.

Norwegian Sea

42. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning Royal Navy activity in the Norwegian sea.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 404 and 405 of volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" (Cm. 101-I). It is not our general practice to give details of the operational deployment of Royal Navy surface ships and submarines.

Youth Training Scheme

43. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give figures for the number of men and women undertaking the armed services youth training scheme during the last three years.

Mr. Freeman: The total number of men and women who have enetered the armed services youth training scheme in each of the last three financial years is as follows:

	Number
1984-85	730
1985-86	1,012
1986-87	743

A further 289 men and women had taken up places by 30 September this year.

Trident

44. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the total procurement cost of the Trident system.

Mr. Sainsbury: As announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, on 27 January this year, the current estimate for the procurement of Trident is £9,265 million at 1986-87 prices and $1·50 = £1.

East/West German Borders

46. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last visited the military installations connected with the East/West German borders.

Mr. Younger: I have paid a number of visits to various elements of British forces in Germany, most recently in October this year.

Armilla Patrol

47. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many merchant ships the Royal Navy's Armilla patrol has accompanied through the Straits of Hormuz since the start of the current year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Up to the beginning of this month, the Armilla patrol has accompanied approximately 300 British merchant ships through the Straits of Hormuz this year.

Strategic Defence Initiative

48. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British participation in star wars research.

Mr. Sainsbury: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 6 November.

Royal Navy

49. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of investment in ships currently on order for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are currently 20 major ships and nine submarines in various stages of construction, representing a total investment of about £4·5 billion at 1986-87 price levels. These include the Hunt class mine-countermeasures vessel HMS Berkeley and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Sir Galahad scheduled for acceptance later this month.

55. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the ordering pattern of surface vessels for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decisions on future orders will be taken when appropriate.

USSR

50. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates his Department has made of Soviet military equipment production.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Soviet Union does not publish figures for its production of military equipment. My Department therefore needs to make its own estimates. Such estimates are, of course, extremely difficult to make and are subject to revision as and when new information becomes available.

Preliminary estimates, by major equipment categories, for 1986 include the following:

	Number
Main battle tanks	3,500
Artillery	3,200
Fighter aircraft	700
Bombers	45
Helicopters	625
Transport aircraft	180
Major surface ships	6
Submarines	8

Rating Reform

54. **Mr. Harry Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements he intends to introduce to compensate service men stationed in Scotland who will be required to pay the community charge from 1989 while service men stationed elsewhere in the United Kingdom will not.

Mr. Freeman: I am currently considering the implications of the community charge for British service personnel, not only in Scotland, but in England and Wales.

Service personnel who own their own homes or live in private or municipal rented accommodation will be in the same position as all other citizens liable for the community charge. The position of those living in service accommodation in Scotland and elsewhere is more complicated. The charges they pay for accommodation include an element for domestic rates. I am considering what changes need to be made to these charges in the light of the new system.

Shackleton and Nimrod Aircraft

56. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Shackleton and Nimrod aircraft are operational; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to annex D of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" (Cm. 101-I). It is not our practice to reveal details of numbers of operational aircraft.

Stand-off Bomber

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the potential nuclear capacity of the stand-off bomber.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The term "stand-off" applies not to aircraft but to weapon systems. The capability of "stand-off" weapon systems varies.

Nuclear Accident Exercises

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what information is given to local residents when top soil, taken from an area where there was a nuclear accident response exercise, is deposited in the vicinity; and what tests are made of the radioactive level of the soil;

(2) if he will invite representatives of local residents to inspect sites where nuclear accident response exercises are carried out; and if he will give them the opportunity to be told of the safety measures taken.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on 4 November, at column *748*. In view of the stringent precautions taken, I see no valid reason for the suggested inspection of locations where nuclear accident response exercises take place.

Rainfall

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the amount of rainfall in the catchment areas of *(a)* the Foyle-Mourne system, *(b)* the River Faughan, *(c)* the River Roe, *(d)* the River Agivey, *(e)* the River Moyola on 21 October; and how this compares with the widespread rainfalls in the same areas and falling in the same time scale in recent years.

Mr. Sainsbury: October daily rainfall returns from the 250 or so voluntary co-operating observers in Northern Ireland are still being processed and validated. From observations so far to hand for 21 October, it appears that for the Foyle/Mourne river system the daily totals were the highest since at least 1911, although falls of comparable magnitude occurred in 1970 and in 1954. For the Faughan basin, comparable rainfalls occurred in 1968 and 1970. For the River Roe, this was the highest daily fall since at least 1931. For the River Agivey, it was the highest total since 1961, although there was a comparable storm in 1952 and a much heavier fall (although probably more localised) in 1960. The River Moyola had a substantially wetter day in 1969 and another (although probably more localised in extent) in 1970.

Dortmund Tank Depot

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to reduce disturbance caused to those living near the Dortmund tank depot in West Germany by groups of tanks driving to a practice field; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is no tank depot in Dortmund, nor are tanks based there. If the hon. Member could provide more details, I would be happy to investigate.

Aero-engines (Repair)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make it his policy that all suitable firms will be allowed to tender for the contract for the repair of aero-engines by plasma spray techniques, to be carried out at St. Athans, South Glamorgan.

Mr. Freeman: The vast majority of engine repair work directed to Royal Air Force St. Athan is undertaken within the station by Royal Air Force personnel and MOD civilians. Only where St. Athan is unable to provide a particular process is the work passed out to industry. St. Athan already possesses plant for areo-engine component repair using plasma spray techniques. Should it be necessary, however, for plasma spray work to be contracted out to industry in the future, our policy of seeking competition wherever it is practical and sensible to do so will continue to apply.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the names of employees of local authorities, boards and civil servants who have been murdered by Irish Republican Army terrorists since 1968.

Mr. Stanley: I regret that this information cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate costs.

Government Offices (Relocation)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if it is his intention to review the location of central Government offices in Northern Ireland with the objective of the relocation of such offices in a decentralised manner.

Mr. Stanley: Policy on the location of Government accommodation in Northern Ireland is under review at present. This review is considering the most appropriate siting of Government offices in the Province taking account of the need to locate them where they can provide public services in an efficient and effective manner.

Anglo-Irish Conference

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the present members of the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King: No.

RUC Stations

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) when work ceased on the new Royal Ulster Constabulary station for the Waterside, Londonderry; what was the original completion date; when he expects work to restart; and what is now his projected completion date;

(2) when the site for the Royal Ulster Constabulary station at Shantallow, Londonderry, was first identified; when a second site was identified; when work on the Shantallow station was to begin and what progress has been made towards construction; and when he expects construction to begin and to be completed.

Mr. Stanley: Work on the new Royal Ulster Constabulary station at Lisnagelvin, Waterside, Londonderry, ceased in June 1985. The original completion date for the new station was August 1987.

The original site for the RUC station at Shantallow was identified in 1981 and the second site in September 1985.

It would not be in the public interest to give details of future plans for these sites.

Owen Carron

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether an application for the extradition of Owen Carron from the Republic of Ireland has been made.

Mr. Stanley: It is not the practice to give details of possible individual extradition cases.

Rating Reform

Mr. John David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to change the present rating system in Northern Ireland; whether the community charge basis for funding local government is being introduced into Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) on 2 November 1987, at column *617*.

Salmon and Grilse (River Faughan)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of salmon and grilse passing through the fish counter on the river Faughan in each of the months of July, August, September and October in the years 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Viggers: The information is as follows:

Year	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*
1983	282	146	840	721
1984	332	151	915	200
1985	3,660	611	203	122
1986	678	2,547	63	464
1987	460	166	125	14

Income-related Benefits

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table containing for Northern Ireland the information presented in table 7B of "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-related Benefits", published by the Department of Health and Social Security; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 2 November 1987]*: Corresponding information is not held for Northern Ireland. However, the impact of the reform on individual claimants will be broadly the same as in Great Britain, with more help generally going to families.

Home-help Service

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of plans made by the Department of Health and Social Security to privatise the home help service in the constituency of Newry and Armagh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 2 November 1987]*: The Department of Health and Social Services has no plans to privatise the home help service.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the cost, adjusted to take inflation into account, of the home help care service in Northern Ireland for each of the years 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986 respectively.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 2 November 1987]*: The information is as follows:

	[1]£
1983-84	18,495,747
1984-85	18,133,254
1985-86	18,825,180
1986-87	[2]18,292,869

[1] At 1985-86 prices.

[2] Provisional.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of contracts agreed by each health and social service board for the following services *(a)* ambulances, *(b)* gardening, *(c)* laboratories, *(d)* portering, *(e)* shops in hospitals, *(f)* window cleaning, *(g)* pharmacy and *(h)* telephones; and if he will give the estimated annual savings in each case.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 6 November 1987]*: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest figures as a percentage of services put out to tender by each health and social service board for *(a)* catering, *(b)* domestic services, and *(c)* laundry; and if he will give the estimated annual savings.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 6 November 1987]*: To date Northern Ireland health and social services boards have been unable to proceed to tender stage in any tests of catering, laundry or domestic services because of insufficient interest from private sector companies.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 12 November 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Duncan Campbell

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Linlithgow on 9 November, if he will define the short-cuts to which he referred which render it inappropriate to take a decision on the prosecution of Duncan Campbell.

The Attorney-General: It would not be appropriate to reach a decision in this matter until all the necessary police inquiries have been fully completed; until the evidence has been carefully considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions, by senior Treasury counsel and by myself; and until I have satisfied myself as to what the public interest requires.

Action for Account of Profits

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General what criteria are used in deciding whether to bring an action for account of profits against an author or publisher alleged to be in breach of a duty of confidence owed to the Crown; and on how many occasions such an action has been brought since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The Crown will claim the remedy of an account of profits in a breach of confidence action whenever appropriate to ensure that the defendant does not profit from his breach. Such a claim has been brought in six cases since 1979, injunctions also being sought.

PRIME MINISTER

EC Budget

Q14. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she intends to submit any specific proposals to the December meeting of the European Council on the budget problems facing the EEC; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 5 November, at column *804*.

South Africa

Q23. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Civil Servants

Q50. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister how many civil servants were employed in, and what was the cost of, No. 10 Downing street in October 1979, October 1983 and October 1987.

The Prime Minister: Sixty-three civil servants were employed in No. 10 Downing street at each of these dates[1].

The cost of No. 10 Downing street in these years is[2]:

	£[3]
1979-80	1,409,101
1983-84	3,026,042
[4]1987-88	4,971,255

[1] These figures do not include posts which appear on the complement of other Departments.

[2] Salaries and wages, notional pension liability and administration costs and the grant-in-aid to the Chequers Trust are included. The costs of office services attributed to 10 Downing street are included for 1987-88. My salary as Prime Minister is excluded.

[3] These costs are not on a consistent basis. I therefore refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on 23 February, at colums 53-54 for an explanation of the changes in the calculation of the costs of No. 10 since 1979.

[4] Estimate.

Stoneleigh

Q72. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make a special visit to Stoneleigh.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Brighton

Q78. **Mr. Andrew Bowden:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to visit Brighton.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Disabled Persons

Q80. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply of 22 October, *Official Report* column 920, she is in a position to indicate specifically when Her Majesty's Government intend to implement those sections of the Disabled Persons (Services, Representation and Consultation) Act 1986 which would assist in assessements for people who have been discharged from hospital and who have been receiving treatment for six months or more for a mental health problem or mental handicap.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and the Disabled announced in his reply to the hon. Member on 4 November, at column 783, plans for the implementation of sections 5 and 6 of this Act, following a meeting with the local authority associations last month. At that meeting discussions began on the implementation of section 7, which deals with assessments for people who have been discharged from hospital. Implementation of that section must await satisfactory conclusion of these discussions.

MI5 (Counsellor)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister whether the post of counsellor to MI5 was advertised; whether it was subject to competitive tendering by consultants; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Prime Minister what is the allocation to *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance for England, Wales and Scotland for each year from 1988 onwards.

The Prime Minister: Information on the allocation of the amounts provided for regional assistance in England, Wales and Scotland for the three years 1988-89 to 1990-91 will as usual be included in the public expenditure White Paper to be published in January.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Scottish Office and the Department of the Environment on the comparison of suitable sites for the disposal of nuclear waste.

The Prime Minister: It is in the first instance for UK NIREX Ltd. to bring forward proposals for a method and siting for a radioactive waste disposal facility. At that stage the relevant Departments will consider NIREX's proposals, and will liaise with other Departments as appropriate.

"Spycatcher"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister which Departments have procured copies of "Spycatcher" for their departmental libraries.

The Prime Minister: Checks with Departments have found none which have procured copies for loan by libraries.

Engagements

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 12 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

WALES

Schizophrenia

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spent on research into schizophrenia in each of the last five years; and what proportion each figure was of expenditure on the Health Service research programme.

Mr. Grist *[holding answer 30 October 1987]*: The Department of Health and Social Security's directly managed research covers Wales and I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on Monday 9 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Advance Factories

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to encourage the building of advance factories in *(a)* Clwyd, South-West and *(b)* Wales as a whole.

Mr. Peter Walker: I make provision to the Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development and give urban aid to local authorities to fund the building of advance factory units in Clwyd, South-West and other parts of Wales. I will consider the identified needs for such property when deciding on future allocations.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what supplementary evidence was submitted by his Department to the Comptroller and Auditor General between 19 January and 15 July, concerning the national museum of Wales; and what actions were subsequently taken by his Department.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Pupil Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each Welsh local education authority the total number of pupils on school rolls and the pupil-to-teacher ratio in *(a)* nursery, *(b)* primary and *(c)* secondary schools.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of full-time and part-time pupils on roll and the pupil-teacher ratios within maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools, as at January 1987, is given in the table:

	Nursery schools	*Primary schools*	*Secondary schools*
Pupil numbers on roll			
Clwyd	372	37,225	30,121
Dyfed	256	29,989	24,787
Gwent	1,124	39,818	32,406
Gwynedd	—	19,718	18,335
Mid Glamorgan	1,247	52,113	42,129
Powys	—	9,786	8,537
South Glamorgan	767	34,375	28,457
West Glamorgan	233	34,975	25,137
Pupil-teacher ratios within schools			
Clwyd	18·6	24·1	16·5
Dyfed	22·4	20·6	15·8
Gwent	22·8	21·9	15·3
Gwynedd	—	20·4	15·3
Mid Glamorgan	20·4	23·3	16·5
Powys	—	19·3	14·8
South Glamorgan	19·5	22·9	16·5
West Glamorgan	23·4	21·2	15·3

Further and Higher Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each Welsh education authority *(a)* the total number and *(b)* the percentage of pupils who have obtained places in higher or further education for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested. Estimates of maintained school leavers' intended entry into full-time further or higher education are as follows:

	Clwyd	*Dyfed*	*Gwent*	*Gwynedd*	*Mid Glamorgan*	*Powys*	*South Glamorgan*	*West Glamorgan*
1979-80								
numbers[1]	1·5	1·4	1·5	1·3	1·5	0·7	1·2	1·1
per cent.[2]	25	28	20	37	17	42	19	20
1980-81								
numbers[1]	1·5	1·7	1·6	1·3	1·7	0·8	1·3	1·2
per cent.[2]	28	35	22	39	21	46	22	22
1981-82								
numbers[1]	1·7	1·7	2·3	1·2	1·8	0·8	1·1	1·8
per cent.[2]	28	35	30	36	21	46	20	29
1982-83								
numbers[1]	1·8	1·8	1·9	1·5	2·0	0·8	1·4	1·9
per cent.[2]	29	36	27	41	24	46	23	33
1983-84								
numbers[1]	1·4	1·6	1·9	1·3	2·2	0·7	1·4	1·7
per cent.[2]	25	33	27	37	26	43	24	31
1984-85								
numbers[1]	1·4	1·7	2·1	1·4	1·8	0·9	1·5	2·2
per cent.[2]	23	34	31	39	22	51	26	37
1985-86								
numbers[1]	1·4	1·8	1·9	1·4	1·8	0·7	1·6	2·1
per cent.[2]	23	36	29	40	22	42	28	39

[1] Numbers of maintained school leavers, expressed in thousands who intended entry into further education.

[2] School leavers intending to enter full-time further or higher education as a percentage of all school leavers.

Class Sizes

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the average sizes in each Welsh local education authority for primary and secondary classes for each of the past three years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Details of the average sizes of registered classes are given in the table. These do not necessarily reflect the size of groups in which children are actually taught.

	[1]*1984-85*	[1]*1985-86*	[1]*1986-87*
Average size of registered classes in primary schools			
Clwyd	25·7	25·7	25·6
Dyfed	20·1	20·6	21·2
Gwent	25·4	25·6	25·8
Gwynedd	20·5	20·5	21·0
Mid Glamorgan	26·0	25·9	26·1
Powys	19·6	19·7	19·7
South Glamorgan	26·8	27·5	27·1
West Glamorgan	24·0	24·0	24·0
Average size of registered classes in years I-V in secondary schools			
Clwyd	28·0	28·5	28·2
Dyfed	25·8	25·4	24·9
Gwent	24·8	24·7	24·1
Gwynedd	25·3	25·4	26·1
Mid Glamorgan	26·2	25·1	24·6
Powys	26·2	25·9	25·3
South Glamorgan	26·6	26·5	24·1
West Glamorgan	25·1	24·4	24·9

[1] September each year.

The information given for secondary schools relates to classes as registered in years I to V. Information on classes as taught, is only available for January 1987, as follows:

	[1]*Average size*
Clwyd	20·1
Dyfed	18·6
Gwent	19·3
Gwynedd	18·5
Mid Glamorgan	20·7
Powys	17·0
South Glamorgan	20·3
West Glamorgan	20·5

[1] Of classes as taught by one teacher in secondary schools.

Road Accidents

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, by Welsh county and class of road, the total number of *(a)* fatal road accidents and *(b)* non-fatal road accidents in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Walker: This question can only be fully answered at disproportionate cost. Summary details for each year since 1979 are, however, published annually in "Road Accidents: Wales" copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest unemployment figures for the Alyn and Deeside constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: At 8 October 1987 the numbers of registered unemployed people in the Alyn and Deeside constituency were:

	Number
Male	2,286
Female	1,171
Total	3,457

A5104

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make the A5104 a trunk road, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. The volume and type of traffic carried would not justify trunk road status.

Education Act 1981

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the cost in Wales of providing brochures required under the Education Act 1981; how many have been distributed to parents and how many are still in storage; and how many have been made available in the Welsh language.

Mr. Peter Walker: There is no requirement under the Education Act 1981 to provide brochures. The Education (School Information) Regulations 1981, made under powers conferred by the Education Act 1980, relate to the publication of information on schools, including provision for publication in Welsh. No information is held centrally on the costs of such information, distribution or Welsh language provision.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many private nursing homes have been operating in each Welsh county in each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: The information is given in the table which shows the position as at 31 December each year. Figures are not available prior to 1982.

Number of private nursing homes

County	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Clwyd	21	22	28	31	34
Dyfed	—	—	—	1	8
Gwent	3	3	4	11	19
Gwynedd	7	7	8	11	17
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	1	1	3	6
South Glamorgan	3	3	3	5	7
West Glamorgan	8	9	10	15	25

National Library of Wales

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to meet the librarian of the National Library of Wales to discuss the proposed commercial and technical system for business information.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am planning to meet the librarian on Thursday 26 November 1987.

Dyfed Bridge

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he intends to increase his financial allocation to Dyfed bridge safety as a result of the recent severe flooding.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A special inspection of trunk road bridges which may have been affected in Dyfed is being carried out. resources will be allocated to deal with any urgent problems which are found. I am prepared to consider any representations from Dyfed county council about particular problems with bridge safety work arising from the recent floods.

Bridge Safety

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is being taken in Wales to implement safety standards for bridges; if he is satisfied that all appropriate action has been taken; what extra resources his Department has made available to meet these standards; and what system of monitoring is employed.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am satisfied with the arrangements for maintaining safety standards on motorway and trunk road bridges in Wales. All bridges are inspected at two-yearly intervals and resources are made available to deal with repairs as the need arises. New bridges are designed and independently checked in accordance with departmental standards.

The safety of bridges on local authority roads is a matter for county highway authorities and the safety of rail bridges is a matter for British Rail.

Welsh Language

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to his answer of 6 November, he will list in the *Official Report (a)* those organisations which made representations referring to the position of Welsh within the national curriculum and *(b)* those which favoured the inclusion of Welsh as a foundation subject throughout Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is as follows:

Here are those organisations which have commented on the position of Welsh within the national curriculum. Those organisations which favour the inclusion of Welsh as a foundation subject throughout Wales are marked with an asterisk.

Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association
BBC Wales—Education Department
Cefn—Anglesey Branch*
Cefn—Cardiff and District Branch*
Clwyd Area Teachers' Association*
Clwyd County Council
Cronfa Glyndwr yn Ysgolion Cymraeg*
Cymdeithas yr Iaith*
Diocese of Bangor
Diocesan Schools Commission, Archdiocese of Cardiff
Dyfed County Council
Farmers' Union of Wales*
Gwent County Council
Gwynedd County Council*
Gwynedd Secondary Heads Association*
Llandygai Community Council, Anglesey
Merched y Wawr
Merched y Wawr—Ceredigion*
Merched y Wawr—Dwyfor
Merched y Wawr—Glyn Maelor*
Merched y Wawr—Powys*
Merched y Wawr—Preseli and South Pembrokeshire*
Merched y Wawr—West Glamorgan*
Mid Glamorgan County Council
Minny Street Independent Church, Cardiff*
Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (MYM)*
MYM—Ceredigion*
MYM—Dyfed*
MYM—West Glamorgan*

National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers
National Federation of Women's Institutes (Wales)*
National Union of Teachers (Wales)*
Newport Welsh School Parents Association*
North Wales Arts Association*

Parent Teacher Associaton of Wales
Plaid Cymru*
Plaid Cymru—Bro Maelog Branch*
Plaid Cymru—Fishguard Branch*
Plaid Cymru—London Branch*
Plaid Cymru—Nantyglo and Blaenau Branch, Gwent*
Powys County Council
Presbyterian Church in Wales—South Wales*
Professional Association of Teachers

School Curriculum Development Committee (Wales)
Secondary Heads Association
Society of Education Officers (Wales)
Society of Health Education Officers in Wales
Society of Welsh Advisors of Wales
South Glamorgan County Council

Trap County Primary School PTA, Dyfed*
Undeb Cendlaethol Athrawon Cymru*
Union of Welsh Independents*
Urdd Gobaith Cymru*

Wales Assembly of Women
Wales TUC
Welsh Congregational Churches—East Glamorgan
Welsh Consumer Council
Welsh Joint Education Committee
Welsh Language Education Development Committee*
West Carmarthenshire Association of Congregational Churches*
West Glamorgan County Council

Yr Academi Gymraig*
Ysgol Coed-y-Gof Parents Association, Cardiff*
Ysgol Cwm Rhymni Parents Assocation, Mid Glamorgan*
Ysgol David Hughes PTA, Menai Bridge
Ysgol Dyffryn Teifi Parents and Friends Association, Dyfed*
Ysgol Glantaf PTA, Cardiff*
Ysgol Parc-y-Tywyn PTA, Dyfed*

Deeside Waterfronts Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit the proposed site of the Deeside waterfronts scheme at Broken bank, Shotton; if he will meet the joint promoters of the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: It is possible that my right hon. Friend may be called on to exercise statutory planning functions in respect of this proposal. It would not therefore be proper for him to visit the site now or to meet the promoters.

Education Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the numbers of pupils in *(a)* Clywd county and *(b)* Alyn and Deeside constituency primary and secondary schools in each of the next five years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The estimated figures for Clwyd are given in the table. Figures for the Alyn and Deeside constituency are not available.

Full-time equivalent pupils in Clwyd maintained schools
(thousands)

Year	*Primary*	*Secondary*
1988	36	29
1989	36	28
1990	36	27
1991	37	27
1992	37	27

Hip Replacement Operations

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to ensure the continuation of hip replacement operations at the Maelor hospital, Wrexham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I understand that Clwyd health authority will be continuing hip replacement operations at Wrexham Maelor hospital at the same rate as they have been carried out so far this year.

Industrial Support and Development

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the annual expenditure at 1986-87 prices for each year since 1972 on industrial support and development in Wales; and how much of it was regional development grant and how much regional selective assistance.

Mr. Peter Walker *(holding answer 5 November 1987)*: Expenditure on regional selective assistance and regional development grants in Wales for the financial years 1972-73 to 1986-87 at 1986-87 prices is as follows:

	RSA £ million	*RDG £ million*	*Total £ million*
1972-73	—	4·0	4·0
1973-74	18·7	63·7	82·4
1974-75	25·5	112·3	137·8
1975-76	28·6	130·8	159·4
1976-77	16·9	153·1	170·0
1977-78	13·6	151·6	165·2
1978-79	59·0	139·1	198·1
1979-80	31·3	84·4	115·7
1980-81	15·0	145·3	160·3
1981-82	11·8	156·3	168·1
1982-83	18·5	144·9	163·4
1983-84	20·7	82·2	102·9
1984-85	27·4	101·2	128·6
1985-86	28·8	86·9	115·7
1986-87	35·6	88·7	124·3

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Reform

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science why home economics is not included in the proposed national curriculum 5-16; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of foundation subjects within the national curriculum is limited by the need to give schools flexibility to cover other areas. Although home economics is not identified in the proposed legislation as a separate foundation subject, we expect some elements of it to feature in the national curriculum particularly through science, technology and art.

School Days (Duration)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information his Department has as to the average length of the school day in *(a)* maintained schools and *(b)* independent schools in 1957, 1967, 1977 and 1987.

Mr. Dunn: No information is available centrally for independent schools, for maintained secondary schools, or for past years. The Department's March 1987 primary school staffing survey recorded an average of 23 hours per week of lesson time (excluding registration, assemblies and break time) in maintained nursery and primary schools in England.

Examination Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what precautions are taken, in compiling the annual examination statistics, to ensure that pupils passing at CSE grade 1 and O grades A to C in the same subject or pupils passing at O grade A to C or CSE grade 1 in the same subject in examinations organised by different examining boards are not counted as having achieved more than one pass in the subject.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department's current source of information on the examination achievements of pupils in English schools is the annual school leavers survey which collects details from schools of the CSE and GCE attainments of a 10 per cent. sample of their leavers.

Schools are asked to record the highest grade achieved in each subject, from any examination board, separately for the CSE and GCE examinations. The main presentation of the statistics of CSE/GCE results at higher grades eliminates double counting in those cases where a GCE and CSE result are both obtained in the same subject.

Primary Schools

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give *(a)* the total number of primary schools in which a representative from industry had taken up a teaching or advisory post as of the latest convenient date, *(b)* the total percentage of primary schools in which a representative from industry had taken up a teaching or advisory post, as of the latest convenient date, *(c)* a breakdown by local education authority of the number of primary schools in which a representative from industry had taken up a teaching or advisory post, as of the latest convenient date and *(d)* a breakdown by local education authority of the percentage of primary schools in which a representative from industry had taken up a teaching or advisory post, as of the latest convenient date;

(2) what information he has about *(a)* the total number of primary school teachers who had previously worked in industry, as of the latest convenient date, *(b)* the percentage of primary school teachers who had previously worked in industry, as of the latest convenient date, *(c)* a breakdown by local education authority of the number of primary school teachers who had previously worked in industry, as of the latest convenient date and *(d)* a breakdown by local education authority of the percentage of primary school teachers who had previously worked in industry, as of the latest convenient date.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested for each local education authority is not available. A sample survey of 500 maintained primary schools and 500 maintained secondary schools in England on school/industry links was undertaken in Industry Year 1986.

The survey shows that there were around 200 to 300 primary schools (about 1 per cent.) where a representative from industry had taken up a teaching or advisory post with them in 1986. Some 20,000 teachers (around 10 per cent.) in primary schools had previously worked in industry.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information division of his Department.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information branch of the Department of Education and Science is currently staffed as follows:

	Number
Grade 5	2
Grade 7	2
Senior Information Officer	[1]6
Information Officer	[1]10
Assistant Information Officer	[2]1
Higher Graphics Officer	1
Graphics Officer	5
Executive Officer	2
Administrative Officer	5
Administrative Assistant	3
Personal Secretaries	2

[1] One vacant.

[2] Vacant

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the cost of maintaining the information division within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is as follows:

	£
1984-85	460,088
1985-86	468,711
1986-87	552,491
[1]1987-88	265,037

[1] To end-September

These figures cover the cost of salaries, national insurance, overtime, hospitality and travel and subsistence for all members of the Department's information branch. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Deaf Children

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to encourage the use of British sign language for the deaf in schools and to help in training qualified interpreters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The method of communication used in schools for children with hearing impairments is a matter for the governing bodies of individual schools to determine. It is not something in which my Department becomes involved. With regard to the training of interpreters, I refer my hon. Friend to the reply by my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 3 November at column *643*.

Science Budget (Research)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will indicate the likely spending on the following items within the new science budget planning total of £696 million for 1988-89: *(a)* research in Antarctica, *(b)* a new research ship for Antarctica, *(c)* inter-disciplinary research centres, *(d)* the strategic reshaping of the science base and *(e)* a Medical Research Council special programme of research on AIDS.

Mr. Jackson: Detailed decisions on the allocation of the science budget for 1988-89 will be taken later in the year in the light of advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils. However, the increased funding for that year announced by my right hon. Friend on 3 November included special provision of £8·6 million for additional research in Antarctica and a new research ship, and of £6 million for the MRC's programmes of AIDS research.

Joint Research Centre

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps Her Majesty's Government intend to propose to the Council of Ministers of the European Community to ensure that the current age profile of joint research centre staff is reversed.

Mr. Jackson: The European Commission has outlined its proposals for the reform of the joint research centre including their ideas for revitalising the staffing. We support this objective and shall be examining their proposals carefully as we believe vigorous action is necessary.

Teaching Facilities, Dewsbury

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if Her Majesty's schools inspectorate in England has inspected the teaching facilities at the public house in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, being used to teach children whose parents have refused to send them to Heathfield middle school, Dewsbury.

Mr. Dunn: No.

Sheffield University

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply of 29 October, *Official Report*, column *365*, what response he has sent to representations he has received from the university of Sheffield about the implications for the university of continued United Kingdom membership of CERN.

Mr. Jackson: I replied to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) on 10 November and the hon. Member may therefore wish to approach him for a copy of my letter.

Advanced Further Education

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much capital expenditure for advanced further education in each local education authority in England and Wales was *(a)* applied for and *(b)* spent in each of the last six years, respectively, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of their allocated advanced further education numbers.

Mr. Jackson: I shall reply to the first part of the hon. Member's question as soon as possible. Since information on the outturn of local authority capital expenditure is not split between advanced and non-advanced further education it is not possible to provide a reliable answer to the second part of the question. Capital expenditure by local education authorities in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

School Governors (Training)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to make further money available for training school governors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government recognise the importance of appropriate training for school governors, particularly in view of the increased responsibilities we propose they should have. We are therefore considering making resources available for this purpose.

Religious Education

Dr. Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in favour of adding religious education to the subjects included in the proposed core curriculum; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received many responses from organisations and individuals regarding the place of religious education in a national curriculum. Copies of all responses from organisations to our consultation document have been placed in the Library. The teaching of religious education is already required to be taught by law and the Government are committed to its continuation as an essential part of the curriculum of every maintained school.

Institute of Hearing Research

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the Institute of Hearing Research.

Mr. Jackson: I understand from the Medical Research Council that the programme of research at its Institute of Hearing Research continues to progress well.

Education Bill

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail the expected impact on the role of secondary school head teachers of the proposals contained in his recent consultation papers and in his proposed Education Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The effective functioning of all schools, primary as well as secondary, depends on the leadership, commitment and judgment of head teachers. Their special role, both educational and managerial, has already been reinforced by the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. That role is conveniently summarised in the statement of head teachers' duties and responsibilities in the "School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document 1987". Many local education authorities have already taken substantial steps to give governing bodies and heads greater independence and authority in running their schools. The Government's proposals which will be incorporated in the Education Reform Bill to be published shortly build on these developments. These proposals when implemented will substantially increase the autonomy which governing bodies and heads have in the running of all except the smallest maintained schools. In practice, heads of secondary schools can be expected in future to have operational control of all the resources, human, material and financial, allocated to their schools. The job of the head will become still more interesting, challenging and rewarding.

Women in Universities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the percentage of *(a)* undergraduates, *(b)* postgraduates and *(c)* academic staff in universities who are women for each year since 1980.

Mr. Jackson: The information is given in the following table:

Great Britain

	Academic year beginning in						
Percentages who are women[1]	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Home full-time students							
Undergraduates	39·8	40·6	41·3	41·6	42·1	42·4	42·7
Postgraduates	35·3	35·7	36·1	36·4	36·8	37·3	37·9
Part-time students							
Undergraduates	50·9	54·3	55·6	55·4	55·6	58·1	58·3
Postgraduates	29·7	30·9	32·2	33·0	33·9	34·4	34·2
Full-time Academic staff	13·9	13·8	14·2	14·9	15·6	16·3	17·1

[1] Excluding the Open University.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are taken to promote equality of opportunity for women in the university sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Between 1979 and 1986 the proportion of full-time home university students who are women rose from 38·3 per cent. to 42·1 per cent. The Government look to a continuation of this trend to help meet their plans set out in the White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge" (Cm. 114). The actual recruitment of students and staff is a matter for individual universities, within the law.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the estimated charge, on the basis of current expenditure *(a)* per household and *(b)* per capita for each English district if a system of local income tax were introduced.

Mr. Howard: The Government remain firmly committed to the introduction of the community charge. They believe that the domestic rating system is discredited, and that a local income tax (LIT) would be unacceptable for a variety of reasons. Among the problems with LIT is the impact of variation in the rate of tax in different areas, as can be seen from the tables that I have placed in the Library showing the rate of LIT in each area on the basis of 1987-88 expenditure. They also show the wide variation in the LIT bill for a single person on national average earnings.

The LIT bills per household and per capita are not shown. These would depend on household and personal circumstances in each area.

The total amount assumed to be raised from LIT is the same as that raised from rates, less an amount attributable to rebates. The calculations assume full equalisation of incomes per head between local authorities, so that those areas where average incomes are relatively low do not have to levy a higher rate of LIT for a standard level of services.

On average, the consequence of introducing LIT would be to increase the rate of income tax by 6p in the £. The tables reveal some remarkable variations between neighbouring authorities. For example, the LIT rate in Barnet would be 5·9p and the tax bill for a single person, on national average earnings, would be £477. These figures compare with an LIT rate in next-door Camden of 25·6p and a tax bill for a single person of £2,066. This would mean that a single person, on national average earnings, could save £1,589 a year by moving from Camden to Barnet.

Acid Rain

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about progress in reducing acid rain.

Mr. Moynihan: A report by the indpendent United Kingdom review group on acid rain, published by my Department in May 1987, concluded that there is evidence of a decline in acid deposition, particularly deposition associated with sulphur emissions. There is little evidence of a change in the levels of nitrate deposition. This is broadly in line with the downward trend in emissions in the United Kingdom and continental Europe.

United Kingdom sulphur dioxide (SO_2) emissions have fallen by about 40 per cent. since 1970, while our nitrogen oxide (NO_x) emissions have remained broadly stable. These trends compare very favourably with those of other European countries. Recently, however, emissions have shown a tendency to rise as a result of increasing demand for energy, associated with higher economic growth, and increased vehicle use. Provisional figures for 1986 show United Kingdom emissions of SO_2 and NO_x of 3·74 million tonnes and 1·94 tonnes, respectively, compared with 1985 figures of 3·56 million tonnes and 1·84 tonnes, respectively. The upward trend is exaggerated because the 1985 figures were artificially low as a result of the miners' strike.

In anticipation of this trend, the CEGB is embarking on a major emission control programme involving the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment at the Drax and Fiddlers Ferry coal-fired power stations and low-NO_x burners to all 12 of its largest such stations, at a cost approaching £1 billion. New coal-fired power stations, of which four are planned by the CEGB for commissioning by 2000, will also be fitted with similar emission control technology. This major programme will help to ensure the continuation of the long-term downward trend in acid emissions. Few countries are doing more to reduce such emissions, and few are likely to match our performance between 1970 and the turn of the century.

The European Community recently moved a step closer to agreement on a framework for new EC vehicle emission standards. The proposals are now subject to the new co-operation procedure between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. The Government attach high priority to the successful completion of this process at the earliest possible date.

Audit Commission

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will explain the basis for the Audit Commission's fees increase of 6.5 per cent.

Mr. Chope: The Audit Commission consulted the local authority associations and the accountancy bodies on its fee proposals as required by statute. My Department has asked the commission to send the hon. Member a copy of the consultation document, which explains the basis of the fees increase.

London City Airport

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money was used in the construction of the London City airport.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Rate Capping

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider announcing criteria for rate capping for 1989-90 as part of the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement so that authorities are fully aware of the consequences of the decisions they take in setting their 1988-89 budgets.

Mr. Chope: No.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications for local government financial planning of local authorities' uncertainty as to the criteria to be used for rate capping until after they have set their budgets.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend's main concern is with the implications for ratepayers of excessive spending by certain local authorities. Under the Rates Act 1984 he has selected the most excessive spenders for rate or precept limitation. But this is a small proportion of local councils and none which budget to spend prudently need be concerned.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why rate capping criteria are not announced until after local authorities' budgets are set.

Mr. Chope: The timetable followed by my right hon. Friend allows him to take into account, as required by the Rates Act 1984, the general economic conditions, including the likely level of local government spending, at the time that he designates authorities for rate or precept limitation.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that authorities not previously rate capped and spending in 1988-89 at or below the expenditure levels assumed in his recent consultation paper will not be rate capped in 1989-90.

Mr. Chope: No.

PRC Homes Ltd.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library an up-to-date list of repair systems which have been licensed by PRC Homes Ltd. licensed subject to amendments and under appraisal in respect of each PRC type.

Mrs. Roe: Yes; I have arranged for PRC Homes Ltd.'s most recent progress report on repair systems to be placed in the Library. We will ensure that this continues to be done as further reports become available.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the workings of the Mobile Homes Act 1983; and if he will bring forward proposals to amend that Act.

Mrs. Roe: We continue to receive various representations about the working of the Act. We are satisfied that the Act is in general working well and we have no plans to amend it. The Department has held talks with representatives of mobile home residents and site owners which have resulted in some important initiatives. These include a code of guidance to be issued by the site owners' organisations to their members, dealing with many of the points of concern to residents. An arbitration scheme along the lines of the one negotiated for the holiday caravan industry is also under consideration. These measures should help deal with the problems that some residents have faced.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* for each year since 1981 the number of dwellings sold by the London Docklands development corporation to persons who were residents of *(a)* any of the three dockland boroughs and *(b)* the statutory area of the corporation.

Mr. Trippier: The LDDC does not itself build or sell dwellings, but makes its land available to other developers. 3,263 homes built on corporation-owned sites were sold by 31 March 1987. 1,490 were purchased by residents of the boroughs of Newham, Southwark, and Tower Hamlets. 1,098 of these same purchases were made by existing residents of the LDDC's area. A more detailed breakdown on an annual basis is not readily available.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate in the *Official Report* for each year since 1981 the number of dwellings built on land some time in the ownership of the London Docklands development corporation which were vested in housing associations.

Mr. Trippier: The number of homes completed on LDDC sites either by housing associations, or purchased by them from other developers, is as follows:

Year	*Completions*
1981-82	0
1982-83	31
1983-84	111
1984-85	119
1985-86	230
1986-87	370

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will tabulate for each year since 1981 the number of housing units built on land some time in the ownership of the London Docklands development corporation and which were initially sold for £40,000 or less, together with the number and respective percentages of dwellings initially sold for a higher figure.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is as follows:

Sales of new homes on LDDC-owned sites

	£40,000 or under		*Above £40,000*		
Year	*Number*	*Per cent*	*Number*	*Per cent*	*Total sales*
1981-82	2	100·0	0	0·0	2
1982-83	399	98·5	6	1·5	405
1983-84	431	96·9	21	3·1	452
1984-85	519	87·8	161	12·2	680
1985-86	324	71·1	494	28·9	818
1986-87	167	56·5	739	43·5	906

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the most recent figures, in square metres, for the quantity of land within the area of the London Docklands development corporation which has been used, since 1981, for *(a)* non-residential development, *(b)* residential development sold at a price of £40,000 or less, *(c)* residential development sold at a price of £100,000 or more, *(d)* rented local authority development and *(e)* other rented accommodation.

Mr. Trippier: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, by what methods the London Docklands development corporation makes the public aware of its activities.

Mr. Trippier: It does so by a variety of means. It is required by law to publish its annual report and its accounts. It also publishes annually its updated corporate plan. The *Docklands News* newspaper and other publicity material are issued on a regular basis. There are also frequent and regular press notices, and interviews and articles by board members and corporation staff. LDDC is represented at many local authority and local community meetings and similar functions. It holds regular open evenings at its area offices, and public meetings and exhibitions on specific issues. Its planning committee meetings and agenda are publicised and open to the public. Finally, there are wide consultations on particular planning applications and on the corporation's own development framework and other proposals.

Sheffield

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received an invitation from Councillor Wigfield, chairman of housing, Sheffield city council; and if he is prepared to visit Sheffield to see and consider that city's work with local tenants and the difficulties it is facing in decently housing its citizens.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Storm Damage

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 29 October, *Official Report*, column 444, regarding the cost of repairing damage consequent on the gales of 15 and 16 October, what the best estimated cost to each of the local authorities concerned will be.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 4 November, at column 926.

Cemeteries (Sale)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report regarding the disposal by Westminster council of three cemeteries at 5p each and their subsequent sale for £2 million; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. This is a matter for Westminister city council, its ratepayers and the district auditor.

Rating Reform

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reply to the letter addressed to him on the poll tax from Mrs. F. A. Higgins of 3 Daffodil road, Birkenhead, which was passed to him on 3 August.

Mr. Howard: Mrs. F. A. Higgins wrote to me on 28 July about the community charge, and received a reply from my officials in the early part of September. She wrote a further letter to my right hon. Friend on 6 October, and a reply was sent on 11 November.

Mrs. Cllwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions he intends to issue to local authorities seeking to collect debts from community charge joint liabilities where one partner has not had access to the family income.

Mr. Howard: It will be for individual local authorities to decide on appropriate recovery procedures for community charge debts. Our proposal for joint and several liability will mean that they will not need to attempt to enforce recovery from partners who have no access to the family income.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the liability on the community charge will be backdated and retained to the time a couple were living together, and remain as a joint debt in instances where the couple have separated following domestic violence.

Mr. Howard: Couples will be jointly and severally liable for unpaid community charges in respect of any period during which they were married and living in the same household, or living together as husband and wife.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to create, as proposed in Scotland, a category of persons known as severely mentally handicapped for the purposes of poll tax implementation.

Mr. Howard: Yes. The severely mentally handicapped will be exempt from liability to pay the personal community charge in England and Wales, as they will in Scotland.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 9 November, *Official Report*, column 14, how many households in each London borough will experience an increase of *(a)* 50 per cent. or more and *(b)* 80 per cent. or more in local tax bills under the poll tax proposals, if local authorities in London continue to spend at present levels until the community charge is fully in place.

Mr. Howard: As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr on 26 October at column *39*., it is not possible to produce figures for individual local authority areas.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply of 4 November, *Official Report*, column 728, he will list the names of those organisations which have given written support to the introduction of the poll tax, indicating also where they are based.

Mr. Howard: No. I do not have the permission of those who submitted comments to publish their views. But as I indicated to the Hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 4 November 1987, at column *728*, a summary of responses was placed in the Library on 15 December 1986.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest proposals in respect of the poll tax for women seeking refuge from domestic violence.

Mr. Howard: Officials from my Department and the Welsh Office met representatives of Women's Aid Federation England and Welsh Women's Aid on 9 November. I am considering what measures may be appropriate in the light of the concerns expressed.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he is proposing for the collection of the poll tax from homeless people.

Mr. Howard: It will be for the individual local authorities to devise the arrangements for collecting the community charge in their areas. Most of the premises that give temporary accommodation for homeless people are likely to be designated for the collective community charge.

Mr. Rooker: To asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the relationship between the contribution to local taxation of the 10 per cent. of households who are highest paid and the 10 per cent. who are the lowest paid *(a)* under the present system and *(b)* under the poll tax.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 5 November 1987]*: Based on data contained in the family expenditure survey, I estimate that under the existing system the 10 per cent. of households with the highest net incomes pay 5½ times as much in local taxation after rebate as the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest net income. If the community charge were fully implemented the 10 per cent. with the highest net incomes would pay six times as much as those with the lowest net incomes.

Council House Sales

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now consider raising the maximum discount available to tenants exercising their right to buy under the Housing Acts from the current ceiling of £35,000.

Mr. Waldegrave: The limit is kept under review, but there are no plans for an increase in the immediate future.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes that tenants who transfer from a council landlord to an approved landlord will retain their right to buy with the subsidy that will be available to council tenants.

Mr. Waldegrave: Section 8 of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 provides for the right-to-buy to be preserved where a house or flat occupied by a secure tenant is transferred to a private landlord. The section has not yet been brought into force because detailed regulations adapting the right-to-buy legislation for this purpose are still in preparation. In the meanwhile the position of tenants transferring to private landlords can be protected by contractual arrangements.

Homeless Persons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to whether the proposed development in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham by Westminster city council of mobile homes to house homeless people from the latter authority will affect the rate support grant of either borough.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment. If the scheme goes ahead there would under the present system be a small effect on the rate support grant payable to Barking and Dagenham due to changes in its population and rateable values. At present, Westminster city council receives no block grant and it is not possible to say whether the proposed scheme would change that position.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department gives to local authorities concerning the resettlement of homeless persons outside their own borough.

Mr. Waldegrave: None; but general guidance on accommodation for the homeless is given in our code of guidance on the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 (now part III of the Housing Act 1985). A copy is in the Library.

Housing (London)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the current total number of vacant properties in the London borough of Southwark *(a)* in council ownership and *(b)* in private ownership;

(2) what are the most recent figures available to him on the number of households registered on the housing waiting list in the London borough of Southwark who have remained on the waiting list for *(a)* less than one year, *(b)* between one and two years, *(c)* between two and three years, *(d)* between three and four years, *(e)* between four and five years and *(f)* over five years;

(3) what are the most recent figures available to him on the number of households registered on the housing transfer list in the London borough of Southwark who had been registered on the transfer list for *(a)* less than one year, *(b)* between one and two years, *(c)* between two and three years, *(d)* between three and four years, *(e)* between four and five years and *(f)* over five years.

Mr. Waldegrave: The numbers of vacant properties and the total number of households on the housing waiting list were provided by the London borough of Southwark in its 1987 housing investment programme return (HIP1), while further information on the waiting and transfer lists was included in the housing strategy statement 1988-89. Copies of both documents are in the Library.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the most recent figures he has for the number of local authority dwellings unlawfully occupied in each inner London borough.

Mr. Waldegrave: The numbers of local authority dwellings in unlicensed occupation at 1 April 1987, as reported by inner London boroughs in their housing investment programme returns, are as follows:

	Number
City of London	8
Camden	340
Hackney	1,049
Hammersmith and Fulham	90
Haringey	190
Islington	401
Kensington and Chelsea	18
Lambeth	1,203
Lewisham	164
Newham	2
Southwark	2,169
Tower Hamlets	672
Wandsworth	63
Westminster	124

Housing

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage change, both in cash and in real terms, in public expenditure on housing in each consecutive financial year from 1973-74 up until the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information cannot be made available for years before 1976-77 on a consistent definitional and geographical basis, except at disproportionate cost. Available information is as follows:

Housing expenditure England

£ million

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*Change on previous year*			
						Column 1		*Column 5*	
	Gross	*Capital receipts*	*Net*	*Current*	*Programme total (cash)*	*Cash per cent.*	*Real[4] per cent.*	*Cash per cent.*	*Real[4] per cent.*
1976-77[1]	2,829	284	2,545	1,261	3,806				
1977-78	2,668	393	2,275	1,147	3,422	−6	−17	−10	−21
1978-79	2,704	529	2,176	1,395	3,571	+1	−8	+4	−6
1979-80	3,158	476	2,682	1,842	4,524	+17	—	+27	+8
1980-81	2,933	603	2,330	2,123	4,453	−7	−22	−2	−17
1981-82	2,563	1,045	1,518	1,612	3,130	−13	−21	−30	−36
1982-83	3,313	1,877	1,436	1,273	2,709	+29	+21	−13	−19
1983-84[2]	4,010	1,955	2,055	1,100	3,154	+21	+16	+16	+11
1984-85	3,973	1,804	2,169	1,096	3,265	−1	−5	+4	−1
1985-86	3,573	1,783	1,790	1,174	2,964	−10	−16	−9	−15
1986-87	3,449	2,134	1,315	1,322	2,636	−3	−7	−11	−14
1987-88[3]	3,668	2,501	1,167	1,353	2,520	+6	+3	−4	−8

[1] Figures for the years prior to 1976-77 cannot be provided on a basis consistent with later years, except at disproportionate cost. Figures for those years have been published in public expenditure White Papers but relate to Great Britain, are in survey prices rather than cash prices and include expenditures transferred to other programmes in later years.

[2] From 1 April 1983 the option mortgage scheme was subsumed in MIRAS.

[3] Estimated outturn.

[4] Using GDP deflator.

London Residuary Body

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the value of assets realised by the London residuary body since its inception.

Mr. Chope: Payments received by the LRB up to 31 October 1987 for the sale of assets were about £115 million.

Nuclear Waste

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether United Kingdom Nirex Ltd. has made any progress with its proposals to develop a deep repository for low and intermediate-level wastes.

Mr. Ridley: UK Nirex Ltd. has today published a discussion document—copies of which have been placed in the Library — outlining its proposals for a deep disposal facility for low and intermediate-level wastes and inviting comments from interested parties. I welcome this document and the consultation exercise of which it is a part. I hope that as many people as possible will take the opportunity to read the document and submit comments to Nirex.

Estuaries

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many proposed schemes he is aware of which would effect change in estuaries in England and Wales where these would involve the development of power generation or of substantial additional activity; and if he will list the estuaries involved.

Mr. Moynihan: Major tidal systems on the Severn and Mersey estuaries are currently under investigation. Part of the costs of those studies, which include environmental assessment work, is being met by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. Industrial or other development proposals on estuaries are primarily questions for the local planning authorities but, if the hon. Member has a particular problem in mind and will write to me giving details, I will look into it.

Unleaded Petrol

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the difference between lead-free and unleaded petrol; and when he expects each to be widely available in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: Unleaded petrol is the technically correct way of referring to petrol to which no lead has been added. There is a British Standard Specification to which all unleaded petrol in the United Kingdom conforms. Lead-Free is simply a popular term for the fuel. As to availability, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) on Wednesday 4 November.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what happened to the 53,000 tonnes of hazardous waste imported during 1986.

Mr. Moynihan: The 53,000 tonnes of imported waste notified under the Control of pollution (Special Waste) Regulations were disposed of as follows:—

Method	*Tonnes*
By incineration	8,000
By treatment	42,000
By land-fill	3,000

Polluted Seawater

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in view of the publication of new research undertaken on behalf of the environmental organisation, Greenpeace, he will review the evidence of a health risk from bathing in sewage-polluted seawater in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moynihan: I am keeping under review the evidence concerning the possible risk to health arising from bathing in sewage-contaminated water.

Ministerial Cars

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which ministerial cars will be exempted from the recently announced decision to put the repair and maintenance of ministerial vehicles out to tender.

Mr. Chope: Some of the vehicles in the Government car service used by Ministers and heads of Department are now being serviced by a commercial garage in order to compare the efficiency and competitiveness of the Government car service's own workshops with services available from the private sector. It is normal practice not to disclose details about particular vehicles used by individual Ministers.

"Tenants' Choice"

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the Green Paper "Tenants' Choice" was not made available to hon. Members through the Vote Office at the time of its release to the public.

Mr. Waldegrave: The White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals" (CM214) was published in September and made available to hon. Members through the Vote Office. Since then, my Department has published a number of consultation and explanatory papers (none of them in the usual sense Green Papers) which explain in more detail the policies outlined in the White Paper. Copies of each of these, including that on Tenants' Choice, were placed in the Library.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now received the 1987 annual report of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. The eighth annual report was published on 1 September and copies were placed in the Library of the House. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and I continue to value greatly the advice of the committee for which we also recently announced the appointment of a new chairman, Professor John Knill, to take over from the late Professor Paul Matthews with effect from 1 September.

Caravan and Tent Site Licensing

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of consultation on proposals to unify caravan and tent site licensing.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department and the Welsh Office received over 100 responses to the consultation paper issued in March. Although certain aspects of the proposals received support, most respondents took the view that there is insufficient evidence of problems now arising on caravan and tent sites so as to justify the greater degree of control which was envisaged. We have therefore decided not to proceed at present with amending legislation, but we shall continue to keep the situation under review.

In the light of this I understand that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has decided not to proceed with the similar consultation exercise which he originally intended.

Green and White Papers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* Green and *(b)* White Papers his Department has produced (i) since 3 May 1978 and (ii) since 9 June 1983; if he will list these in date order; in each case, whether the responses to the papers were deposited in the Library; and what was the percentage of papers for each year which have not had their responses placed in the Library since 1980.

Mr. Ridley: I cannot be held responsible for papers produced between 3 May 1978 and 3 May 1979.

The Green Papers produced by the Department of the Environment since 9 June 1983, and the White Papers produced since 3 May 1979 are as follows.

Details of Green Papers produced before June 1983 are not readily available. The current arrangements for placing in the Library responses to major consultation papers on matters of general interest were introduced in October 1986, and a list of those papers where responses have been placed in the Library is as shown.

For papers produced in the 1986-87 Session, 48 per cent. have not had their responses placed in the Library.

Green and White Papers produced by the Department of the Environment

Green Papers produced since 9 June 1983

This includes all consultation documents, discussion papers and other items which set out proposals which are at a formative or uncompleted stage and are issued to solicit comment.

1983-84

June 1983—Water Act 1983: Second Draft Guidelines on the Representation of Consumers' Interests.

August 1983—Memorandum on Structure and Local Plans and on the Green Belt: Draft Circular.

September 1983—Proposed Amendment to the Building Regulations: Access and Facilities for Disabled People.

October 1983—Good Design and Development Control: Draft Circular.

October 1983—Streamlining the Cities: Consultation Paper on the re-allocation of planning functions in the Greater London Council and Metropolitan County Council (MCC) Areas.

October 1983—Housing and Building Control Bill: Right to Repair: Proposals for Implementation.

October 1983—Proposed Amendment to the Building Regulations: Access and Facilities in Buildings for the Benefit of the Disabled.

October 1983—Proposed site licensing of camping sites: Consultation Paper

October 1983—Streamlining the Cities: Consultation Paper on Housing.

October 1983—Rate Support Grant Settlement (England) 1984-85: Consultation Paper.

October 1983—Disposal Facilities on Land for Low and Intermediate-Level Radioactive Wastes: Draft Principles for the Protection of the Human Environment.

November 1983—Streamlining the Cities: Consultation Paper on Arrangements to be made for Waste Disposal.

November 1983—Consultation Papers on the Local Authority Housing Subsidy System: Reckonable Expenditure on Management and Maintenance for 1984-85 and on the Determination of Reckonable Income for 1984-85.

November 1983—Secure Tenants' Right to Exchange (Draft Proposals to give secure tenants in England and Wales of Local Councils, new towns and housing associations a statutory right to exchange their homes.)

January 1984—Streamlining the Cities: Consultation Paper on the Disappearance of the Greater London Council Precept.

January 1984—Streamlining the Cities: Consultation Paper on Implications for the Block Grant System.

January 1984—Standardised Statements of Accounts by Local Authorities: Proposals for Regulations.

January 1984—Consultation Paper on Proposed Amendments to the General Development Order, and the National Parks etc. Special Development Order.

January 1984—The re-allocation of planning functions in the Greater London Council (GLC) and Metropolitan County Council (MCC) areas: revised proposals paper.

February 1984—Housing and Building Control Bill—draft Building (Approved Inspectors etc.) Regulations—Consultation Letter.

February 1984—Housing and Building Control Bill—draft guidelines for insurance schemes—Consultation Letter.

February 1984—New Building Regulations—Approved documents—Consultation Letter.

May 1984—Review of the Target Wind-Up Dates for New Town Development Corporations in the North East of England: Consultation Paper.

May 1985—Simplified Planning Zones: A Consultation Paper.

June 1984—Building Regulations: Unvented Hot Water Systems—Consultation Letter.

June 1984—Draft Code of Practice for the Pre-Inquiry stages of Major Planning Inquiries and Consultation Letter.

June 1984—Housing and Building Control Act 1984: Draft Right to Repair Regulations.

June 1984—Draft Code of Guidance on Consultation of Representatives of Industrial and Commercial Ratepayers.

July 1984—Streamlining the Cities: Consultation Paper on the Transfer of the GLC's Interest in Land under the Green Belt (London and Home Counties) Act 1938.

July 1984—Lee Valley Regional Park Authority: membership and financial arrangements after the abolition of the GLC: Consultation Paper.

July 1984—Consultation Papers: (1) Improvements and Amendments to the Planning System and (2) Planning Control over Hazardous Development.

August 1984—Planning Control over Oil and Gas Operations: Draft Circular.

August 1984—Draft Regulations for Consultation: (i) Building Regulations, (ii) Means of Escape in Case of Fire and (iii) Building (Approved Inspectors) Regulations.

September 1984—New Building Regulations—approved documents—Consultation Letter.

September 1984—Proposed amendment to the Building Regulations—access and facilities for disabled people—Consultation Letter.

September 1984—Designation of bodies and approval of inspectors etc for building control—Consultation Letter.

September 1984—Peak District National Park: Transfer of Metropolitan County Council Functions to Metropolitan District Councils: A Consultation Paper.

September 1984—Abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils: Support for the Voluntary Sector.

September 1984 — Housing Defects Act 1984: Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete Dwellings designed before 1960—Consultation Paper.

1984-85

October 1984 — Housing: The Right to Buy: Service Charges—Consultation Paper.

November 1984 — Local Authority Housing Subsidy System: Consultation Papers on Determination of Reckonable Income for 1985-86 and on Reckonable Expenditure on Management and Maintenance for 1985-86.

November 1984 — Dog Licensing: Future arrangements in Great Britain—Consultation Paper.

November 1984—New Building Regulations Approved Document: Conservation of Fuel and Power—Consultation Paper.

November 1984—Proposed designation of the Broads under Section 41 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

December 1984—Access by Public Sector Tenants to their Landlord's Files—Consultation Letter.

January 1985—New Building Regulations Approved Document: Fire Spread—Consultation Letter.

February 1985 — Control of the use of marine anti-fouling paints: Consultation Paper and draft regulations.

February 1985—Competition in the provision of local authority services: Consultation Paper.

February 1985 — Financial arrangements for ex-GLC housing after the abolition of Council: Consultation Paper.

April 1985 — Farm and Forestry Development in the National Parks—LASDO: Consultation Paper.

May 1985—Home Improvement—A New Approach: Government proposals for encouraging the repair and improvement of private sector housing in England and Wales.

June 1985—Town and Country Planning (Minerals) Act 1981: Draft Circular.

July 1985—Derelict Land: Reclamation and Recycling: a Draft Circular.

August 1985—Local Government Act 1985: Abolition of the GLC and MCCs: Compensation for financial detriment—Consultation Paper.

August 1985—Local Government Act 1985: Abolition of the GLC and MCCs: Early Retirements—Consultation Paper.

August 1985—Development by small businesses: Draft Circular.

September 1985—The Building Regulations 1985: Fees for Building Control

September 1985—Standardised Statement of Accounts for Local Authorities in England and Wales: Consultation Paper.

1985-86

November 1985—The Introduction of Unleaded Petrol: Implementation of EEC Directive 85/210/EEC.

November 1985—Draft Circular on the development of contaminated land. Inter-departmenal Committee on the Redevelopment of Contaminated Land.

November 1985 — Local Authority Housing Subsidy System: Consultation Papers on Reckonable Expenditure on Management and Maintenance for 1986-87 and on Determination of Reckonable Income for 1986-87.

December 1985 — Water Authority Privatisation: A Discussion Paper.

December 1985 — Gypsy sites policy in England: Consultation Paper.

December 1985 — Abolition: Balances and Capital Receipts: Consultation Paper.

January 1986 — Paying for Local Government: Consultation Paper.

February 1986—Control of Advertisements Regulations: a "deemed consent" for directional advertising signs for tourist attractions.

February 1986—Review of the Local Authority Capital Expenditure Control System in England and Wales: Consultation Paper.

February 1986 — South East Regional Strategic Guidance: draft response by the Secretary of State for the Environment to the Chairman of the London and South East Regional Planning Conference.

March 1986 — Private Water Supplies: Consultation

March 1986—Water and Sewerage Law: Consultation Paper.

April 1986 — Regulations to Control the Sale and Import of Anglers' Lead Weights under the Control of Pollution Act 1974: Consultation Paper.

April 1986—Implementation of the European Directive on Environmental Assessment: Consultation Paper.

April 1986—The Water Environment: the Next Steps: the Government's Consultative Proposals for Environmental Protection under a Privatised Water Industry.

April 1986—Compensation provisions in the Town and Country Planning Acts: Consultation Paper.

April 1986 — Draft Certificate of Authorisation for radioactive discharges from the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant: Consultation Paper.

June 1986 — Proposals to Modernise the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972: Consultation Paper.

June 1986 — Housing Act 1986: Heating Charges Regulations.

June 1986 — Application of Building Regulations to Inner London: Drainage etc.

July 1986 — Control of Advertisements Regulations: Government's proposals for amending regulations.

July 1986—General Development Order: miscellaneous and consolidating minerals amendments — Consultation Paper.

August 1986—Aware of costs in planning cases: Draft Circular.

September 1986 — Building Regulations: access and facilities for disabled people—Consultation Paper.

September 1986 — The Future of Development Plans: Consultation Paper.

October 1986—Rate Support Grant Settlement 1987-88 (A further consultation paper).

October 1986 — Local Authority Housing Subsidy System: Determination of Reckonable Income for 1987-88 —Consultation Paper

October 1986—Development of Contaminated Land: Draft Circular.

October 1986 — Local Authority Housing Subsidy System: Reckonable Expenditure on Management and Maintenance for 1987-88—Consultation Paper.

1986-87

November 1986 — Telecommunications Development: Draft Development Control Policy note.

November 1986—Draft Circular: use of waste material for road fill.

December 1986 — Protecting the countryside: Government's consultative proposals for landscape conservation orders.

December 1986 — Rate Support Grant Settlement 1987-88: a third Consultation Paper.

December 1986 — Local Authority Housing Schemes: Proposed abolition of project control.

December 1986—Review of the Building Regulations: Consultation Paper.

December 1986 — Review of the Town and Country Planning (Inquiries Procedure) Rules 1974: Consultation Paper.

December 1986—Air pollution control in Great Britain: review and proposals.

December 1986—Review of the target wind-up date for the North East New Town Development Corporations

January 1987—Draft General Development Order

January 1987—Control of Pollution Act 1974: Waste Collection and Disposal Regulations 1987

February 1987—Proposed Control of Pollution (Landed Ships' Waste) Regulations 1987

February 1987 — Draft Town and Country Planning (Unitary Development Plans) Regulations 1987

February 1987 — Development Involving Agricultural Land: Planning Guidance: Draft Circular

February 1987 — Assistance by local authorities to private landlords to provide houses for letting

April 1987 — Proposed legislation unifying tent and caravan site licensing in England and Wales

April 1987—Draft circular on opencast coal mining

April 1987 — Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 — the review of financial guidelines

May 1987 — Draft Code of Practice and draft Order for Local Authority Publicity

White Papers produced since 3 May 1979

1986-87 — The Government's reply to the Environment Committee's report on planning appeals, call-in and major public inquiries.

1985-86 — Privatisation of Water Authorities. Government's reply to Environment Committee report on Disposal of Radioactive waste.

1984-85 — The Government's reply to Environment Committee report on Acid Rain.

1983-84 — GLC and Metropolitan Counties — Streamlining the Cities. Rates limitation and reform.

1982-83 — None issued.

1981-82 — Future of building control in England and Wales.

Council House Sales: The Government's response to the Second Report from the Environment Committee, 1980-81 Session.

1980-81 — The Government's reply to the First Report from the Environment Committee Session 1979-80.

1979-80 — Central Government controls over local authorities.

Organic changes in Local Government.

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION PAPERS HELD IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS LIBRARY
(received since December 1986)

Responses to:
- Proposals to Modernise the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972: Consultation Paper.
- Building Regulations: access and facilities for disabled people: Consultation Paper.
- Protecting the Countryside: Government's Consultative Proposals for Landscape Conservation Orders.
- Review of the Town & Country Planning (Inquiries Procedures) Rules 1974: Consultation Paper.
- Draft General Development Order 1977.
- Development Involving Agricultural Land: Planning Guidance: Draft Circular.
- Review of the Building Regulations: Consultation Paper.
- Proposed legislation unifying tent and caravan site Licensing in England and Wales.
- Draft Circular on opencast mining.
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 the review of financial guidelines.
- Air pollution control in Great Britain: review and proposals.
- Draft Circular on the use of waste materials for waste fill.
- The Future of Development Plans: Consultation Paper.
- Simplified Planning Zones: A Consultation Paper.
- Draft Town & Country Planning (Unitary Development Plans) Regulations 1987.

Caring Institutions

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list those caring institutions which will be exempted from the proposed community charge, and the reasons for which they have been exempted.

Mr. Howard: The exemption for residents of caring institutions will apply to those who are solely or mainly resident in such institutions and are receiving care and/or treatment there. The institutions concerned will be private and voluntary residential care homes; local authority residential care homes; registered nursing and mental nursing homes; and certain hostels providing accommodation and care.

In many cases people living in these establishments will have relatively little contact with the local democratic process and will be unable to make full use of local authority services. In addition, problems of definition might arise if residents in hospitals were exempted from personal community charges but residents in homes were not.

Sport and Leisure Facilities

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his latest proposals concerning local authority financing for sport and leisure facilities.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland issued a consultation paper on 28 September setting out our proposals to open up the management of local authority sports facilities to competition. The aims of the proposals are to ensure, through more effective management and marketing of facilities, greater sensitivity to the needs and demands of the community and better value for money from local authority expenditure. Copies of the consultation paper are available in the House Library and comments have been invited by 11 December.

Cricket (Ministerial Visit)

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons accompanied the Minister for Sport to the World Cup cricket final in Calcutta; and what was the cost to public funds of this visit.

Mr. Moynihan: I was unaccompanied on my visit to Calcutta for the final of the Cricket World Cup. I travelled on a club-class ticket and the total bill for my travelling arrangements was £1,682. There were no additional costs.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the NATO Civil Defence Committee will issue guidelines on civil defence measures and long-term measures for the protection of the civilian population against the effects of chemical weapons; and if such guidelines will be made available to authorities charged with a duty to plan for the protection of the public in war;

(2) if he will make available in the Library minutes of the meetings of the medical sub-group and warning and monitoring sub-group which provide expert advice to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's Civil Defence Committee.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Minutes of the medical sub-group carry a NATO security classification and cannot be made available. Minutes of the warning and monitoring sub-group are unclassified and copies will be placed in the Library shortly.

The Civil Defence Committee issued on 18 December 1986 a "Compendium of Technical Information for the Basic Protection of Populations"; this includes a chapter on chemical protection. Copies have been circulated to county emergency planning officers and will today be placed in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all capital projects costing over £100,000 which are included in the total of civil defence expenditure within public expenditure White Papers for 1984-85 to 1989-90.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Details of central Government capital projects costing more than £500,000 are given in tables included in the Supply Estimates, published in April annually.

Information about central Government and local authority capital projects costing over £100,000 is not readily available and could be provided only at disprortionate cost.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will enable fire and civil defence authorities to extend their emergency planning functions by providing statutory powers to incur expenditure in the preparation of contingency plans to respond to peacetime civil nuclear emergencies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: District and borough authorities have powers under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972 to incur such expenditure as they consider necessary in taking action to avert, alleviate or eradicate the effects of disasters or emergencies in their area. This power allows for the deployment of the full range of local authority services.

Under the revised arrangements for the former metropolitan areas, these powers remain with the district and borough authorities; we do not think it necessary to extend them to the fire and civil defence authorities. Fire and civil defence authorities are, however, enabled by the Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986 to co-ordinate matters, if requested to do so by the districts or boroughs concerned.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to celebrate officially the 50th anniversary of the civil defence college, Easingwold, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A reception for representatives from the local community and organisations concerned with the college's work took place at the college in July. An anniversary dinner is to be held there in December.

Firearms

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to bring within the scope of his proposals relating to firearms a provision prohibiting the manufacture, sale or possession of any firearm consisting entirely or mainly of plastic materials.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This matter is under consideration.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to include in the new Firearms Bill a provision that those members of gun clubs who use their membership to obtain a firearms certificate will lose their certificate if they should allow their membership of the gun club to lapse.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Continued membership of a gun club is normally checked on renewal of a firearm certificate every three years. We are not persuaded that more frequent checks on club membership, which would be costly, would significantly improve the present controls.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, in the *Official Report*, the meeting he has had with the various organisations representing owners and users of firearms, regarding his proposals for changes in the law governing ownership and use of firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have met representatives of the British Shooting Sports Council, a body which represents the interests of a large number of shooting organisations. In addition, officials have met with representatives of the Arms and Armour Society, the Historical Breech Loading and Small Arms Association, the Imperial War Museum, the Shooting Sports Trust, the Gun Trade Association, the National Pistol Association, the Clay Pigeon Shooting Association, the National Rifle Association, the National Small Bore Rifle Association, and the Scottish Shooting Council. We have also written to a wide range of interested organisations seeking their views on our proposals.

Court Buildings (Vandalism)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the trend in vandalism, cases of abscondings and assaults in or about magistrates' courts since the introduction of the Crown prosecution service; and to what extent he attributes this trend to the consequent reduction of police officers present in court buildings in some areas.

Mr. John Patten: Representations have been made that some difficulties have been experienced, but no systematic information is available centrally.

Prostitution

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the number of men who have been convicted at the South West London magistrates' court for kerb-crawling activities in the Bedford hill area of Wandsworth during the last three years;

(2) what has been the number of convictions at the South West London magistrates' court of women convicted of soliciting for prostitution in the Bedford hill district of Wandsworth, during the last three years;

(3) what is the number of people who have been convicted at the South West London magistrates' court in each of the last three years for living off the immoral earnings of prostitutes.

Mr. John Patten: The information held centrally, which may be incomplete, is given in the table. It is not possible to identify separately those offences which occurred in the Bedford hill area of Wandsworth.

Persons found guilty of offences relating to prostitution at South Western Magistrates' Court

Offence	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Kerb-crawling	[1]—	—	—
Soliciting for prostitution	402	579	288
Living on earnings of prostitution	—	1	1

[1] This offence was created by the Sexual Offences Act 1985 which came into force in September 1985.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what account the team set up to establish what further record might be put on the police national computer will take of the implications for civil liberties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The team is fully aware that all records on the police national computer are subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984 and will be subject also to the code of practice for police computer systems (including the police national computer) being prepared by the Association of Chief Police Officers.

Street Lighting (Crime)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the chief constable of Bedfordshire and from Bedfordshire's police authority on the relationship between inadequate and defective street lighting and the level of crime in the county, and in Luton in particular; and what has been his response.

Mr. John Patten: We have received no such representations.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been conducted into the relationship between the level of crime and the level of street lighting within the last five years.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that because of the methodological difficulties involved, little research of any consequence has been carried out into the relationship between street lighting (or the lack of it) and crime in the United Kingdom.

Electoral Registration

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will conduct a study into the likely impact of the introduction of the poll tax on electoral registration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The community charges register and the electoral register, and the processes of registration for the two, will be entirely separate, and we do not think that research of the kind suggested would be relevant or financially justifiable.

Immigration

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to alter current immigration procedures so as to prevent women from the Philippines offered for sale as brides from gaining entry into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Renton: The repeal of section 1(5) of the Immigration Act 1971, as proposed in the Immigration Bill, will ensure that all applications from women seeking to come here on the basis of marriage to a British citizen or other Commonwealth citizen will be subject to the current immigration rules. Under the rules the entry clearance officer must be satisfied that the marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain admission to the United Kingdom.

Prisoners (Racial Discrimination)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints of racial discrimination have been received from black prisoners in the United Kingdom and if he will give a statistical breakdown of the complaints received at each prison.

Mr. Hurd: Formal procedures exist for the airing by prisoners of complaints about aspects of their treatment including alleged racial discrimination, and for their investigation, but no central record of complaints is kept.

Advertising

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of recent advertisements for contraceptives and public information advertisements warning of the dangers of AIDS, he will examine those provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1981 which prohibit advertisements in respect of products which are deemed to be of a religious nature; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The statutory requirements governing religious advertisements are of long standing and we have no present plans to amend them.

Taxi Drivers (Tests)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are at present waiting to take the Metropolitan police's examination to become taxi drivers; what is the average number of applicants tested each year; and what is the average annual pass rate for the above examination.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The tests take place in several stages, each of which must be successfully completed before the applicant is licensed as a taxi driver. Applicants present themselves to take the various stages when they consider themselves ready to do so, and regularly spread their attempts over a considerable period of time. There are at present just over 2,000 applicants undergoing assessment. There are currently a further 4,379 applicants who have not yet presented themselves for assessment; a proportion of these may be expected to withdraw before doing so. There were 926 successful candidates in 1986. Over the previous five years the average number of successful candidates was about 700.

Identity Parades

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, following initial indications from the Brixton police station identity parade scheme, he has any plans to extend this scheme to other police stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Provision for the installation of viewing screens, for use in identification parades, has been made in the code of practice for the identification of persons by police officers. Installation of these screens is a matter for individual chief officers of police.

Superintendent Ganley

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of public concern at the recent remarks attributed to Superintendent Ganley, he will publish figures on crimes committed on the Stonebridge estate, over the most recent period for which figures are available, broken down by *(a)* the crime, *(b)* the age, sex and race of the offender or alleged offender and *(c)* the age, sex and race of the victim.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not available in this form. I am writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the disciplinary action taken with respect to Superintendet Bill Ganley following the publication of racially divisive comments attributed to him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. I understand that the Commissioner takes the view that no ground exists for disciplinary action to be taken against Superintendent Ganley.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of public concern about remarks attributed to Superintendent Ganley at a local police consultative committee, he will revise his Department's guidelines on such committees.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. We see no reason to revise existing guidance on consultation arrangements set and in Home Office circular 2/1985 in the light of press reports of Superintendent Ganley's statements.

Stonebridge Estate

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Metropolitan Police Commissioner on the arrangements for the policing of the Stonebridge estate and its environs in the London borough of Brent.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. Arrangements for the policing of a particular area are a matter for the Commissioner.

Trials (Police Information)

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what general guidance Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary has given to chief officers following the request to him by the Home Secretary last July to consider whether any guidance was needed, in the light of the use by Swedish authorities of information supplied to them on the case of Captain Simon Hayward on a police-to-police basis, but used in proceedings in open court.

Mr. Hurd: I expect to receive the advice of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary shortly and will then consider what, if any, general guidance to chief officers is needed.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the practice for officers interviewing suspects held in foreign countries on signing confirmatory memoranda regarding hearsay information relating to those suspects; and on whose authority the officers who did so after interviewing Captain Simon Hayward on 11 June signed such a memorandum.

Mr. Hurd: Subject to the requirements of the law, the question of whether and, if so, how to disclose to others (including police forces in other countries) information held by the police is a matter for the appropriate chief officer; and he is responsible for the actions of his officers. The officers referred to by my hon. Friend are members of the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the arrangements for police-to-police liaison with Nordic countries following the attendance of the London-based Norwegian police official at the trial of Captain Simon Hayward in Stockholm, contrary to the wishes of the head of the national drugs intelligence unit.

Mr. Hurd: Liaison officers have an important part to play in promoting the effective international co-operation which is essential to combat drug trafficking. The liaison officer representing the Nordic countries is a properly accredited official with full diplomatic status. His attendance at Captain Hayward's trial in Stockholm was not a matter on which any authority in this country would be expected to express a view. I am not persuaded of the need for review of liaison arrangements with the Nordic countries.

National Drugs Intelligence Unit

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is responsible for disciplinary action or complaints against personnel working on secondment to the national drugs intelligence unit; and what information he has as to how many complaints have been received against the national drugs intelligence unit during the past 12 months.

Mr. Hurd: Responsibility for such matters remains with the chief officer of the individual's home force. Complaints would be dealt with in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, including, as appropriate, the involvement of the Police Complaints Authority. I understand that there have been no formal complaints made against the unit's staff in the last 12 months.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the head of the national drugs intelligence unit on the conduct of the two officers working for the unit alleged to have performed their duties improperly while interviewing Captain Simon Hayward while he was held without charges in Sweden.

Mr. Hurd: No. I understand that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has taken the view that there are no grounds for formal disciplinary action against the two officers.

Football Matches

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column 842, if he will give details of *(a)* the number of matches covered for each club in season 1987-88 to date, *(b)* the average charge per 1,000 spectators and *(c)* the criteria adopted by the Metropolitan police when deciding the number of officers who should attend a particular match.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that for the charges set out in my reply of 22 October the information requested is as follows:

Club	*Season 1987-88*	
	Number of matches charged	*Number of matches paid*
Arsenal	4	4
Brentford	7	4
Charlton	6	6
Chelsea	8	5

Club	Season 1987-88 Number of matches charged	Number of matches paid
Crystal Palace	7	5
Fulham	9	5
Leyton Orient	10	7
Millwall	7	6
Queen's Park Rangers	6	6
Tottenham Hotspur	7	4
West Ham United	8	5
Wimbledon	7	4

The number of officers to be deployed within each ground is the subject of discussion between the club and the local chief superintendent prior to the start of the season and is based on operational experience. The method of determining manning levels on the basis of one police constable per 1,000 spectators with corresponding supervision is no longer used and the average charge per 1,000 spectators is therefore not readily available.

Exclusion Orders

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons living in the west midlands area were the subject of exclusion orders between December 1974 and the present day;

(2) how many persons living in the west midlands area were the subject of exclusion orders for each month between December 1974 and the present day.

Mr. Hurd: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Refugee Centres

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to establish regional refugee centres.

Mr. John Patten: The voluntary services unit of the Home Office takes a close interest in proposals to establish regional refugee centres in the form of regional councils. Whether such a response is appropriate to the circumstances of the area in question must, however, be decided locally.

South African Visitors

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many South Africans were admitted to the United Kingdom between 1 January 1986 and 1 January 1987; what was their average length of stay in the United Kingdom; what were the main reasons for their visits; and if he will provide a breakdown according to ethnic groups;

(2) how many South African business people were admitted to the United Kingdom from 1 January 1986 to 1 January 1987; and what was their average length of stay.

Mr. Renton: The numbers of South African nationals admitted to the United Kingdom in 1986, and their categories of admission, are published in table 1 of "Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom 1986" (Cm. 166). Information on length of stay is not available for the great majority of persons admitted to the United Kingdom nor is any record kept of the ethnic origin of passengers admitted.

Breath Tests

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy with regard to random breath testing by the police;

(2) what proposals he has for changing the law in relation to drink and driving offences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) on 5 November at column *816*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the alleged use of random breath testing by the police; and in respect of which police forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have received two representations in the last 12 months about the use made of police powers to carry out breath tests: one from an hon. Member on behalf of a constituent and one from a member of the public. Both related to operations conducted by Sussex police.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he will call for a report from the chief constable of Sussex as to the use by Sussex police of section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 in relation to the breath testing of motorists; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Sussex as to the use of road blocks in relation to the recent drink-drive campaign; what steps the chief constable has taken to satisfy himself of the legality of such methods; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The chief constable of Sussex police has indicated that in enforcing the drink-drive legislation his officers have stopped all vehicles passing selected sites, using their powers under section 159 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. Breath tests have then been administered to the driver when there were grounds to do so under section 7 of the 1972 Act. The chief constable satisfied himself that this approach was lawful before authorising the operation.

Television Licences

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many television licences for *(a)* colour and *(b)* black and white have been issued in Northern Ireland in each year since 1980.

Mr. Renton: The available information relates to the number of general form television licences in force at 31 March in each of the years mentioned. This was as follows:

Year	Monochrome	Colour
1980	107,745	162,554
1981	101,313	174,893
1982	94,968	176,936
1983	90,174	183,758
1984	83,818	192,553
1985	79,357	199,055
1986	75,724	194,941
1987	74,520	196,539

Eksund (Arms Find)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list such information that is available to him regarding the types and quantities of weapons, explosives and shells found stowed aboard the vessel Eksund by the French authorities.

Mr. Hurd: I think it right that the French authorities should decide what information should be published and when it should be published. I should not wish to publish any details which would be regarded as prejudicial to criminal proceedings in France.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many black prisoners there are in the prisons of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The information is published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (table 1.13 of the 1986 issue, Cm. 210).

Prison Officers (Statistics)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many black prison officers there are in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* I regret that this information is not available for the prison service in England and Wales. We have instituted a voluntary system of monitoring the ethnic background of new prison service recruits and are anxious to encourage more members of the ethnic communities to apply for prison service vacancies.

Prison Service (Racism)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policies he has to tackle racism within the prison service.

Mr. Hurd *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* We are committed to a policy of racial equality and to the elimination of discrimination in all aspects of the work of the prison service. The strategies adopted for implementing that policy include:

(a) the promulgation of a succinct public policy statement, to be drawn to the attention of all inmates, staff, members of boards of visitors and local review committees and others who have regular dealings with establishments;

(b) the establishment of a clear accountability for the implementation of the policy at establishment level; for this purpose a race relations check-list and statement of responsibilities has been introduced; and governors have been recommended to set up local race relations management teams;

(c) the establishment of central machinery to disseminate advice and guidance and to monitor performance as regards the implementation of the policy;

(d) the development and improvement of race relations training for all grades of staff; and

(e) efforts to increase ethnic minority recruitment to the service and to boards of visitors and local review committees.

Details of the initiatives at *(a)* to *(c)* are given in circular instructions 32/1986, a copy of which is in the Library.

Fireworks

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what report he has received on accidents and incidents arising from the use of fireworks on 5 November and the immediately preceding four weeks.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

I am pleased to say that 5 November and the preceding three weeks seem to have been relatively quiet this year. I hope that this will be reflected in a fall in the number of injuries. However, I have seen reports of a number of incidents which confirm that the problem of hooligans misusing fireworks persists. Our response must be vigorous enforcement of the law in this area.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Credit Facilities

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking in co-operation with the credit industry to control the indiscriminate sale of credit facilities; and if Her Majesty's Government will give publicity to the hazards of borrowing money.

Mr. Maude: Comprehensive controls already exist under the Consumer Credit Act 1974 which ensure that consumers entering into credit agreements are fully informed about their potential commitments and have appropriate protection against unfair or oppressive lending practices. Regulations under the Act impose controls on advertisements to ensure that they are not deceptive or misleading and the Act prohibits the sending of unsolicited credit tokens (including credit cards) to consumers and the sending of credit circulars to minors. In addition, the Director General of Fair Trading has a statutory responsibility under the Act to provide advice and information to the public on credit matters and his office has issued a number of helpful publications which are widely available through trading standards departments, libraries and citizens advice bureaux.

While individuals who freely enter into credit agreements must accept responsibility for their decisions, I accept that lenders, too, have a duty to lend responsibly and I believe this is being increasingly recognised by the industry. I am encouraged by a number of recent developments, including the adoption by the Finance Houses Association of a code of practice, which demonstrate a commitment to responsible lending.

Post Office

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what level of investment is proposed in the Post Office for the years ending March 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office (excluding Girobank, which is treated as a separate nationalised industry for the purposes of monitoring and control) has been given a capital allocation of £135 million for the year ending March 1988. The allocation for the year ending March 1989 will not be given until publication of the forthcoming public expenditure White Paper. But, as recorded in Cm. 56-II, for planning purposes capital spending of £123 million has been assumed.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representation he has received about the level of service provided by the Post Office.

Mr. Butcher: Since the election we have received some 70 such representations from hon. Members and others.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what funding is available to the Post Office for investment in new equipment; and how this compares with 1979 in real terms.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office (excluding Girobank, which is treated as a separate nationalised industry for the purposes of monitoring and control) has been given a capital allocation of £135 million for 1987-88. In real terms this is some 22 per cent. higher than the Post Office's capital spending of £64 million in 1979-80.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many full and part-time staff are employed by the Post Office; and how this compares with 1979;

(2) by how much the first and second class post has increased in size since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: I refer my hon. Friend to the Post Office report and accounts 1986-87, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what are the pay scales currently in force in the Post Office; and how that compares with 1979 in real terms;

(2) what action has been taken to introduce modernisation in the Post Office since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: This is an operational matter for the Post Office Board.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is satisfied with the performance of the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The Post Office has made creditable and satisfactory progress in recent years in many aspects of its performance. But further improvement is necessary, particularly with regard to the quality of the services provided to its customers.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure that the United Kingdom obtains the maximum 19.3 per cent. of European funds which is available under the 1987 European regional development fund.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom is, by Community regulation, guaranteed 14.50 per cent. of the European regional development fund, provided it submits enough qualifying applications. The upper limit of the United Kingdom's share is 19.31 per cent. In 1985, before Portugal and Spain joined the Community, the corresponding figures were 21.42 per cent. and 28.56 per cent.

Similar provisions, with different numbers, apply to the other member states. Since the sum of the current guaranteed lower limits is 88.63 per cent., and of the upper limits 117.09 per cent., the average outcome is bound to be nearer the lower limits.

The limits are applied to commitments over periods of three years, currently 1985-87. The United Kingdom has applications with the Commission to a value of over the upper limit applicable for this period.

The allocation of the fund, within the limits, is the responsibility of the European Commission under the terms of the regulation. The Commission is well aware of our interest in a good share. Other member states have similar interests.

Fireworks

Mr. Pike: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent representations he has received regarding the sale and use of fireworks; and if he proposes to introduce any new regulations to govern these matters.

Mr. Maude: I have received fewer representations than usual this year about the sale and use of fireworks. Most concern children throwing them about and frightening people. The law against selling fireworks to the under-16s and letting them off in the streets was considerably strengthened by the Fireworks (Safety) Regulations 1986 and the Consumer Protection Act 1987. There may, therefore, be more prosecutions for such offences this year and I expect that this will lead in due course to a reduction in the level of abuse.

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on the employment of commercial agents by British companies in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: Within the limits of our international commitments, the full range of the British Overseas Trade Board's services is available to British firms wishing to export to South Africa. Advice continues to be available under the board's export representative service.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy concerning the export of security equipment from the United Kingdom to South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have nothing to add to my reply that I gave to the right hon. Gentleman on 10 November 1987.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take action to prevent Racal plc from supplying components to its subsidiary, Decca components, in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: No. Racal is in close touch with my Department concerning its activities in South Africa, and has secured the necessary export licences where appropriate.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will take action to prevent the export of Land Rovers to South Africa for use by the South African military.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on Tuesday 10 November 1987.

Exports (Latin America)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) which were the top 10 Latin American importers of British manufactured goods for each year since 1975;

(2) if he will list, for each year since 1975, the volume and value in pounds sterling of the top 10 British manufactured goods imported by Latin American countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information is available only in value terms for exports of manufactured goods. The available information is given in the tables:

Table I

Top Ten Latin American Importers of British Manufactured Goods

1975-82
Brazil
Mexico
Venezuela
Argentina
Peru
Cuba
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Panama

1984
Brazil
Mexico
Venezuela
Chile
Panama
Cuba
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Bolivia

1983 and 1985-86
Brazil
Venezuela
Mexico
Chile
Cuba
Colombia
Peru
Ecuador
Panama
Paraguay

Table II

Major Exports of Manufactured Goods to Latin American Countries

£ million

Division	*1975*	*1976*
Machinery other than electric (71)	241·5	260·5
Transport equipment (73)	84·8	100·2
Electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances (72)	43·2	62·7
Manufactures of metal NES (69)	43·2	26·4
Chemical elements and compounds (51)	33·3	49·2
Iron and steel (67)	32·7	24·6
Chemical materials and products NES (59)	17·4	26·6
Miscellaneous manufactured articles NES (89)	16·5	18·9
Medicinal and pharmaceutical products (54)	13·3	14·7
Plastic materials regenerated cellulose and artificial resins (58)	12·7	14·3

Table III

£ million

Division	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Road vehicles (78)	63·4	66·1	77·2	82·2	84·9	45·9	30·3	32·6	82·9	93·4
Power generating machinery and equipment (71)	74·5	86·3	79·1	109·5	108·3	83·6	38·9	56·8	75·4	90·4
Machinery specialized for particular industries (72)	97·3	105·1	92·8	110·9	100·8	74·0	44·4	48·5	76·3	78·2
Organic chemicals (51)	37·8	33·2	31·3	35·8	39·7	37·5	35·3	51·2	71·3	66·4
Other transport equipment (79)	154·0	82·2	113·2	40·1	52·9	70·3	52·9	137·4	96·4	56·9
General industrial machinery and equipment NES and machine parts NES (74)	61·3	67·8	78·3	64·4	70·4	54·1	40·2	50·3	59·7	54·9
Chemical materials and products NES (59)	28·2	32·2	35·0	29·3	30·5	29·5	39·7	36·8	56·4	47·9
Telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (76)	28·7	21·1	29·6	23·1	22·3	38·3	16·8	20·2	56·0	46·4
Medicinal and pharmaceutical products (54)	18·7	17·1	22·0	25·8	24·7	26·8	25·3	30·1	37·9	42·3
Metalworking machinery (73)	24·5	18·3	17·4	43·1	28·7	24·5	20·8	57·5	7·6	39·1

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

1. Latin America defined as in OTS recognised designation of countries.
2. 1975 and 1976 major exports defined as divisions of the Standard International Trade Classification Revision.
3. 1977-86 major exports defined as divisions of the Standard International Trade Classification Revision 2 (SITC (R2)).
4. 1986 figures provisional.

Copyright

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he proposes to take to prevent the copying of copyright material on tape and gramophone record.

Mr. Butcher: The right to prevent the copying of copyright material is a private right to be exercised by the owner of the right. Moreover, the unauthorised production of copies for the purpose of trade is a criminal offence for which severe penalties are provided. The Copyright, Designs and Patents Bill will maintain this level of protection.

European Space Agency

Mr. Page: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will report on the outcome of the European Space Agency ministerial meeting at The Hague on 9 and 10 November.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made today.

Thanet

Mr. Gale: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assistance he intends to give the Thanet travel-to-work area in recognition of its serious economic problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to the approval of the European Commission, it is my intention to make available up to £500,000 for the provision of business improvement services in the Thanet travel-to-work area. Support under the scheme will be available for a period of up to three years or until the funds run out, whichever is the sooner.

Property

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the properties owned by the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The properties owned by the Duchy or in which the Duchy has an interest are as follows:

(a) Estates, predominantly agricultural in nature in the following counties.

County	*Approximate acreage*
Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire	2,865
Staffordshire, Cheshire and Shropshire	13,353
Lancashire	10,920
Yorkshire	9,318
	36,456

In addition, the Duchy owns some 15,000 acres of moorland in north Yorkshire and south Wales, most of which are subject to common rights.

The estates include 175 agricultural tenancies and 3,145 acres of woodland.

(b) The freehold of properties in the Manor of Savoy bounded by Lancaster place, the Embankment, Savoy hill and Strand (including the Savoy chapel) and a building at 2-4 Lancaster place to 137 Strand. A substantial part of these properties is let on building leases or equivalent terms, having between 31 and 92 years unexpired.

Including the Savoy chapel and its garden (from which no revenue is derived) the acreage totals approximately 2·25.

(c) Miscellaneous commercial properties in Harrogate which include five shops, one hotel and a house now converted to offices. These properties, in the main, are let on occupational leases. There is also the remainder of a residential estate developed over a period of 100 years or so producing 36 ground rents. The freehold reversions are sold to the lessees on terms which follow the provisions of the Leasehold Reform Acts.

(d) Single holdings (eg not forming part of an estate) of commercial property in Leeds, Leicester, Bradford, Lewes and London (other than the Savoy estate). Except for four properties in London which are let on ground rents, these are let on occupational leases.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the items of land and property in the possession of the Duchy of Lancaster which are leased, giving in each case the financial benefit to the Duchy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All properties owned by the Duchy are let under lease (unless temporarily vacant pending re-letting) except for properties occupied by the Duchy in the course of managing its own business, and for woodlands.

The total number of lettings (including wayleaves and minor interests) exceeds 850.

The gross income before the deduction of repairing and insuring costs borne by the Duchy, and before management costs, may be summarised as follows:

	£
Agricultural estates, miscellaneous residential lettings; mineral and sporting rents	1,860,167
Commercial properties, whether let on occupational leases or ground rents (including those located within the agricultural estates)	1,055,430
	2,915,597

The figures are as audited to 29 September 1986. The total unaudited figure to 29 September 1987 is £3,054,203.

Commercial Operations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the estimated financial gain to the Duchy of Lancaster from repealing the restrictions on the commercial operations of the Duchy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The change in legislation envisaged in the Duchy of Lancaster Bill would not of itself create an increase in revenue, as the increase in value of a site could be realised by the sale of the site, and reinvestment of the proceeds. What the proposed legislation makes possible is the retention of the site and the enhancement of the value by way of increased rental from the site, rather than by sale and reinvestment.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list for each region of England payments made for *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance in 1986-87 and so far in 1987-88.

Mr. Atkins: Payments of regional development grant[1] made in each region of England in 1986-87 and 1987-88 to date were:

Region	*1986-87 £ million*	*[3]1987-88 £ million*
North East	89·8	33·4
North West	113·7	28·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	27·1	11·4
East Midlands	8·4	5·6
South West	15·4	2·5
TOTAL	254·4	81·3

Payments of regional selective assistance[2] in the same periods were:

Region	*1986-87 £ million*	*[3]1987-88 £ million*
North-East	18·5	9·0
North-West	19·2	6·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	10·0	4·3
East Midlands	2·2	0·3
West Midlands	9·9	8·1
South-West	5·2	0·8
TOTAL	65·0	28·7

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[1] Consists of old and new style RDGs.

[2] Industrial and training grants only.

[3] April to October.

Press Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his reply of 3 November, to what factor he attributes the increase between 1983-84 and 1984-85 in his Department's expenditure on press advertising.

Mr. Butcher *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: In any one year the Department of Trade and Industry undertakes a wide range of advertising projects. These have differing durations and may span more than one financial year. Consequently the sums spent on promoting individual activities, and the total amount, can vary from one year to the next.

Between 1983-84 and 1984-85 there was increased expenditure on services for small firms, trade promotion, and inward investment, partly offset by a lower level of spend on high technology.

In addition, I regret that there was a transposition of digits in my answer of 3 November. The expenditure for 1984-85 should read £2,081,883 and not £2,810,883.

Eastern Bloc (Telephone Calls)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will name and give the precise location of the United States facility in the area of Harrogate through which all telephone calls to Eastern bloc countries are routed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have been asked to reply.

There is a United States communications facility near Harrogate at Menwith hill but I am not prepared to comment in detail on its operational role.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENTS

Crown Agents

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those countries which are using or seeking to use the services of the Crown Agents.

Mr. Eggar: A list of principals of the Crown Agents is given on pages 41 to 45 of its 1986 annual report and accounts, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it would not be appropriate to refer to current negotiations for the use of the Crown Agents' services.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether he has any proposals to change *(a)* the management and *(b)* the future status of the Crown Agents;

(2) whether his Department is involved in any discussions about the future of the Crown Agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have no new proposals to announce. The Government regularly consider the future development of the Crown Agents in the course of examining its annual strategic plan and their annual report and accounts.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Radioactivity

Mr. Gary Waller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring of radioactivity levels was carried out in the Craven and Ilkley area of north and west Yorkshire in the period following the Chernobyl disaster; whether any precautionary action was taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the period following the Chernobyl accident, the Ministry sampled widely in England; in north and west Yorkshire, 181 and 36 samples respectively were taken in 1986. Of these, the samples listed in the table were taken from the Craven and Bradford districts (the latter includes Ilkley). None of these results gave cause for concern so precautionary action was limited to continuing low-level monitoring in these counties.

However, I have been aware of recent press comments focusing on a small area around Skipton and Ilkley, and have as a precaution caused further sampling to be carried out in these localities. I reported the initial results of this exercise to my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) on 9 November, at column *63*, and I undertook in that reply to publish all results in detail when complete and deposit them in the Library of the House.

Measurements of total caesium levels in samples taken from Craven and Bradford districts in 1986

Type of sample	*Number of samples*	*Date*	*Total caesium content*
A. Craven district			
Cow's milk	10	5-11 May	Not detected—14 Bq/l
Sheep's cheese	1	26 May	38 Bq/kg
Rhubarb	1	2 July	Not detected
Sheepmeat (muscle)	3	23 July	176-315 Bq/kg
Blackberries	1	22 October	< 59 Bq/kg
B. Bradford district			
Sheepmeat (muscle)	1	27 June	130 Bq/kg
Grouse	2	6 August	514 689 Bq/kg

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of maintaining the information division in his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Information is not readily available in the form requested. Expenditure by my Department, including information division, on press liaison, information policy, technical visual aids and publications, as shown in the Ministry's top management information system (MINIM), is as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	2·7
1986-87	3·0
1985-86	3·5
1984-85	3·2

Expenditure for previous years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information division of his Department.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The complement for information division for *(a)* press liaison, information policy, technical visual aids and publication duties; and *(b)* library services, is as follows:

Grade	*(a)*	*(b)*
5	1	—
PIO	—	
Chief librarian (Grade 7)	—	1
SIO	8	—
Deputy Chief librarian	—	1
IO	6	—
IO/HEO	4	—
HEO	2	—
Librarian	—	2
Assistant librarian	—	6
AIO	9	—
AIO/EO	2	—
EO	6	—
Higher Graphics Officer	1	—
Graphics Officer	7	—
Translators (Grade II and III)	—	5
AO/AA	26	15
Senior Paper Keeper and Paper Keepers	11	2
Senior Photographer	1	—
Personal Secretary	2	—
Typist	1	—
Total	89	32

Poultry

Mr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the quarterly figures for the last two years and annual figures for the preceeding five years for the number of imports of poultry into the United Kingdom from each of the member countries of the EEC.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is given in the table. Figures for 1980 are not readily available.

United Kingdom imports of live poultry from the European Community

Number of birds

Year	*France*	*Netherlands*	*Irish Republic*	*Denmark*
1981	—	—	374,003	—
1982	—	48,626	1,297,112	283,200
1983	—	20,785	1,376,968	500
1984	41,517	19,810	1,933,022	773,526
1985				
1st quarter	10,275	—	717,548	177,797
2nd quarter	1,400	13,500	775,952	166,000
3rd quarter	6,700	—	741,263	188,550
4th quarter	1,800	8,490	651,907	221,500
1986				
1st quarter	—	—	565,964	208,068
2nd quarter	7,950	3,320	1,071,360	242,306
3rd quarter	2,450	1,560	873,274	233,284
4th quarter	8,050	—	931,897	153,450

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Trade Statistics.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the quarterly figures for the last two years and annual figures for the preceding five years for the number of imports of poultry into the United Kingdom from each non-EEC country.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The information requested is given in the table. Figures for 1980 are not readily available.

United Kingdom imports of live poultry from third countries

Number of Birds

	United States of America	*Canada*	*Tanzania*
1981	20,574	—	—
1982	112	38,900	24
1983	—	14,600	—
1984	53,833	44,466	—
1985			
1st quarter	31,200	—	—
2nd quarter	12,980	17,609	—

	United States of America	*Canada*	*Tanzania*
3rd quarter	16,928	21,140	—
4th quarter	82,910	2,450	—
1986			
1st quarter	28,872	—	—
2nd quarter	21,812	19,830	—
3rd quarter	16,296	—	—
4th quarter	3,120	17,530	—

Source: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Trade Statistics

Mr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which countries have been granted licences for the import of poultry into the United Kingdom in the last year.

Mr. Donald Thompson: General import licences exist for the importation into the United Kingdom of live poultry from the Republic of Ireland, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Imports from elsewhere must comply with animal health conditions agreed between Her Majesty's Government and the authorities of the country of origin, and enter the United Kingdom under specific licences issued to individual importers. In the last year, during which no new agreements on animal health conditions have been reached with any country, specific licences have been issued for imports from Canada, Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States of America.

THE ARTS

Scottish Arts Council

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the sub-committees of the Scottish Arts Council; and if he will list *(a)* the male and *(b)* female members of each of these sub-committees, giving their names, qualifications and the length of their service on the council.

Mr. Luce: There are four women members of the Scottish Arts Council: Olga Clayton, Elaine McDonald, OBE, Jan McDonald and Ann Turner Thomson. No formal qualifications are necessary. Members are selected because they have expertise or interest in a particular field.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the names and qualifications of the women members appointed to the Scottish Arts Council; and if he will list the criteria used in the selection process.

Mr. Luce: The seven committees of the Scottish Arts Council, with their members and length of service, are as follows. No formal qualifications are required.

	Length of service	
	Years	*Months*
Music Committee		
Alexander Orr (Chairman)	5	10
Geoffrey Ball	2	10
Ian Halliburton	1	10
Peter Evans	3	10
Beth McKill	3	10
Nicholas Philipson	2	11
Jim Souness	2	11
Deirdre Hutton	3	10
Robin Miller	3	10
Linda Ormiston		10
Drama Committee		
Jan McDonald (Chairman)	3	10
Andrew Johnstone	3	10
Norman Macdonald		8
Gerda Stevenson	1	7
John Watt	1	7
Paul Bassett	1	7
Margaret Gordon	3	10
Stephen Mulrine	3	10
Judy Steel	3	10
André Tammes	3	10
Alan Lyddiard		7
Stuart Patterson		6
Dance and Mime Committee		
Keith Alexander (Chairman)	1	10
Michael Clayton	3	6
Elaine McDonald		10
Joyce Deans	2	4
Dorothy Munro	2	6
Helen Bryce	3	7
Bill Burdett-Coutts	1	1
Norma Main	3	0
Roger Spence	3	0
Art Committee		
Myer Lacome (Chairman)	1	4
Isi Merzstein		10
Ann Turner Thomson	4	10
Christopher Allan	3	10
Keith Ingham	2	7
Robert McGilvray	2	7
Joyce Cairns	2	7
Doug Cocker	1	7
Duncan Thompson	3	7
Literature Committee		
Stewart Sanderson (Chairman)	4	10
Iain Crichton-Smith	2	10
Willis Packard	4	10
Stewart Conn	5	1
Janis Adams	4	10
Deirdre Keaney	2	10
Deirdre Chapman	1	1
Peter Cochrane	2	10
Combined Arts Committee		
Brian Ivory (Chairman)	4	10
Olga Clayton		10
Clive Andrews	2	7
Simon Mackenzie	2	7
Graeme McKinnon	4	7
Arthur Watson	2	7
Grace Grant	3	3
Elizabeth Foulkes	3	4
Joseph McGinlay		6
John Moreland	1	1
Policy and Resources Committee		
Sir Alan Peacock (Chairman)	1	3
Keith Alexander	1	10

	Length of service	
	Years	*Months*
Brian Ivory	4	10
Myer Lacome	1	4
James Logan	4	10
Jan McDonald	3	10
Alexander Orr	5	10
Stewart Sanderson	4	10
David G. Campbell (SED ASSESSOR)	4	0

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy in the next Finance Bill to extinguish the differential charge to taxation resulting from lawfully married couples paying more in taxation than two single persons cohabiting on identical individual and unit incomes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Green Paper "The Reform of Personal Taxation" (Cmnd. 9756), published in March 1986, discussed the so-called "tax penalties" on marriage and how they might be removed under a new system of independent taxation of husband and wife with transferable allowances. I announced in the Budget debate this year that the Government would not be going ahead with transferable allowances at this stage but would explore the possibility of a halfway house to the approach in the Green Paper. I made it clear that the Government consider it important to remove the tax penalties on marriage.

BP Shares

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations were held with BP over the decision to establish a floor price for its rights issue shares sold to the public; and whether BP is to be asked to make any contribution to the cost of repurchase of those shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: BP was consulted on what action should be taken in relation to the offers, in accordance with clause 8·01 of the underwriting agreement. The arrangements for financing the repurchase of any partly paid BP shares were set out in my answer to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 5 November at column *851*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he held with the Bank of England about the floor price proposal for BP shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my right hon. Friend's statement of 29 October.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 9 November, if he will break down the figure of £5·9 million spent on newspaper advertising in relation to the British Petroleum share issue by individual newspaper.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. The information requested is commercially confidential.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact there would be in a full year on the revenue from stamp duty if *(a)* all Government and local authority bonds were included within the tax net and *(b)* the rates of stamp duty were all halved.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The combined effect of the changes would be a reduction in stamp duty revenue of about one fifth. This estimate assumes that transfers of new and existing Government and local authority bonds would be subject to the same rate of duty as transfers of stocks and shares and it does not allow for the effect on prices and the volume of transactions resulting from the changes.

Central Office of Information

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the Central Office of Information.

Mr. Brooke: Personnel[1] employed in the Central Office of Information as at 1 November 1987 are as follows:

	Number
Grade 3	1
Grade 4	1
Grade 5	6
Grade 6	15
Grade 7	32
Senior Information Officer	96½
Information Officer	206½
Assistant Information Officer	39
Senior Executive Officer	12½
Higher Executive Officer	24½
Executive Officer	46
Photographic Grades	15
Librarian Grades	2
Typing and Secretarial Grades	57½
Reprographics Grades	11
Administrative Officer	147
Administrative Assistant	25½
Paperkeeping, Messengerial and Security Officer Grades	49½
Telephonist	3
Industrial Grades	15
Total	805½

[1] Fractions represent part-time staff.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of maintaining the Central Office of Information in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The running costs (on an outturn basis) for the Central Office of Information for these years were as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1979-80	13·6
1980-81	16·5
1981-82	17·7
1982-83	17·6
1983-84	18·8
1984-85	18·2
1985-86	18·1
1986-87	17·7

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of maintaining the information division within Her Majesty's Treasury in each year since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: The figures are as follows:

Year	Total £000
1982-83	404
1983-84	456
1984-85	508
1985-86	524
1986-87	535

This expenditure has been incurred by the information divisions in the central Treasury and in the central computer and telecommunications agency (part of Her Majesty's Treasury). Comparable figures for the years 1979-80 to 1981-82 are not available because of machinery of Government changes.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to widen the criteria under which taxpayers have access to independent statutory appeals against the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Lawson: I have no plans to do so. Taxpayers already have a statutory right to appeal to the independent appeal commissioners against their tax assessment if they think it is incorrect. Where a taxpayer's complaint concerns maladministration by the Inland Revenue, it is open to an hon. Member to ask the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to investigate it.

Mr. Raison: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to how many individuals the Inland Revenue sends notices of tax coding at their homes.

Mr. Lawson: I regret that the information is not available.

The total number of coding notices issued in the current year is likely to be around 23 million. The number of individuals receiving them, however, will be fewer. Many employees will not need a coding notice because their affairs are relatively straightforward and Budget changes can be automatically reflected in their coding. Other employees may receive several notices in a year if, for example, their circumstances are more complex or change during the year. A small proportion of notices are sent to the employee at his employer's address.

Developing Countries (Tax Relief)

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he is giving to allowing tax relief on provisions made by banks against loans to developing countries; which banks have applied for such assistance; what amounts are involved in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 10 November 1987]:* Tax relief due to banks in respect of loans which cannot be recovered in full is governed by the ordinary tax rules which apply to any trader who gives credit in the course of his business. Because of the rules of confidentiality which govern taxpayers' affairs, I am not in a position to provide information about individual banks.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the studies, with their precise remits, that he, or Her Majesty's Customs and Excise, has commissioned on value added tax and revenues from value added tax; and when he expects them to report to him.

Mr. Lilley: The Economic and Social Research Council, together with the Treasury and other Departments, under the auspices of the Public Finance Consortium, in 1986 commissioned two research projects relating to value added tax. One is being undertaken by Professor Ulph at the University of Bristol; the second is being undertaken by Professor Blundell at University College London.

The aim of Professor Ulph's project is to improve our ability to forecast receipts from value added tax using aggregate data. The project is due to be completed in June 1988.

The aim of Professor Blundell's project is to use micro-economic data to model indirect taxes, both excise duties and value added tax. The funding by the Public Finance Consortium ended in September 1987 but the Treasury and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise have provided additional finance so that the project will now be completed in September 1988.

As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House on 29 April, at column 329, these projects were selected following an advertisement in *The Guardian* in March 1985 inviting applications for research proposals on indirect taxes.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's policy towards extending value added tax, or any attempts to extend value added tax, to cover newspapers, books and periodicals.

Mr. Lilley: Decisions on changes in taxation are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget judgment.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions he has made about *(a)* extensions to value added tax and *(b)* rises in excise duties when he compiled his forecast for inflation in 1988.

Mr. Lilley: The forecast in the Autumn Statement makes the conventional assumptions that excise duties are revalorised in the Budget in line with RPI inflation in the previous year and that no changes are made in the coverage or rates of value added tax.

Government Data Network

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of the memorandum of agreement to be sent to the groups tendering for the contract to run the proposed new Government data network; and when he hopes to make a statement on the outcome of the tendering process.

Mr. Brooke: Memorandums of agreement have yet to be finalised with the three consortia bidding for the Government data network contract. Each memorandum is different and will reflect the solution being offered by a consortium. Publication would be a breach of commercial confidentiality.

I expect to be in a position to announce the outcome of the tendering process early next year. The precise timing depends on the speed with which the Government and consortia are able to complete negotiations and on the content of the tenders. A decision on whether or not to preceed will be taken after tenders have been evaluated.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps have been taken to assess the feasibility and costs of training civil servants to operate and manage the proposed new Government data network; for what reasons the Government have rejected this option; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Given the general scarcity of networking skills and experience, the Government are seeking bids from consortia with a proven track record in data communications as the best practical way to provide a GDN service quickly and reliably.

If the project goes ahead the successful contractor will be expected to operate the network management centre. The staffing and management of the application service centres will be the responsibility of Departments using GDN.

Tax Allowances

Dr. Marek: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the amount of tax allowances against United Kingdom income tax or corporation tax given to *(a)* individual persons and *(b)* other bodies carrying on a trade or business for the last five years for which figures are available; what proportion of these allowances and the aggregate amount was deductible only by virtue of it relating to expenditure on (i) overseas customers and (ii) employees; and what amounts were in each case claimed for but not allowed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A table of the estimated cost of tax allowances and reliefs for 1986-87 is given in table 2.29 "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90" (Cm. 56). Corresponding figures for earlier years were published in previous public expenditure White Papers. Information to provide the detailed breakdown requested is not available centrally and it would not be possible to collect it without disproportionate cost.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage increase in the number of unemployed people in the United Kingdom since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: Between May 1979 and 8 October 1987 the number of unemployed claimants, in the United Kingdom, excluding school leavers and adjusted for discontinuities and seasonality, increased by 135·7 per cent.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will publish figures for each year since 1974 showing unemployment totals both numerically and as a percentage of the total work force in each of the London boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham;

(2) if he will publish, for each year since the establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation, unemployment totals both numerically and as a percentage of the total work force for that part of each of the London boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham that is in the London Docklands Development Corporation;

(3) if he will publish figures for each year since the establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation showing unemployment totals both numerically and as a percentage of the total work force in the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The table shows the numbers of unemployed claimants in the London boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham, the areas within those boroughs which are also in the London docklands area, and the London docklands area as a whole, at September of each year since 1983. Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas. These figures are derived from the ward-based system and are available only from June 1983. The comparison is affected by the change in the compilation of the unemployment statistics in March 1986.

Unemployed claimants

	London Borough			*Area of Borough within the London Docklands area*			
	Southwark	*Tower Hamlets*	*Newham*	*Southwark*	*Tower Hamlets*	*Newham*	*London Dockland area*
September 1983	18,161	15,814	15,909	1,506	3,915	1,669	6,997
September 1984	20,416	16,052	16,968	1,589	4,032	1,789	7,346
September 1985	21,834	16,618	17,269	1,721	4,193	1,914	7,733
September 1986	21,727	16,626	17,633	1,704	4,098	2,055	7,735
September 1987	19,470	15,364	15,240	1,519	3,813	1,789	7,012

Availability for Work

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding the operation of the availability for work rules.

Mr. Lee: I continue to receive periodic representations on the procedures which operate in unemployment benefit offices to ensure that claimants to unemployment benefit satisfy the availability for work rules. These rules, which have been adopted by successive Governments, and which have not changed in recent years, require that all claimants to unemployed benefit must be available for work.

Secret Ballots

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of representations he has received opposing the secret balloting of trade union members for election of union officials and before strikes.

Mr. Nicholls: Individual responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and their Members" are treated in confidence by my Department. Of the 54 responses to the proposal to require all political fund ballots and elections to principal executive committees to be by the fully postal method only, only 19 expressed disapproval. Of 55 comments on the proposal to give trade union members a right to restrain their union from authorising or endorsing industrial action without a secret ballot only 14 were against.

Departmental Statistics

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed within the information division of his Department.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is as follows:

1 × Grade 5
1 × Grade 6
4 × Grade 7
11 × Senior Information Officer
14 × Information Officer
5 × Assistant Information Officer
2 × Graphics Officer III
1 × Higher Executive Officer
3 × Executive Officer
6 × Administrative Officer
4 × Administrative Assistant
2 × Senior Personal Secretary
3 × Typist
2 × Casual Administrative Assistant
1 × Casual Assistant Information Officer

Youth Training Schemes

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the youth training schemes provided at the latest available date, together with the number of places each is offering for Coventry, in the same form as the information provided in the answer of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *317*.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 6 November 1987]:* A list of YTS providers at October 1987 in the Coventry local authority district and the number of places offered by each is shown below.

Provider	*Places offered*
Alvis Ltd.	10
Atlas [Coventry and Warwickshire Awards Trust][1]	33
Coventry Area Health Authority	33
Coventry Chamber of Commerce	320
Coventry City Council (clerical)	60
Coventry City Council (construction)	30
Coventry and District Co-operative Society	26
Coventry City Education Department	513
Coventry Rad Heat	14
Coventry Small Business Training Scheme	12
Courtaulds Plc.	26
Dunlop Ltd.	55
GEC Ltd.	90
Guy Associates	56
Hotel and Catering Training Board	52
Jaguar Cars Ltd.	28
Boots Company Plc.	10
British Office Systems and Stationery Federation	3
British Printing Industry Federation	8
British Rail	20
British Retail Florists Association	12
Burgess	6
Burton Group Plc.	7
C and A Modes	2
Clothing and Allied Products Industry Training Board	22
Construction Industry Training Board	320
Debenhams Plc.	20
Department of Employment	10
D.E.R.	1
De Vere Hotels Ltd.	13
Dewhurst	7
Dixons Group Plc.	4
Electricity Council	5
Electronic Rentals	3
Essanelle	4
Essex Leisure	1
Federation of Banks	18
Footballers Association Further Education and Vocational Training Society Ltd.	12
Ford Motor Company	2
Fosters Menswear	4
Gateway Food Markets Ltd.	6
GKN	1
Glass Training Ltd.	2
Granada Television Rentals	4
Habitat	2
Halifax Building Society	2
Home Charm Group plc	18
IBM	8
Lunn Poly	8
Motor Agents Association	50
Magnet and Southerns	2
Marks and Spencer plc	5
JHP Training (Coventry)	72
Lloyds British Training Services Ltd.	98
Massey Ferguson Ltd.	24
MGTS Training Services Ltd.	268
Midland Link	126
National Association for the Care and Settlement of Offenders—Coventry	30
Rolls-Royce Ltd.	32
Peugeot Talbot plc	49
Tetra Incorporated	100
Wickham Bennet	6
Post Office	31
East Midlands Butchery	30
Total	2,224

[1] Some of these places will be provided in Warwickshire.

The following list shows providers whose schemes in Coventry and Warwickshire are administered by the Manpower Services Commission large companies unit. It is not possible to separately identify schemes operating in Coventry.

Provider	*Places offered*
Abbey National Building Society PLC	1
Association of British Travel Agents	16
Association of Merchants in Trading	9
ARROW Training Associates	5
Austin Rover Group Ltd.	41
British Association of Professional Hairdressing Employers	15
British Holiday Homes and Parks Association	3
British Home Stores PLC	6
British Insurance Brokers Association	14
Builders Merchants Federation	19
Midland Bank PLC	8
Mothercare Ltd.	4
National Institute of Hardware	3

Provider	*Places offered*
National Pony Society	3
Owen, Owen	10
Partco	11
Plastics Processing Industry Training Board	4
Remploy	5
Rumbelows	5
J. Sainsbury PLC	13
Scaffolding GB	1
Shoe Repair Industry Training Board	4
W. H. Smith & Son	3
W. H. Smith Do It All	2
Standard Tyre & Exhaust Ltd.	4
Stylo Barrett	4
Tesco Stores Ltd.	20
Trust House Forte	1
Threshold	20
Timpson Shoe Repairs	1
Trustee Savings Bank PLC	2
Timber Trades Training Association	6
Wolseley Centres Ltd.	3
F. W. Woolworth PLC	6
TOTAL	894

Fit for Work Award

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the names of the employees who won the most recent Manpower Services Commission fit for work award.

Mr. Lee: The fit for work award is for employers and the 1987 winners will be announced on 9 December.

Tourism (Sports Facilities)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on measures to encourage the availability to tourists of all-weather sports facilities.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply. The Government fully recognise the contribution sport and recreation can make to tourism. Public sector sports facilities, including those grant-aided by the Sports Council, are available to all members of the public, including tourists. Numbers of all-weather sports facilities have increased in the last 10 years and information on such facilities is made freely available to tourists. The tourist boards are also able to encourage provision of recreational facilities used by tourists through the schemes run under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

Miss V. A. Culnane

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when Miss Veronica A. Culnane, formerly employed in the St. Marylebone unemployment benefit office, will receive the 18½ days salary in lieu of annual leave, due to be paid to her by the end of October.

Mr. Lee: Miss Culnane was paid her entitlement on 10 November 1987.

Homeless Persons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what guidance his Department gives to local authorities concerning the resettlement of homeless persons outside their own borough in relation to their employment prospects.

Mr. Lee: My Department, principally through the employment service jobcentre network, is able to offer advice on employment prospects in particular localities to local authorities and to other enquiries, including employers and jobseekers. This includes providing information about jobs available locally and in other areas, advice on general employment matters and Department of Employment and Manpower Service Commission programmes and provision.

Settle-Carlisle Corridor

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total cost of the study on the Settle-Carlisle corridor by J. Jarvis and Sons plc; who is funding the study and by what amount in addition to the Manpower Services Commission; whether J. Jarvis and Sons plc was chosen by competitive tender for the task; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The feasibility study on the Settle-Carlisle corridor followed discussions between the Ribblesdale trust, J. Jarvis and Sons plc and MSC. The study is being jointly funded by MSC and J. Jarvis. The total cost will be in excess of £10,000 to which MSC is contributing £5,000, the balance being met by J. Jarvis.

The purpose of the study is to see what opportunities there are to mount projects in the area whether under the community programme or other programmes. Once the study has been completed MSC will decide which if any of the projects will be undertaken and will invite a range of sponsors to discuss how those projects can best be taken forward.

In view of the interest of the hon. Member I have asked officials from my regional office in Leeds to meet with him to inform him of progress on the study.

Factories Inspectorate

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions are given to the factories inspectorate about dealings with *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the press.

Mr. Nicholls: Civil servants in HSE are subject to the Official Secrets Act and to instructions which guide staff as to their conduct. The general principles are that the relation of trust between civil servants and Ministers must be maintained and that civil servants should not engage in activities likely to call their political impartiality into question. Area directors of the factory inspectorate are free to respond directly to Members of Parliament on specific matters affecting their constituencies. HSE staff deal with the press through the HSE press office or through the regional offices of the Central Office of Information.

Community Programme

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether supermarkets will be able to offer community programme places to the unemployed under the new benefits plus scheme.

Mr. Lee: No. However, managing agents may wish to arrange work placements for their trainees with local employers, including those in the retail sector, as part of their personal development and where this would improve their chances of securing a job.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is yet ready to announce the level of the premium entitlement to be paid to participants on the new community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No.

Information Division

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of maintaining the information division within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: Separate salary and other staff costs relating specifically to my information division are not available prior to 1985. For the financial years since then the information is as follows:

	£
1985-86	470,917
1986-87	592,414

Pesticides

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been carried out into the effect of pesticides on the health of agricultural workers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive has commissioned three research projects into agricultural pesticides and human health. There is an extensive scientific literature relevant to the subject, both from this country and from abroad, and the executive keeps in close touch with research developments.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to establish a reward of money owed to the London residuary body in respect of unsettled Greater London council accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My Department settles accounts once it is satisfied that payment is due. If the hon. Member is aware of any unsettled accounts in respect of the Greater London council I shall be happy to look further into the matter.

Holiday Advertisements

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is taking steps to ensure that travel companies should be required to include in the description and specifications of holiday hotels and resorts details of the noise pollution levels of each hotel advertised, details of adjacent noise levels from neighbouring hotels and of noise enforcement practices operated by the local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The content of holiday promotional material is already subject to the requirements of the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, to the British code of advertising practice and to the relevant provisions of the tour operators' code of conduct administered by the Association of British Travels Agents. There are no plans to introduce specific requirements for disclosure of noise levels in hotels or at resorts.

Child Labour

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will give the number of cases brought to court in the last 10 years regarding the illegal use of child labour and the number of cases resulting in conviction on the same basis; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what evidence he has of the incidence of abuse of child labour in the United Kingdom; whether Her Majesty's Government have any forthcoming proposals regarding this matter; and whether he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: I have been asked to reply.

The available figures are as follows:

(a) Industrial undertakings

Prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive under section 1 of the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920.

	Information laid	*Convictions*
1981	5	[1]5
1982	4	4
1983	3	3
1984	6	6
1985	8	[1,2]6

Note: Figures prior to 1981 are not readily available.

[1] One withdrawn.

[2] One dismissed.

(b) Agriculture

Between 1977 and 1986, under legislation which prohibits the employment or involvement of children in certain agricultural operations, 250 informations were laid resulting in 241 convictions. It is thought that a significant number of the informations laid were under the Agriculture (Avoidance of Accidents to Children) Regulations 1958 which apply to all children under the age of 13 years whether they are employed or not.

(c) Non-industrial undertakings

Figures (may be incomplete) notified by the Home Office for prosecutions and convictions under Sections 18, 19 and 20 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933.

	Information laid	*Convictions*
1979	23	18
1980	26	25
1981	24	22
1982	17	16
1983	12	12
1984	12	9
1985	11	9

Note: Figures prior to 1979 are not readily available.

Legislation prohibits the employment of children under 13 and restricts the part-time employment of children between the ages of 13 and 16 and gives substantial powers to those responsible for enforcement of these safeguards. Children in this age group may work only to the extent that their health and welfare and education do not suffer. Under the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and byelaws approved by the Secretary of State, local education authorities are empowered to enforce restrictions on the hours and occupations in which children may work, and under the Education Act 1944 to prohibit or restrict the employment of any child.

The Health and Safety Executive has powers under the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920 to take immediate action if a child is found to be working illegally in any industrial undertaking and has powers to enforce health and safety legislation which prohibits the employment or involvement of children in certain agricultural operations.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimates he has as to the average weekly take-home pay of dockers employed in each port who are employed in the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The attached list, provided by the National Dock Labour Board, shows the average weekly gross payment, by port, of registered dock workers for the second quarter (April-June) of 1987. Figures for take-home pay are not available.

Registered dockworkers—Weekly average earnings

Port	*Total gross payments*
Newcastle	248·84
North Shields	277·65
South Shields	327·61
Blyth	363·53
Sunderland	217·40
Seaham	438·47
Middlesbrough	357·61
Hartlepool	325·92
Hull	296·12
Goole	353·18
Grimsby and Inn (Commercial)	401·41
Grimsby (Fish)	179·99
Boston	409·06
Wisbech	308·45
King's Lynn	373·57
Yarmouth	384·83
Lowestoft	433·37
Ipswich	372·83
London	324·97
Rochester	349·02
Sittingbourne	285·04
Sheerness	411·03
Southampton	327·76
Poole	266·13
Weymouth	397·75
Plymouth	200·95
Fowey	302·31
Par	230·49
Charlestown	240·58
Falmouth	258·19
Penzance	314·60
Bristol	233·44
Sharpness	274·86
Gloucester	226·65
Newport	325·87
Cardiff	304·77
Barry	465·44
Port Talbot	472·08
Swansea	230·88
Liverpool and Birkenhead	226·90
Garston	271·47
Salford	255·75
Ellesmere Port	443·27
Runcorn	243·52
Weston Point	292·18
Fleetwood	272·00
Whitehaven	275·97
Workington	297·95
Silloth	211·15
Barrow	221·11
Ayr	335·46
Ardrossan	394·28
Hunterston	289·69
Greenock	390·09
Glasgow	320·42
Aberdeen (Commercial)	420·69
Aberdeen (Fish)	242·04
Dundee	260·68
Methil	283·39
Kirkcaldy	266·97
Burntisland	371·64
Grangemouth	236·46
Leith	228·46
National average	309·78

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Security Conference (Vienna)

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement of progress on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe review conference at Vienna.

Mr. Mellor: Some progress has been made in negotiations on a final document, including in the areas of military security and economic cooperation. But movement on human rights and contacts has been painfully slow, despite protestations of good faith by the Eastern side. We are making it clear that without adequate progress in these areas there can be no agreement at Vienna. We wish to bring the meeting to a substantial and balanced conclusion by Christmas, if at all possible, but are prepared to go on longer if constructive work remains to be done.

Fiji

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds Her Majesty's Government have recognised Fiji as an independent republic.

Mr. Eggar: We recognise states not Governments. The question of recognition therefore did not arise when Her Majesty's The Queen accepted the governor-general's resignation.

Anglo-Irish Council

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council held since January 1986, giving the purpose and results of each such meeting.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There have been no meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council since January 1986.

Tibet

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take up in the United Nations the plight of the Tibetan people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We believe that the best way in which we can help the Tibetan people is by encouraging the Chinese Government to maintain their programme of economic and political reform.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's ambassador to Peking or any of his staff have visited Tibet in the current year.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassador in Peking has not visited Tibet in the current year. Seven members of Her Majesty's Embassy have made working or recreational visits to Tibet this year.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made representations to the Chilean Government over the continuing detention of opposition leaders in the approach to the plebiscite.

Mr. Eggar: Appropriate representations have been made on a number of occasions.

African National Congress

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* all press statements released by his Department in connection with his Department's meeting with Mr. Tambo, the president of the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: The press statement issued after my right hon. and learned Friend's meeting with Mr. Tambo in September 1986 read as follows:

> "Mr. Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC, called on the Foreign Secretary at Chevening at 9.00 a.m. on 20 September. The meeting lasted almost two hours.
>
> Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mr. Tambo had a frank and serious discussion about the current situation in South Africa and the prospects for a peaceful setlement.
>
> The Foreign Secretary emphasised the British Government's total opposition to the system of apartheid and our wish to see rapid, fundamental but peaceful change in South Africa. He emphasised that the British Government utterly rejected violence as a means of achieving change. Sir Geoffrey also made it clear that the Twelve member states of the European Community are united in their determination to do everything possible to promote a peaceful settlement in South Africa through dialogue and a suspension of violence on all sides."

The statement issued after my own meeting with Mr. Tambo in June 1986 read:

> "At the British Government's invitation, Mr. Oliver Tambo, the President of the ANC, Mr. Thabo Mbeki and Mr. Aziz Pahad called on the Minister of State at 6.30 p.m. on 24 June for an exchange of views on the situation in South Africa.
>
> The meeting which lasted for more than one hour, was useful and candid.
>
> Mrs. Chalker emphasised the British Government's continuing commitment to the early and complete elimination of apartheid. She expressed grave concern at the continuing violence and repression in South Africa, including yesterday's bombing outrage. Violence could never lead to a solution to South Africa's problems. The way ahead had to be through dialogue and negotiation in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides".

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of all meetings between Ministers and officials with representatives of the African National Congress since 1 January 1986, including when and where such meetings took place and in what capacity British Ministers and officials were acting.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met the President of the African National Congress, Mr. Oliver Tambo, on 20 September 1986 at Chevening when he was President of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Community. I met Mr. Tambo in London on 24 June 1986. There have been contacts with the African National Congress at official level from time to time in London and abroad as and when necessary.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will describe in what capacity he has met the president of the African National Congress, Mr. Oliver Tambo; whether the African National Congress was advised in what capacity he was meeting Mr. Tambo; whether the press was advised in what capacity he was meeting Mr. Tambo; and to what extent the members of the EEC Council of Ministers were consulted in advance of the meeting with Mr. Tambo.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met Mr. Tambo when he was President of the Foreign Affairs Council of the European Community. He also took the opportunity to make Her Majesty's Government's view clear to Mr. Tambo. His approach to Mr. Tambo was set unambiguously in the context of his mission to southern Africa which was undertaken at the request of the European Community Heads of Government. His colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Council were fully aware of his plans. The press release issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office after the meeting made it clear that my right hon. and learned Friend spoke to Mr. Tambo on behalf of the European Community.

South Africa

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in the light of the United States State Department's report submitted to the United States Congress on 1 April naming Britain as one of seven countries involved in supplying arms to South Africa, he will make a statement on British compliance with the arms embargo against South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Our record on compliance with the United Nations arms embargo is good. As we understand the report made clear, we diligently enforce the arms embargo. This is demonstrated by the record of successful action in recent years against British companies who have been in breach of the United Kingdom legislation through which the embargo is implemented. In several cases, prison sentences as well as fines have resulted.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to prevent the subsidiaries of British companies operating in South Africa and Namibia from violating the arms embargo imposed against South Africa by the United Nations.

Mrs. Chalker: We will initiate investigations into allegations against companies within the United Kingdom's jurisdiction of violations of United Kingdom law implementing the arms embargo.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the South African Government to prevent the execution of Mojalefa Sefatna, Reid Mokoena, Oupa Diniso, Duma Khumalo, Thearas Ramashamola and Francis Mokhesi.

Mrs. Chalker: The appeals of the so-called "Sharpeville Six" were heard on 2 and 3 November. The court reserved judgment. It would be inappropriate for us to make representations until the outcome of the appeal process is known.

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to make illegal the export of safety and security equipment to key points designated by the National Keypoints Act in South Africa.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

No.

Syria

Mr. Leadbitter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy not to sanction further European Economic Community contacts with President Assad's regime in Syria so long as human rights abuses, as high-lighted by the recent Amnesty International report, persist.

Mr. Mellor: We are studying the Amnesty International report carefully and drawing the attention of our partners in the Twelve to the very serious allegations in it.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information branch within his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The personnel currently employed in the information department of the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are:

Grade	*Staff*
DS4	1
HCS6	1
DS5	10
DS6	9
DS7	11
DS9	6
Clerical support	13
Secretarial support	5
Total	56

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of maintaining the information department within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The costs of maintaining the information department within the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been:

	£
1983-84	1,284,000
1984-85	1,046,000
1985-86	1,341,000
1986-87	1,427,000

Costs prior to 1983-84 are not available.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the news department within his Department.

Mr. Eggar: The personnel currently employed in the news department of the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are:

Grade	*Staff*
DS4	1
DS5	5
DS6	2
DS7E	2
Clerical support	3
Secretarial support	3
Total	16

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of maintaining the news department within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The costs of maintaining the news department within the diplomatic wing of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have been:

	£
1983-84	453,000
1984-85	425,000
1985-86	468,000
1986-87	502,000

Costs prior to 1983-84 are not available.

Belau

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise in the United Nations Security Council the United States plan to use one third of the land area of Belau for military facilities in return for aid, in contravention of the United Nations trusteeship terms governing the United States relationship with Belau (Palau); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Under the terms of the compact of free association agreed between the United States and Palau (Belau), the United States is to remain responsible for Palau's defence. We understand, however, that the United States Government have stated that they have no intention at present of situating military bases in Palau. The levels of United States economic assistance to Palau were freely negotiated and agreed by the United States and Palau. In these circumstances we see no need to raise the matter at the Security Council.

Military Cathode Ray Tubes

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will use his powers under the United Nations prohibited transactions order to prevent the manufacture of military cathode ray tubes by National Regunning Ltd. under licence from Thorn EMI.

Mrs. Chalker: We are investigating certain allegations which have been made in this connection.

Flexitank

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will use his powers under the United Nations prohibited transactions order to prevent the supply through BTR Sarmcol of the BTR Flexitank to the South African defence forces.

Mrs. Chalker: We are investigating certain allegations which have been made in this connection.

BBC (External Services)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the effects of the Autumn Statement on the grant-in-aid for the external services of the British Broadcasting Corporation, indicating separately the effect for the monitoring service at Caversham park, Reading.

Mr. Eggar: It has been agreed in the 1987 public expenditure survey that the grants-in-aid of the BBC external services for capital and current expenditure on broadcasting and monitoring in the next three years will be £112·5 million in 1988-89, £115·9 million in 1989-90 and £122·9 million in 1990-91. The element for current expenditure represents an annual increase of some 5 per cent. on the 1987-88 provision. The allocation of current expenditure between broadcasting and monitoring has yet to be finalised and will be shown in the Supply Estimates to be published in March 1988.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will set out in tabular form for each of the last five financial years the grant-in-aid from his Department to the monitoring service of the British Broadcasting Corporation at Caversham park, Reading.

Mr. Eggar: The table sets out the BBC external services' grant-in-aid provision for the monitoring service from 1983-84 to 1987-88:

	Current £	*Capital* £
1983-84	5,749,000	539,000
1984-85	5,936,000	856,000
1985-86	6,514,000	2,393,000
1986-87	6,703,000	5,820,000
1987-88	8,090,000	3,487,000

Mr. Arthur Gilbert

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a response to the original letter from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth addressed to the Baroness Young and dated 13 April and to a subsequent letter from the hon. Member to the Lord Glenarthur and dated 3 July, referring to Arthur Gilbert of 38 Northampton lane, Dunchurch, Rugby, will be forthcoming.

Mr. Eggar: I regret the delay which was the result of an administration oversight: a full reply to my hon. Friend concerning his constituent Mr. Arthur Gilbert of 38 Northampton lane, Dunchurch, Rugby, will be forthcoming in the very near future.

Intermediate Nuclear Forces

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the removal of American and Soviet intermediate-range nuclear forces.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 29 October.

Food (Radiation)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Ministers' meeting held on Sunday 8 November on the subject of radiation levels in food.

Mrs. Chalker: At its meeting on 8 November, the Council continued its efforts to reach agreement on a framework regulation laying down maximum permitted levels of radioactivity in foodstuffs following a nuclear accident. There will be a further discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council on 23-24 November.

Settlers

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training is given to interviewers of potential settlers.

Mr. Eggar: All Entry Clearance Officers, if not already fully experienced, attend a four or five-week training course run jointly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office prior to taking up their appointment overseas. Training in the particular skills required in interviewing entry clearance applicants is an integral part of the course.

British Embassy (South Africa)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many white South African business people have been helped by the British embassy in South Africa; and what assistance was given.

Mrs. Chalker: We do not keep records of the ethnic origins of those seeking assistance from our posts in South Africa. To do so would be inconsistent with our opposition to apartheid.

Mr. Mustafa Natchew

Mr. Millan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make representations to the Government of Israel regarding their refusal of an exit visa for Mustafa Natchew, the mayor of Hebron.

Mr. Mellor: We have raised this matter informally with the Israeli authorities.

VAT

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what negotiations have recently taken place within the European Economic Community on the position of value added tax on newspapers, periodicals and books; and whether any timetable has been agreed for such implementation.

Mr. Lilley: I have been asked to reply.

The European Commission's proposals for the "approximation" of VAT rates (which would, if adopted in their present form, require the United Kingdom to impose VAT on newspapers, periodicals and books) have not been discussed in Brussels. They will formally be presented to the Council of Economic and Finance Ministers at their meeting on 16 November. No decisions on the proposals are expected for some time.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether as part of the move to an internal market in the European Economic Community and the standardisation of value added tax rates on newspapers and periodicals, it is proposed to withdraw direct subsidies, grants and subsidised loans from newspapers in other European countries.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply.

National subsidies in Community member states are subject to the Community's states aid rules. I am aware of no plans to change these rules in respect of subsidies to newspapers.

North Sea Pollution (Conference)

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he expects will be agreed by the international North sea pollution conference to be held in London at the end of November.

Mr. Moynihan: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 4 November by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

ENERGY

Opencast Mines

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy concerning the granting of licences to private mining companies to develop opencast coal reserves.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Under existing legislation the British Coal Corporation is responsible for the granting of licences for private opencast mining operations.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many licences were given to mining companies to mine coal either in deep-mined or opencast mines annually since 1979; and if he will list the companies given licences since 1979.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the British Coal Corporation and I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what accounting procedures are in operation to ensure that all plutonium in civil nuclear plants in the United Kingdom is at all times fully accounted for; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many kilograms of plutonium have gone missing from civil nuclear plants in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's reply to the former hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) on 22 March 1985 at column *633*.

TRANSPORT

MOT Test

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider including the examination of hydraulic brake fluid in the MOT compulsory road test.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no evidence that the condition of hydraulic brake fluid has contributed to a significant number of road accidents. I do not believe this would be justified.

Ferries (Safety)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the safety record of passenger and car ferries and other forms of transport over the last 30 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Complete data for the last 30 years are not readily available. A table of comparative casualty rates for different forms of transport for the period 1975-85 is given in table 1.9 of "Transport Statistics 1976-1986" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, a copy of which is in the Library.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information division within his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The number of staff currently employed by the Department of Transport information division is 34, broken down by grade, as follows:

	Number
Grade 5	1
Grade 7	[1]4
Senior Information Officer	7
Information Officer	5
Assistant Information Officer	1
HEO	1
EO	3
AO	8
AA	2
Personal Secretary	1
Allocated Typist	1
	34

[1] One Principal.
Three Principal Information Officers.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of maintaining the information division within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost of maintaining the information division within the Department of Transport in each year since 1984-85 is as follows:

	Running costs £
1984-85	857,145
1985-86	837,432
1986-87	850,721
1987-88	[1]826,224

[1] Estimated increase of 6 per cent.

Before that date, information was a common service of the Departments of Transport, Environment and Property Services Agency.

The allocation of overheads such as accommodation has changed considerably between years, which explains the decrease in the cost of the division.

Cambridge Park, Wanstead

Mr. Neil Thorne: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to have completed the requisition of all property required to widen Cambridge park, Wanstead; and when this project is programmed for completion.

Mr. Peter Bottomley There are no proposals to widen Cambridge park but part of the A12 Hackney Wick-M11 link road is planned to pass in cutting parallel to and immediately south of it and then beneath it at George Green. Except in one case where negotiations are still in progress, all the properties in Cambridge park likely to be required have been purchased at the owners' request under the blight provisions. Subject to the satisfactory outcome of the statutory procedures, construction of the scheme could start in 1990 for completion in 1994.

Nuclear Waste

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why British Rail trains carrying nuclear waste have passed through Halifax without specific notification to the local council; and what safety measures are being taken to ensure the safety of people living near to the line in the event of an accident.

Mr. Peter Bottomley The regulations which control the transport of radioactive materials require full protection to be built in to the design of the containers so that they would not present a significant radiological hazard, even in the event of a severe accident. The choice of routes used is not therefore dependent on safety considerations and there is no need to involve local authorities.

Anti-Lock Brakes

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress is being made towards making mandatory the fitting of anti-lock braking systems to articulated lorries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley Agreement was reached last week in the European Community for an amendment to the braking directive enabling member states to require anti-lock brakes on the following categories of heavy vehicle:

Towing vehicles over 16 tonnes
Trailers over 10 tonnes
Coaches over 12 tonnes

This means that all articulated lorries with a total gross weight of more than 26 tonnes would have to be equipped. The amended directive will enable member states to impose the requirements from 1 October 1989 to new type approvals and to all new vehicles registered from 1 October 1991. We shall be consulting in the new year on draft regulations to apply the requirements in this country.

National Bus Company

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by type of purchase, all former National Bus Company subsidiaries which have been privatised since his answer of 24 July, at column *604*.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A further 10 National Bus Company subsidiaries have been sold since 24 July 1987. The details are as follows:

Management/employee buy-outs
Luton & District Transport Ltd.
Midland Fox Ltd.
Milton Keynes City Bus Ltd.
Northumbria Motor Services Ltd.
Southdown Motor Services Ltd.

Third Party Purchasers
Alder Valley South Ltd.
Bristol Omnibus Company Ltd.
Vogage National SA.
Western National Ltd.
West Yorkshire Road Car Company Ltd.

Abb Scott Lane, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what survey of traffic in Abb Scott lane, Bradford, has been undertaken to examine the effects of low-cost engineering methods; whether any survey results will be published; whether there are plans to curb the traffic weighing over 3 tonnes currently using Abb Scott lane; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Abb Scott lane is a local authority road. Bradford city council is responsible for its traffic management. The transport and road research laboratory is collaborating with the Bradford city council in a trial project to reduce accidents over a large part of Bradford including Abb Scott lane. The results of this project should be published early in 1989.

London Buses

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the financial results of competitive tendering for bus routes in London.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: About 15 per cent. of London Regional Transport's bus network mileage is currently operated under contracts obtained by competitive tendering. The average cost per bus mile of all tendered services at 31 March 1987 was £1·54, compared with an average cost of £1·99 per bus mile when the services were operated by London Buses Ltd. before tendering. After the additional costs of service improvements and administration are taken into account, LRT estimate that the net savings of the order of 15 per cent. are being realised from the tendering process.

Airline Competition Policy

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the Government's airline competition policy, following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's report on the proposed British Airways-British Caledonian mergers.

Mr. Channon: As the House knows, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has concluded that the proposals made by British Airways may be expected not to operate against the public interest. It is a matter for BA and the British Caledonian Group whether the merger proceeds. But if it does now go ahead, the chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority has agreed that he will report to me one year later about implementation of the merger on the basis proposed.

The commission considered only the merger proposal before it and made it clear that any investigation of airline or airports policy as such, or of the powers of the CAA, was outside its terms of reference. I believe that the commission made a sensible distinction. Its job is to report on mergers or proposed mergers. My responsibility, as Secretary of State for Transport, is the much wider one of ensuring that the objectives of the Government's airline competition policy and airports policy can be achieved. The CAA, within its statutory duties and statement of policies, is responsible for the day-to-day regulation of the aviation industry and for providing me with expert advice.

The Government's airline competition policy objectives are set out in the 1984 White Paper. The main elements are:

promotion of competition in all markets;

encouraging a sound and competitive multi-airline industry with a variety of airlines;

enabling the United Kingdom industry to compete aggressively against foreign airlines.

The merger—if it proceeds—will clearly strengthen the international competitive position of the United Kingdom industry in a world which is seeing moves towards larger carriers. Removing the present uncertainty about BCal's future and the opportunities for improved efficiency will also contribute to the competitive position of the industry.

However, while securing these benefits, we must also promote competition within the United Kingdom industry, and provide suitable safeguards against anti-competitive behaviour.

The CAA has a duty to publish its air transport licensing policies and to consult the air transport industry and users before doing so. Before the proposed merger was announced, the CAA was engaged in public consultations about its policies on market entry and anti-competitive behaviour. If the proposed merger goes ahead, it will be all the more important that the CAA should press ahead with those consultations and I shall be discussing with the chairman their scope, timing and whether any other aspects of its policies should be covered.

M1

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of widening the M1 from three lanes to four in both directions between London and its junction with the M6; and if he has any plans to authorise the widening in whole or in part of the M1.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expensive and quite detailed studies would have to be carried out before any useful estimate could be given for the cost of widening the M1 between London and its junction with the M6. Apart from the provision of a climbing lane to both carriageways of the M1 at junction 9, I have no plans at present to authorise the widening of any part of this motorway.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why the scrapped offside lane hard shoulder on the M1 north of junction 6 cannot be utilised as a vehicle carriageway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The extra lane would not be long enough to be useful or safe.

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reason the stretch of offside lane hard shoulder on the M1 north of junction 6 was scrapped almost immediately after construction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It was decided in 1972 to provide offside hard shoulders on four-lane motorways on the understanding that the police would supervise the re-entry of vehicles to the carriageway. By 1982, there was much concern about the safety of re-entry and the police advised against such provision. The offside hard shoulder planned for this section of M1 was therefore covered over.

Motorways (Repairs and Maintenance)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport why he does not require 24-hour working to take place on repair and maintenance work which involves lane closures on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department allows 24-hour working on major maintenance sites whenever possible. Occasionally environmental reasons preclude this. There are often practical reasons why contractors choose not to work the full hours offered. There can be difficulties in maintaining accuracy with some types of work outside daylight hours, and with supplies of materials.

Lane rental contracts provide ample incentive for contractors to complete works as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Stimulants (Research)

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his reply of 3 November, *Official Report*, column 654, where the research referred to in his reply has been published; and when the further work he refers to in his reply wil be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The position on research into road accidents and drugs or medicines is summarised in a paper published by the transport and road research laboratory. I am having a copy placed in the Library of the House. The current research under way will taken about two years. Results dealing with the presence of different drugs in road accident fatalities should be ready next September.

A607 (Croxton Kerrial)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will request a senior representative of his east midland regional office to visit Croxton Kerrial, Leicestershire, to observe traffic conditions there and advise him on the desirability of reducing the speed limit on the A607 road to 30 mph.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A senior representative of the east midland regional office has already visited Croxton Kerrial and given advice. Since then no accidents have occurred. A speed limit of 30 mph would not contribute to road safety.

Cars (Registrations)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number of *(a)* new cars registered and *(b)* cars registered in the United Kingdom in each year since 1970.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The available information is as follows:

Cars licensed: Great Britain

Millions

—	*New registrations*	*Total registrations at end year*
1970	1·1	11·2
1971	1·3	11·7
1972	1·6	12·3
1973	1·6	13·1
1974	1·2	13·2
1975	1·1	13·4
1976	1·2	13·8
1977	1·3	13·8
1978	1·5	13·8
1979	1·6	14·3
1980	1·4	14·8
1981	1·4	14·9
1982	1·5	15·3
1983	1·8	15·5
1984	1·7	16·1
1985	1·8	16·5
1986	1·8	17·0

Defective Tyres

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will seek powers to stop the export from the United Kingdom of defective tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We could not take action against the export of these tyres under powers contained in the Road Traffic Act.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning faulty tyres manufactured by Arvoland Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Representations were made in 1986 by various trading standards and consumer protection bodies that tyres remoulded by Arvoland Ltd. were faulty and unsafe. The matter was taken up with the manufacturers who went out of business at the end of the year and a recall campaign was undertaken. The Department continues to monitor the position on remoulded tyres generally.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends to provide for the forfeiture and destruction of faulty tyres; what improvement he proposes in controls over the sale of unroadworthy vehicles or vehicle parts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I will be meeting the Director General of Fair Trading next month to discuss, among other things, the sale of unroadworthy vehicles and components, including tyres.

Traffic Lights

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information or recent evidence is available to him about the probability of motorists inadvertently crossing red traffic lights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In a recent small-side survey the transport and road research laboratory found that one in 36 drivers was faced with a difficult decision about whether to proceed once traffic lights had started to change. Of those drivers who decided to jump a red light, it appeared that 50 per cent. could in practice have stopped safely. The percentage of drivers crossing lights after they have started to change varied widely between sites. Further research is now in hand on conditions at signalled junctions, and on factors affecting driver behaviour.

SCOTLAND

Sport (Violence)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the monitoring by police of all professional football matches, to observe for the commission of chargeable offences; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend considers that it would be inappropriate for him to intervene in what is an operational matter for the police.

Road Safety

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have died as a result of road traffic accidents in Scotland in each of the last five years; and if he will break down these figures by age, sex, and regional council area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Age group/sex

	0-9			*10-19*			*20-29*			*30-39*		
	M	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*
1982												
Borders	2	—	2	2	—	2	10	—	10	2	—	2
Central	—	—	—	7	1	8	5	3	8	5	2	7
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	3	1	4	1	1	2	5	—	5
Fife	1	2	3	6	1	7	5	1	6	5	1	6
Grampian	4	—	4	14	3	17	20	1	21	6	—	6
Highland	1	—	1	8	4	12	10	1	11	2	—	2
Lothian	1	3	4	10	4	14	21	2	23	3	3	6

	0-9			*10-19*			*20-29*			*30-39*		
	M	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*
Strathclyde	11	8	19	42	20	62	33	7	40	26	4	30
Tayside	1	1	2	6	6	12	10	1	11	7	—	7
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	3	—	3	1	—	1	—	—	—
Total	21	14	35	101	40	141	119	17	136	61	10	71
1983												
Borders	—	1	1	3	—	3	3	—	3	5	—	5
Central	1	1	2	6	—	6	8	—	8	1	—	1
Dumfries and Galloway	1	—	1	7	—	7	8	4	12	3	1	4
Fife	3	—	3	4	3	7	5	1	6	2	—	2
Grampian	4	2	6	9	4	13	12	3	15	6	—	6
Highland	1	1	2	3	—	3	5	—	5	4	1	5
Lothian	2	1	3	7	1	8	10	—	10	7	1	8
Strathclyde	12	5	17	49	11	60	34	6	40	19	6	25
Tayside	—	—	—	9	2	11	10	4	14	6	3	9
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	1	1	—	1
Western Isles	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	1	—	1
Total	24	11	35	98	22	120	97	18	115	55	12	67
1984												
Borders	—	—	—	2	1	3	5	2	7	3	—	3
Central	3	2	5	3	1	4	7	—	7	4	1	5
Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	1	1	—	1	4	—	4	9	—	9
Fife	3	—	3	7	1	8	8	1	9	2	1	3
Grampian	3	—	3	10	9	19	18	2	20	8	1	9
Highland	2	—	2	8	3	11	10	2	12	4	1	5
Lothian	4	1	5	13	2	15	13	2	15	5	1	6
Strathclyde	10	10	20	32	11	43	33	9	42	14	2	16
Tayside	1	2	3	6	6	12	9	6	15	6	4	10
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	1	—	1
Total	26	16	42	84	34	118	109	24	133	56	11	67
1985												
Borders	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	—	2
Central	3	—	3	4	1	5	5	—	5	3	—	3
Dumfries and Galloway	1	1	2	3	—	3	2	1	3	4	2	6
Fife	2	—	2	3	1	4	6	2	8	5	1	6
Grampian	2	4	6	17	4	21	19	11	30	7	1	8
Highland	1	1	2	6	4	10	3	2	5	6	2	8
Lothian	1	2	3	8	2	10	10	2	12	14	2	16
Strathclyde	12	7	19	31	6	37	40	9	49	15	7	22
Tayside	—	—	—	7	2	9	4	2	6	4	2	6
Orkney	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1
Total	23	15	38	80	20	100	93	29	122	61	17	78
1986												
Borders	—	—	—	2	—	2	4	—	4	2	—	2
Central	1	1	2	9	1	10	12	5	17	7	2	9
Dumfries and Galloway	2	—	2	7	4	11	11	4	15	—	1	1
Fife	1	—	1	3	4	7	9	—	9	3	—	3
Grampian	3	—	3	11	1	12	13	3	16	4	—	4
Highland	1	1	2	3	—	3	7	1	8	5	3	8
Lothian	3	—	3	9	4	13	9	4	13	5	1	6
Strathclyde	17	3	20	31	9	40	33	7	40	20	3	23
Tayside	2	—	2	5	3	8	9	3	12	7	1	8
Orkney	—	—	—	4	1	5	1	—	1	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	2
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	30	5	35	85	27	112	108	27	135	54	12	66

Age group/sex

	40-49			*50-59*			*60+*			*Total*		
	M	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*
1982												
Borders	2	—	2	1	1	2	3	1	4	22	2	24
Central	4	2	6	1	3	4	3	6	9	25	17	42
Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	1	2	1	3	5	3	8	16	7	23
Fife	3	—	3	5	—	5	5	6	11	30	11	41
Grampian	4	2	6	3	5	8	11	19	30	62	30	92
Highland	6	1	7	2	2	4	7	8	15	36	16	52
Lothian	4	3	7	7	2	9	15	11	26	61	28	89
Strathclyde	21	7	28	20	9	29	36	23	59	189	78	267
Tayside	10	1	11	6	1	7	7	5	12	47	15	62
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	—	2
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	2
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	5	—	5
Total	54	17	71	47	24	71	94	82	176	497	204	701
1983												
Borders	2	—	2	2	—	2	3	3	6	18	4	22
Central	—	—	—	1	—	1	5	3	8	22	4	26
Dumfries and Galloway	2	—	2	3	1	4	4	—	4	28	6	34
Fife	1	2	3	1	3	4	1	4	5	17	13	30
Grampian	11	—	11	8	2	10	6	5	11	56	16	72
Highland	2	2	4	6	—	6	2	4	6	23	8	31
Lothian	5	2	7	3	1	4	5	18	23	39	24	63
Strathclyde	20	6	26	20	3	23	37	40	77	191	77	268
Tayside	3	1	4	5	2	7	13	13	26	46	25	71
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	3
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	4	—	4
Total	46	13	59	49	12	61	77	90	167	446	178	624
1984												
Borders	—	—	—	4	2	6	3	1	4	17	6	23
Central	3	—	3	1	—	1	2	—	2	23	4	27
Dumfries and Galloway	2	—	2	2	1	3	3	3	6	21	5	26
Fife	4	—	4	1	—	1	3	6	9	28	9	37
Grampian	4	3	7	4	1	5	12	5	17	59	21	80
Highland	3	1	4	4	2	6	3	3	6	34	12	46
Lothian	1	1	2	5	3	8	9	8	17	50	18	68
Strathclyde	15	3	18	14	4	18	38	30	68	156	69	225
Tayside	3	1	4	3	1	4	4	6	10	32	26	58
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	1	3	1	4
Western Isles	2	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	5
Total	37	9	46	38	15	53	78	62	140	428	171	599
1985												
Borders	3	2	5	—	1	1	1	3	4	8	6	14
Central	1	—	1	3	—	3	1	2	3	30	3	23
Dumfries and Galloway	4	—	4	2	1	3	5	2	7	21	7	28
Fife	1	—	1	1	—	1	5	5	10	23	9	32
Grampian	5	1	6	4	—	4	9	11	20	63	32	95
Highland	1	1	2	5	1	6	4	2	6	26	13	39
Lothian	5	—	5	2	5	7	8	11	19	48	24	72
Strathclyde	18	2	20	11	12	23	31	39	70	158	82	240
Tayside	4	1	5	7	—	7	13	5	18	39	12	51
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	3	—	3
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	2	—	2
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	3	—	3
Total	42	7	49	35	20	55	80	80	160	414	188	602
1986												
Borders	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	2	2	9	2	11
Central	4	1	5	3	—	3	5	2	7	41	12	53
Dumfries and Galloway	5	1	6	2	—	2	2	3	5	29	13	42
Fife	2	—	2	3	1	4	1	2	3	22	7	29
Grampian	2	—	2	2	4	6	8	8	16	43	16	59
Highland	5	1	6	2	1	3	4	2	6	27	9	36
Lothian	6	—	6	3	2	5	16	11	27	51	22	73
Strathclyde	13	7	20	19	5	24	31	28	59	164	62	226
Tayside	11	—	11	5	—	5	8	7	15	47	14	61
Orkney	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	6	2	8

	40-49			*50-59*			*60+*			*Total*		
	M	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*	*M*	*F*	*T*
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	3
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	49	10	59	40	13	53	75	66	141	441	160	601

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote road safety in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is concerned about Scotland's poor road accident record. He has therefore taken a number of steps aimed at reducing casualty levels. These include the extension for a further two years of the Scottish road safety campaign, which was initially set up to organise Scotland's contribution to European Road Safety Year in 1986. The campaign committee has been set the task of devising and implementing initiatives which will quickly and significantly reduce road accident rates. In addition, the work of the Scottish Development Department's road safety advisory unit is being reviewed with the aim of subsequently increasing the number of accident black spots investigated on trunk roads.

Police Establishments

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the establishments of the police forces in Scotland; and whether any of them are operating below establishment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The position as at 30 September 1987 was as follows:

Force	*Police authorised establishment*	*Police actual strength*
Central Scotland Police	568	568
Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary	344	341
Fife Constabulary	754	733
Grampian Police	1,008	1,007
Lothian and Borders Police	2,393	2,427
Northern Constabulary	620	613
Strathclyde Police	6,954	6,775
Tayside Police	1,001	1,004
Total	13,642	13,468

Note: Actual strength figures include officers on national training courses, on central service, and with the Scottish crime squad.

All forces, with the exception of Strathclyde police, are operating at or close to authorised establishment. Fife constabulary is in the process of implementing an increase in authorised establishment agreed earlier this year.

Radioactivity

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the monitoring stations for the initial detection and measurement of radioactivity proposed for the Highlands and Islands to become operational.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is hoped that the first group of new monitoring stations will begin to operate in the spring of 1988. These will be based largely on existing Meteorological Office sites throughout the United Kingdom, and will be supplemented by the monitoring capabilities of the existing nuclear sites. Precise locations of monitoring sites in the area of the Highlands and Islands have still to be determined.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects his discussions with the Council of Scottish Local Authorities about the dissemination of information and advice on radioactivity levels in Scotland to the public and to local authorities to be concluded; and whether he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Officials of the Scottish Office met representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 14 October this year and had a useful discussion of the detail of the proposed national response plan for nuclear incidents occurring overseas. They are now awaiting the convention's formal comments on the plan.

Elections (Psychiatric Patients)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what facilities were available during the last general election to psychiatric patients interned in Scottish hospitals for the exercise of their right to vote as ordered in the Representation of the People Act 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Patients detained in mental hospitals under the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984 are not entitled to be registered as electors or to vote. Most patients in mental hospitals have been admitted without formality and are not subject to detention. Of these informal patients, some are already registered as electors in respect of their home address. Others not registered as electors in respect of their home address may, by making a "patient declaration", have their names included on the electoral register in respect of an address outside the hospital where they would otherwise be resident (or, failing which, a former address). It was open to informal patients included on the electoral register to vote in person at the general election or, if unable to do so, for example because of distance or physical illness, to apply to vote by post or by proxy. Appropriate guidance was issued to health boards in 1983, 1986 and 1987.

Health Service

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will explain the effects of the SHARPEN report with regard to registration for people with a mental handicap;

(2) if he will explain the effects the SHARPEN report will have on long-stay patients in the Clydesdale constituency;

(3) if he will explain the effects the SHARPEN report will have on patients with a high level of dependency in the Clydesdale constituency;

(4) if he will make a statement explaining the effects the SHARPEN report will have on general practitioners in the

Clydesdale constituency; and what incentive payments will be made to general practitioners in the Clydesdale constituency;

(5) if he will make a statement explaining the effects the SHARPEN report will have on hospital in-patient facilities for children in the Clydesdale constituency;

(6) if he will make a statement explaining the effects the SHARPEN report will have on special care baby provision in the Clydesdale constituency;

(7) what effect the SHARPEN report will have on acute services and their future share of resources;

(8) what kind of financial support and taxation systems Her Majesty's Government will implement to encourage informal care, as recommended in the SHARPEN report;

(9) what will be the criteria for the evaluation to determine a hospital at home scheme for cost efficiency, as recommended in the SHARPEN report;

(10) what effects the SHARPEN report will have on local government provision of long-stay accommodation;

(11) if he will explain the effects the SHARPEN report will have on the number of hospitals for the mentally-handicapped in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Clydesdale.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The report "Scottish Health Authorities Review of Priorities for the Eighties and Nineties" (SHARPEN), has the status at present only of a working document that is under consideration by the Scottish Health Service planning council. The council will consider the recommendations in the report in detail at its meeting in March and will thereafter advise the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that all members of Scottish health boards, Scottish health councils and Scottish health service unions will receive copies of the SHARPEN report immediately.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of inquiries he has received for copies of the SHARPEN report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has received eight inquiries for copies of the SHARPEN report.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations were made to the working party on the SHARPEN report by the Scottish health service unions.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to make a visit to a hospital in the Clydesdale constituency; and if he will meet the health service unions on such a visit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit a hospital in the hon. Member's constituency.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the information held by him centrally on Scottish National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The main items of information on Scottish National Health Service hospitals are contained in "Scottish Health Service Costs", published each year jointly by the Scottish Home and Health Department and the National Health Service and in "Scottish Health Statistics" published annually by the common services agency for the Scottish Health Service. Copies of each are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what effects the SHARPEN report will have on William Smellie hospital;

(2) what effects the SHARPEN report will have on Birkwood hospital;

(3) what effect the SHARPEN report will have on staffing levels at each hospital in the Clydesdale constituency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 October, at columns 138-39.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received a copy of the SHARPEN report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 26 October, at columns *138-39*. My right hon. and learned Friend has not yet formally received a copy of the SHARPEN report.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his response to the recommendations of the SHARPEN report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 October, at columns *329-30*.

Rivers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to improve the quality of rivers over the next four years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Responsibility for the control of pollution of rivers lies mainly with the local river purification authorities. The results of the latest survey conducted by the Scottish Development Department in 1985 — which my predecessor announced in the House on 25 March 1987, at columns 178-79 — show that overall the quality of Scottish waters continues to be very high and that there have been some marked improvements since the 1980 survey. We are considering what further measures might be taken to maintain these standards as well as to improve the few waters of poor quality.

Water and Sewerage

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on progress on compliance with the terms of European Community environment directives within the water and sewerage industries; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are more than 20 EC directives relating to the quality of water and these are applied by the local authorities, the river purification authorities and the Scottish Development Department, as appropriate. Where required, information on compliance with directives is collated by the Scottish Development Department and passed to the authorities in Brussels.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contact Scottish Office officials have had with NIREX with regard to nuclear waste disposal sites in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In common with other environmental and regulatory Departments, Scottish Office officials have periodic contact with NIREX on general radioactive waste management matters and were consulted about the terms of the discussion document to be issued by the executive on 12 November.

Cytology Services

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the date on which he received the report on cervical cytology services in Scotland prepared by the Scientific Services Advisory Group under the chairpersonship of Professor J. Strong; and what action he intends to take to implement its recommendations.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I am presently considering the report of a group under the chairmanship of Professor Strong, which was received on 5 November 1986. I shall be making an announcement shortly.

Scottish Film Council

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the names and qualifications of the women members appointed to the Scottish Film Council; and if he will list the criteria used in the selection process.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The following women are members of the Scottish Film Council:

Mrs. Paddy Higson
Ms. Penny Thomson
Mrs. Rae Milne
Ms. Gale Chrisman.

The chairman and two of the 21 members of SFC are appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend for the personal qualities which they can bring to the work of the council. The remainder of the membership consists of nominees of representative organisations.

Private Health Services

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the information held by him centrally on private health services.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Comprehensive information relating to private health services is not held centrally. Some information is, however, held about private hospitals and nursing home places, type of establishment and staffing numbers.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the annual revenue costs to the Scottish electricity industry of nuclear power stations.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that the annual revenue costs associated with its nuclear generating stations, including depreciation but excluding interest and supplementary depreciation, for 1984-85, 1985-86 and 1986-87 were £143 million; £165 million and £183 million respectively.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of debt charges still outstanding on each of the nuclear power stations in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I am advised by the South of Scotland Electricity Board that it does not allocate borrowings to specific capital projects and much of its new capital expenditure is internally financed. However, certain loans have been arranged through Euratom and the European Investment Bank specifically for Torness power station and at 30 September 1987 these totalled £635 million.

Motherwell (General Hospital)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an updated statement on the provision of a new general hospital in Motherwell.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Lanarkshire health board is currently conducting a general review of its long-term acute services strategy. This review will include an examination of the case for a new general hospital in Motherwell.

Lanarkshire (Hospitals)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the hospitals currently the responsibility of the Lanarkshire health board in the Clydesdale constituency;

(2) if he will give in percentage terms the change in spending in real terms over the previous year on each of the hospitals in the Clydesdale constituency, for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally on a constituency basis.

Forensic Science Laboratories

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police forensic laboratories there are in Scotland; how many forensic scientists are employed by police forces in Scotland; and what are the grades and pay scales of forensic scientists employed in police forensic science laboratories in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are three such laboratories—in Grampian police, Lothian and Borders police and Strathclyde police—which currently employ a total of 40 forensic scientists. The grades and pay scales of the scientists employed in each laboratory are matters for the police authorities concerned.

Cancer Screening

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average wait for results of cervical smear tests in the Greater Glasgow health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available centrally.

Prison Statistics

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the ratio of prison officers to prisoners on each Scottish prison.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the table.

Establishment	*Ratio of prison officers: inmates*
Aberdeen	1:2·10
Barlinnie	1:3·11
Barlinnie Special Unit	1:0·54
Castle Huntly	1:2·79
Cornton Vale	1:1·21
Dumfries	1:1·39
Dungavel	1:2·80
Edinburgh	1:2·04
Friarton	1:1·58
Glenochil	1:1·82
Greenock	1:1·47
Inverness	1:1·35
Longriggend	1:2·09
Low Moss	1:3·49
Noranside	1:1·94
Penninghame	1:2·77
Perth	1:1·99
Peterhead	1:0·74
Polmont	1:2·36
Shotts	1:1·77

These ratios exclude former members of the chief prison officer grade who became members of the unified prison service grades on 1 June 1987. Comparison between these and previously published ratios is therefore inappropriate.

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of prisoners held in each of Her Majesty's prisons in Scotland at the present time.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: On 3 November 1987 the numbers of inmates held in Scotland's penal establishments were as follows.

	Total population
Prisons	
Aberdeen	161
Barlinnie	1,147
Barlinnie Special Unit	7
Cornton Vale	162
Dungavel	144
Edinburgh	633
Friarton	84
Glenochil	432
Inverness	100
Low Moss	360
Noranside	102
Penninghame	68
Perth	425
Peterhead	104
Shotts	317
Young offenders institutions	
Castle Huntly	132
Cornton Vale	31
Dumfries	120
Greenock	170
Polmont	433
Detention centre	
Glenochil	136
Remand unit	
Longriggend	278
Total	5,546

Nursing Homes

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when the new regulations designed to supersede the Nursing Homes Registration Regulations (Scotland) 1938, the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Amendment Regulation 1974 and the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1981, will be made;

(2) if he will make it his policy when amending the Nursing Homes Registration Regulations (Scotland) 1938, to increase the supervision by local health boards over private nursing homes in their area.

Mr. Rifkind: The recent review of the subordinate legislation governing the registration of private nursing homes proposed an extension of the controls health boards may exercise over the conduct and inspection of nursing homes, and the facilities and services provided there.

I hope to make new regulations shortly.

Residential Homes

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to enable local health boards to increase their supervision over private residential homes for the elderly in their area.

Mr. Rifkind: Health boards have no supervisory functions in relation to private residential homes.

Springburn Initiative

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will be meeting Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council to discuss the setting up of the Springburn initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No such meeting is planned. Preparatory discussions between the Scottish Development Agency, local authorities and other local interests are continuing and when all the parties agree on a programme of action and on the necessary administrative arrangements the initiative will be launched.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the mortality rates for Scotland as a whole and for Greater Glasgow, in particular, for the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will also give such equivalent information as is available to him for France, the German Democratic Republic, the German Federal Republic, Italy, the Soviet Union, Spain and the United States of America for the same years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The available information is as follows:

Death rates (per 1,000 population) 1984 to 1986

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	12·1	12·5	12·4
Greater Glasgow	13·6	13·5	13·8
France	9·9	10·1	[1]9·9•
German Democratic Republic	13·3	13·5	[1]13·4•
German Federal Republic	11·3	11·5	[1]11·5•
Italy	9·3	9·5	N/A
Soviet Union	10·8	10·6	[1]9·7•
Spain	7·7	N/A	N/A
United States of America	8·7	8·7	[1]8·7•

[1] Provisional rates.

N/A Not available.

Note: Due to different methods in collecting and collation these rates may not be strictly comparable.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the mortality rates for the Clydesdale constituency area during the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will give the comparable figures for the rest of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available for parliamentary constituencies. Information for Clydesdale district and the rest of Scotland is as follows:

Death rates per 1,000 population

Year	*Clydesdale District*	*Scotland (excluding Clydesdale District*
1984	10·7	12·1
1985	11·3	12·5
1986	11·1	12·4

Patients (Readmissions)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients, for each year since 1980, discharged from hospitals in Scotland and in the Greater Glasgow area in particular, had to be readmitted, suffering from the same illness or complaints which had caused them to be previously admitted.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients, for each year since 1980, discharged from hospitals in the Clydesdale constituency area had to be readmitted again suffering from the same complaints or illnesses which had led to their original entry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money he has allocated to the social security and health services, in accordance with the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Only seven provisions of the Act have been brought into force so far. Their limited resource implications for local authorities have been taken into account in provision for social work in the 1988-89 rate support grant settlement. Neither these nor one further section being considered for implementation in the present financial year have significant implications for the level of health services or for the provision of social security benefits.

Cancer Deaths

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths from cancer of the lung, the trachea and bronchus occurred in Greater Glasgow in the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and how these figures compare with those from England, Wales and Northern Ireland in percentage, for the same years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Deaths from cancer of the lung, trachea and bronchus Greater Glasgow 1984 to 1986

	Number
1985	1,112
1985	1,152
1986	1,117

Deaths from cancer of the lung, trachea and bronchus as a percentage of all deaths 1984 to 1986

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Greater Glasgow	8·4	8·8	8·4
England	6·4	6·1	6·1
Wales	5·5	5·3	5·6
Northern Ireland	5·0	4·7	4·6

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths due to cancer of the lung, bronchus and trachea occurred in the Clydesdale constituency area in the years 1984, 1985 and 1986; and how these percentages compare with those in Scotland as a whole.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available for parliamentary constituencies. I have tabulated mortality data for Clydesdale district and for Scotland.

Deaths from cancer of the lung, trachea and bronchus Clydesdale district 1984 to 1986

	Number
1984	28
1985	24
1986	30

Deaths from cancer of the lung, trachea and bronchus as a percentage of all deaths 1984 to 1986

	1984	*1985*	*1986*
Clydesdale district	4·5	3·6	4·6
Scotland	6·8	6·7	6·5

Life Expectancy

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the present figures for male and female life expectancy in Scotland as a whole and for Greater Glasgow in particular; and how these figures compare with those for England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and what equivalent information he has for France, the German Democratic Republic, the Federal German Republic, Italy, Spain, the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information available is as follows:

Male and female life expectancy at birth

	Male	*Female*
Scotland[1]	70·0	76·0
Greater Glasgow[1]	68·7	75·2
England	N/A	N/A
Wales[2]	71·1	77·1
England and Wales[2]	71·8	77·7
Northern Ireland[2]	70·1	76·4
France[3]	71·2	79·4
German Democratic Republic[3]	69·1	75·1
Federal German Republic[3]	70·5	77·3
Italy[4]	71·4	78·0

	Male	Female
Spain[5]	72·4	78·6
Soviet Union	N/A	N/A
United States of America[4]	70·6	78·1

[1] 1984-86 based
[2] 1983-85 based
[3] 1980-84 based
[4] 1980-83 based
[5] 1980 based
N/A not available
Note: These figures may not be strictly comparable, due to different methods of collection and collation and the different years to which they relate.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for male and female life expectancy in the Clydesdale constituency area and for the rest of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not readily available.

Cook-chill Kitchens

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if there are plans to build cook-chill kitchens in Clydesdale area hospitals.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals in Scotland use the cook-chill system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Seven hospitals in Scotland are presently operating a full or partial cook-chill system. It is for health boards to assess the suitability of this system for their own specific requirements.

Community Medicine

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when will he publish the report on the future development of public health functions and community medicine in Scotland set up by the chief medical officer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The chief medical officer issued a discussion paper in July 1986 on the future development of community medicine in Scotland. In the light of responses to that paper we issued proposals in June 1987 which we are considering with health boards, local authorities and professional bodies.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what have been the numbers, for every year since 1975, of community medicine specialists in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is given in the following table:

Number of Community Medicine Specialists[1] in Scotland

	Number
1975	145
1976	131
1977	135
1978	138
1979	145
1980	148
1981	139
1982	138
1983	132
1984	133
1985	126
1986	129

[1] Figures as at 30 September.

NHS (Consultants)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is, for each year since 1975, the percentage of expansion of the number of full-time consultants working for the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is shown in table A. This table does not indicate true change in consultant numbers because it excludes consultants employed on maximum part-time contracts (these are normally counted as full-time staff, but separate information about their numbers is available only from 1981). The annual percentage change of full-time consultants, including those with maximum part-time contract, is shown in table B.

Table A:
Full time Medical and Dental Consultants excluding those on maximum part-time contracts

Years[1]	Percentage change
1975-76	3·8
1976-77	2·6
1977-78	4·7
1978-79	1·4
1979-80	2·2
1980-81	1·2
1981-82	2·6
1982-83	1·4
1983-84	2·3
1984-85	−0·5
1985-86	0·1

Table B:
Full time Medical and Dental Consultants including those on maximum part-time contracts

Years[1]	Percentage change
1981-82	2·2
1982-83	1·2
1983-84	2·5
1984-85	0·5
1985-86	1·0

[1] The percentage change given is that between 30 September in the first year and 30 September in the second year.

Doctors (Lists)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the average size of a medical practitioner's list in the urban areas of Scotland;

(2) what is the average size of a medical practitioner's list in the inner cities of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: For statistical purposes medical practitioners' lists are classified as urban, semi-urban or rural. At 1 October 1986, the date of the latest information available, the average size of a medical practitioner's list in Scotland classified as urban was 1748.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he is putting forward to seek a reduction in the hours of work for junior doctors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Home and Health Department instructed health boards in 1983 to eliminate regular rota commitments of one night on duty in two and, where practicable, to aim for a maximum commitment of one night in three or better. Surveys carried out by SHHD in 1983 and 1985 indicated that there had been a reduction in rotas more onerous than one in three from 449 (13·8 per cent.) to 340 (11 per cent.). SHHD is collecting similar data for 30 September this year and will participate in national discussions with the British Medical Association on juniors' hours which are to be held soon.

Community Care

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will urgently provide special funds for the Greater Glasgow and Lothian health boards as a compensation for the relative loss of resources, transferred in order to improve the care in the community under the SHARE arrangements.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: No such loss of resources to health boards has occurred and the question of compensation does not therefore arise.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give effective support to the efforts of the health boards to improve the availability of up-dated waiting lists to patients, with fresh provisions of funds aimed specifically at such an objective.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regard it as very important that health boards improve the provision to general practitioners and their patients of accurate information about waiting lists—and particularly waiting times—for hospital procedures. This will offer wider possibilities for exercising choice and reducing patient waiting times. I therefore expect all boards, as part of their quest for improvement in the quality of patient care and for greater efficiency in management, to pursue the objective of better information flow to GPs and patients. Since action to achieve this is an integral part of a health board's main role, boards should give it appropriate priority when deciding how to spend the total resources allocated to them.

Doctors (Patients' Choice)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it one of his priorities for patients to have more freedom to choose their own doctors, and take all the steps necessary to put such a policy into practice.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The existing arrangements whereby patients may choose their doctors are currently being considered by my right hon. and learned Friend in the course of the review of primary health care, which followed publication of the Government's consultative document "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion". The conclusions reached on this review will be announced shortly.

Rents

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average rent rise over the previous year for *(a)* public sector and *(b)* private sector accommodation in each district authority area in Scotland for each year from 1979 to 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information for the public sector is given in table 1. Details of SSHA rents by district have only been collected centrally since 1984 and are shown in table 2: figures for 1987 are not yet available. Information for private sector accommodation in each district is not collected.

Increases in Local Authority, New town, SSHA Average Annual Rents (£)
Table 1

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*[2]1986-87*
Local Authority	50·12	94·34	68·96	43·53	31·38	56·59	74·96	86·50
Berwickshire	55·58	102·70	109·09	27·80	62·55	52·94	32·63	50·65
Ettrick and Lauderdale	33·63	28·24	193·22	44·25	115·34	−4·03	−0·02	37·93
Roxburgh	54·09	136·80	99·90	53·95	52·88	66·62	86·74	29·47
Tweeddale	91·23	117·57	113·37	42·64	−2·42	3·27	70·28	23·47
Clackmannan	36·90	96·55	111·37	47·78	50·01	23·75	62·28	86·26
Falkirk	70·68	71·47	118·42	63·00	26·40	48·50	48·17	71·24
Stirling	68·60	60·60	48·89	76·16	0·35	117·51	108·00	78·03
Annandale and Eskdale	56·13	113·05	86·09	76·69	63·53	49·26	71·25	58·41
Nithsdale	50·21	120·12	85·98	43·57	46·80	50·94	86·22	46·19
Stewarty	71·19	156·01	121·93	38·13	68·04	6·80	70·63	55·10
Wigtown	65·04	124·83	111·81	67·98	113·62	84·05	47·04	−6·96
Dunfermline	49·13	142·21	112·39	53·53	25·57	−0·13	67·73	68·91
Kirkcaldy	51·29	127·64	79·48	43·71	59·91	51·61	65·13	89·14
North East Fife	103·32	136·55	88·50	76·62	−2·36	59·02	106·54	64·72
Aberdeen	46·11	18·42	51·23	50·06	50·78	120·47	69·80	109·75
Banff and Buchan	16·84	117·55	116·28	67·41	61·04	71·14	61·58	19·78
Gordon	27·05	80·52	101·21	64·43	25·89	89·71	66·30	35·75
Kincardine and Deeside	48·48	113·98	99·88	55·25	66·40	63·11	43·52	24·55
Moray	75·40	50·64	54·89	79·60	66·87	100·94	23·62	105·58
Badenoch and Strathspey	82·46	98·61	74·78	85·79	53·98	48·79	95·94	0·36
Caithness	43·44	96·88	79·08	65·68	108·34	46·63	54·07	64·58
Inverness	35·50	115·70	62·43	38·74	38·42	99·50	42·95	99·63
Lochaber	15·75	181·75	125·82	36·84	47·84	36·58	67·88	90·95
Nairn	19·34	119·01	128·28	65·63	47·66	71·97	59·72	67·29

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	[2]*1986-87*
Ross and Cromarty	59·76	103·22	78·04	51·90	64·63	38·37	103·69	58·00
Skye and Lochalsh	106·86	54·84	121·75	34·71	100·80	98·52	115·24	1·78
Sutherland	38·79	125·28	55·88	50·43	55·34	50·62	71·09	16·93
East Lothian	42·92	83·09	65·12	87·26	44·92	67·14	50·35	73·20
Edinburgh	57·59	99·36	77·74	64·74	65·03	−9·20	1·75	112·13
Midlothian	50·24	76·31	95·32	45·41	45·28	55·38	47·91	66·24
West Lothian	48·49	149·99	82·03	37·86	25·91	41·36	44·36	63·59
Argyll and Bute	74·33	148·83	109·38	82·92	61·20	36·73	−0·35	67·04
Bearsden & Milngavie	18·82	156·00	72·88	32·22	30·20	37·54	107·03	125·47
Clydebank	72·62	83·93	76·99	26·85	52·02	111·99	148·27	118·56
Clydesdale	76·98	74·54	89·41	24·15	52·72	75·35	45·10	42·14
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	74·12	135·47	62·40	−0·28	25·55	110·64	104·40	89·85
Cumnock and Doon Valley	56·27	122·66	72·18	54·27	26·01	37·31	54·28	82·08
Cunninghame	0·38	102·54	45·27	42·90	0·38	0·19	85·78	133·32
Dumbarton	35·15	145·44	52·73	3·00	42·18	0·46	119·16	154·10
East Kilbride	96·43	96·61	115·13	45·21	52·52	54·65	107·06	50·23
Eastwood	48·00	126·74	75·82	29·25	25·94	25·08	22·99	25·71
Glasgow	58·10	100·79	37·01	26·65	0·70	53·01	101·84	106·73
Hamilton	36·09	72·61	105·29	54·38	36·52	47·96	95·96	108·78
Inverclyde	32·99	71·51	26·64	25·99	40·01	115·11	57·59	46·90
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	68·67	117·14	32·15	26·23	26·27	52·41	94·92	75·94
Kyle and Carrick	1·53	49·49	121·81	52·72	42·32	91·35	62·02	50·83
Monklands	43·71	69·88	92·16	49·97	0·00	105·01	122·46	95·42
Motherwell	43·84	113·99	26·70	51·99	52·17	70·35	62·15	84·76
Renfrew	47·03	96·50	47·24	11·99	25·20	51·85	87·76	78·98
Strathkelvin	69·68	149·01	35·30	24·17	45·66	54·61	133·47	62·26
Angus	19·98	151·44	53·30	87·45	50·35	49·69	57·87	49·62
Dundee	43·27	−0·06	70·26	42·07	37·97	53·17	94·04	102·12
Perth and Kinross	61·24	128·57	150·09	12·07	−0·17	60·14	51·99	51·66
Orkney Islands	56·80	61·71	72·49	41·35	45·75	112·43	68·91	85·44
Shetland Islands	44·23	124·86	126·30	7·63	−2·63	151·38	79·68	51·08
Western Isles	97·06	119·06	137·13	48·00	95·69	30·88	53·08	52·97
New Town	74·64	102·12	109·64	44·62	57·66	64·71	69·28	73·37
Cumbernauld	75·20	102·20	111·92	46·86	62·09	72·54	66·56	36·38
East Kilbride	70·82	98·24	107·06	44·62	48·61	66·78	67·38	100·47
Glenrothes	73·91	110·18	100·54	41·32	60·50	67·22	68·87	86·31
Irvine	83·94	79·29	110·61	45·72	52·74	52·96	64·80	78·57
Livingston	79·23	111·23	112·97	44·87	63·72	62·51	76·98	52·58
SSHA	92·67	101·00	107·41	38·71	54·60	61·94	81·05	88·77

[1] Prior to 1980 this was Lanark District.

[2] Estimated rent figures for 1987 were extracted from CIPFA's Rating Review publication.

Table 2

Increases in SSHA Average Annual Rents(£), by district

Area	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
SSHA total	61·94	81·05
Berwickshire	43·04	64·67
Ettrick and Lauderdale	48·31	83·40
Roxburgh	55·90	101·83
Tweeddale	59·50	102·37
Clackmannan	60·15	59·96
Falkirk	53·59	62·55
Stirling	66·73	79·82
Annandale and Eskdale	53·17	92·98
Nithsdale	57·50	90·91
Stewartry	42·38	70·90
Wigtown	—	—
Dunfermline	65·32	56·28
Kirkcaldy	60·88	55·31
North East Fife	—	—
Aberdeen	60·37	108·23
Banff and Buchan	53·61	85·50
Gordon	53·57	83·74
Kincardine and Deeside	54·03	94·29
Moray	44·29	74·65
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—
Caithness	38·57	55·12
Inverness	63·39	66·70
Lochaber	61·24	66·12
Nairn	79·16	61·86
Ross and Cromarty	45·72	54·71
Skye and Lochalsh	—	—
Sutherland	—	—
East Lothian	81·15	87·49
Edinburgh	71·09	91·92
Midlothian	71·30	73·00
West Lothian	63·15	64·65
Argyll and Bute	68·27	52·91
Bearsden and Milngavie	85·91	119·19
Clydebank	58·36	88·69
Clydesdale	54·62	68·93
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	72·55	91·06
Cumnock and Doon Valley	57·49	92·03
Cunninghame	70·81	58·25
Dumbarton	63·55	56·78
East Kilbride	—	—
Eastwood	59·00	114·44
Glasgow	57·65	100·90
Hamilton	69·86	73·94
Inverclyde	69·91	84·07
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	72·81	66·06
Kyle and Carrick	67·58	80·71
Monklands	64·96	94·44
Motherwell	73·20	86·25
Renfrew	70·04	84·67
Strathkelvin	68·33	96·56

Area	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Angus	54·54	68·93
Dundee	59·72	93·83
Perth and Kinross	46·29	83·83
Orkney Islands	—	—
Shetland Islands	37·71	61·28
Western Isles	28·71	64·21

— No stock of SSHA dwellings in District.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on changes in private sector rent levels in Dundee since 1979, and on the Government's policy for such rent levels; and whether he plans any measures to protect tenants on low incomes in future.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No information on private sector rent levels in general is held centrally. The Government's policy for the private rented sector in Scotland was set out in "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland" (Cm. 242), published on Wednesday 11 November.

Mortgage Defaulters

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish information available to him concerning the number of mortgage defaulters in Dundee in each of the past eight years involving *(a)* private sector houses and *(b)* public sector houses purchased under the right to buy legislation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Nursery Education

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the level of nursery education in each regional authority area in Scotland; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information at September of the years available is set out in the table:

Pupils in education authority nursery schools as a percentage of all three and four year olds

Authority	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Borders	13·0	13·7	17·4	17·6	16·6	16·8
Central	21·8	25·6	28·9	29·5	31·6	31·5
Dumfries and Galloway	7·5	8·5	8·0	8·1	7·9	8·7
Fife	36·7	38·8	39·7	41·5	42·7	43·5
Grampian	18·0	18·7	19·6	18·4	18·8	18·6
Highland	8·5	9·2	10·3	10·8	10·4	10·7
Lothian	36·9	40·6	43·3	43·5	44·0	45·5
Strathclyde	23·3	24·9	27·8	28·0	27·9	27·7
Tayside	21·0	22·5	23·9	24·0	23·4	23·0
Orkney	21·1	21·4	17·7	16·7	18·1	18·7
Shetland	11·7	13·2	12·1	12·1	11·2	13·6
Western Isles	17·0	18·4	19·5	19·7	16·3	0·0
All Scotland	24·0	25·8	28·0	28·2	28·3	28·4

School Boards

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate and publish the cost of setting up school boards in each regional authority area in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave the hon. Member for the Western Isles (Mr. MacDonald) on 28 October at column *235*.

Crime Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the recorded number of crimes against the person in Dundee in 1987; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: "Crimes against the person" is not an established term in Scottish criminal statistics. Groups 1 and 2 of the standard classification of crimes and offences, however, include most such crimes. The figures for these groups are set out in the table. Information for 1987 is not yet available.

Crimes recorded 1979 to 1986, city of Dundee

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Group 1: crimes of violence against the person	447	718	769	639	651	579	590	561
Group 2: crimes of indency	173	285	244	250	282	262	269	253
Total of groups 1 and 2	620	1,003	1,013	889	933	841	859	814

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the crime detection rate for each year since 1979 in the Dundee area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table expresses the number of crimes cleared up as a percentage of those recorded in the city of Dundee for the years 1979 to 1986.

Clear-up rates for city of Dundee

	Percentage
1979	32·3
1980	35·1
1981	34·0
1982	37·6
1983	41·2
1984	37·7
1985	42·7
1986	40·2

Board and Lodging

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many families in Dundee are currently in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid for out of public funds; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No overall figures are available for the number of persons in bed-and-breakfast accommodation paid out of public funds. However at 30 September 1987 no households were in bed-and-breakfast accommodation in Dundee district under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977. The corresponding figures for 30 September each year since 1980 are also nil. Figures for 1979 are not available.

Housing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of the housing capital programme for Dundee district council for each year since 1979, at 1987 prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Gross housing capital allocations (ie the aggregate of housing revenue account and non-housing revenue account allocations) to the city of Dundee district council have been as follows:

	1987-88 prices[1] £ million
1979-80	15·048
1980-81	13·808
1981-82	12·114
1982-83	16·427
1983-84	15·788
1984-85	16·030
1985-86	15·210
1986-87	17·140
1987-88	21·500

[1] Using GDP deflators.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest number of houses in need of urgent repair in Dundee; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of people on housing waiting lists in each district authority area in Scotland; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reliable and consistent information on waiting list figures is not available centrally.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the latest figures for house building by public and private sectors in *(a)* Scotland as a whole and *(b)* Dundee district authority area; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest figures for housebuilding in the public and private sectors in Scotland as a whole were published in table 1 of "Statistical Bulletin HSIU No. 31-Q1(87)" which is sent to all hon. Members for Scottish constituencies. The details requested for Dundee district are set out in the table:

Dundee district—Housebuilding

Year	*Public sector*	*Private sector*
1979	342	261
1980	224	244
1981	351	160
1982	162	162
1983	148	469
1984	155	470
1985	222	250
1986	83	179

Regional Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been paid in *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance in Fife in 1986-87 and so far in 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: Payments of RSA to firms in Fife in 1986-87 and in the period April to October 1987 totalled £6·2 million and £1·7 million respectively. Information on old RDG is available only in respect of payments of over £25,000 in the Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline, Cupar, Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy, St. Andrews and Leven and Methil local employment office areas. Such payments of RDG totalled £28·2 million in 1986-87 and £3·4 million in the period April to September 1987. Under new RDG, payments of over £25,000 in Fife totalled £0·1 million in 1986-87, and there have been no such payments so far this year.

Special Housing

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many homes were specially built for the elderly or disabled by each district council in Strathclyde region in the last financial year;

(2) if he will give the number of homes currently being built by the district councils of Scotland specifically for the needs of elderly and disabled people.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Consistent and reliable information is not available.

Rating Reform

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will *(a)* supply all hon. Members who request it with a copy of the CIPFA report commissioned by his Department on implementation of the poll tax and *(b)* place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Lang: The report, which is a long and technical document, has already been placed in the Library and hon. Members who wish may obtain extracts from it there.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has determined how the severely mentally handicapped will be defined for the purposes of poll tax exemption.

Mr. Lang: The definition of persons who are severely mentally handicapped for the purposes of exemption from liability for the personal community charge is contained in section 8(9) of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987. A consultation paper on the procedures for identifying such people was sent to interested bodies on 22 October.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people under 25 years in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area have been unemployed for more than one, two, three and four years.

Mr. Lang: The numbers of unemployed claimants under 25 years of age on 9 July 1987, the latest date for which this information is available, are shown in the table:

Duration unemployed	*Dundee, East parliamentary constituency*	*Dundee travel-to-work area*
Up to 1 year	1,803	3,799
1 to 2 years	416	820
2 to 3 years	222	393
3 to 4 years	82	144
Over 4 years	134	239
Total	2,657	5,395

This information is available in the Library.

MSC Schemes

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in *(a)* Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* Dundee district authority area have received financial assistance to attend interviews on Manpower Services Commission-sponsored schemes in the past 12 months; and what proportion of total applicants for such finance this represents.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is not available in the form requested. However, during the 12 months to end October 1987, 9,518 payments were made to people in the Dundee jobcentre area attending interviews about Manpower Service Commission employment and training schemes.

Fuel Disconnections

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for each year since 1974, the number of disconnections of gas and electricity supplies to domestic consumers due to unpaid bills in the Dundee area.

Mr. Lang: The information requested on electricity disconnections is not held centrally but I am asking the chairman of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board to write to the hon. Member.

Information in respect of gas disconnections is a matter for British Gas plc. I am asking the chairman to respond to the hon. Member's request.

Population Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of people in *(a)* the Dundee, East constituency and *(b)* the Dundee travel-to-work area broken down by sex, who are (i) under 25 years, (ii) between 25 years and 35 years, (iii) between 35 years and 50 years and (iv) over 50 years.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the hon. Gentleman means unemployed people. The number of unemployed claimants on 9 July, the latest date for which this information is available, is:

	Dundee, East Constituency			*Dundee Travel-to-Work Area*		
Age Group	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*	*Males*	*Females*	*Total*
Under 25	1,716	941	2,657	3,448	1,947	5,395
25-34	1,400	484	1,884	2,683	1,143	3,826
35-49	1,277	542	1,819	2,425	1,051	3,476
50 and over	844	374	1,218	1,754	820	2,574
All ages	5,237	2,341	7,578	10,310	4,961	15,271

This information is available in the Library.

Hunting

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the policy of the Forestry Commission with regard to hunting on the land it manages; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is the commission's policy to allow hunting to continue over land where it has traditionally taken place.

Social Security Fraud

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in the Glasgow, Central area have been prosecuted for fraudulent social security claims in the past six months; and how many of these received custodial sentences.

Mr. Portillo: I have been asked to reply.

In the six months ended on 31 October 1987, 65 prosecutions involving social security offences were instituted by local social security and unemployment benefit offices covering the Glasgow, Central area. None of those prosecuted received custodial sentences.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Blood Products

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is being taken to ensure the United Kingdom is self-sufficient in blood products.

Mr. Newton: Scotland and Northern Ireland are self-sufficient in all blood products. England and Wales are already self-sufficient in many. To ensure complete self-sufficiency a new blood products laboratory has been built at Elstree at a cost of £60 million. The new factory was officially opened on 29 April 1987. Production is expected within the next few months leading to very substantial output in 1988 and self-sufficiency in 1989.

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when guidance on planning for the National Health Service in war will be made available for inclusion in the emergency planning guidance to local authorities;

(2) if he will make available in the Library a copy of his plan for the organisation of the National Health Service in war.

Mrs. Currie: Individual health authorities are responsible for the preparation of plans for the organisation of the National Health Service in war, in line with guidance issued by the Department. This guidance, which has recently been revised, will come to Ministers for approval before being issued to the National Health Service in England as a health circular and before inclusion in the emergency planning guidance to local authorities. Health circulars are routinely placed in the Library.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many students at St. Andrew's university are currently in receipt of housing benefit; and what is the average payment received.

Mr. Portillo: The housing benefit scheme is administered by local authorities, and information about payments made in a particular locality is not held centrally.

Whipps Cross Hospital

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services for what reasons there are regularly waiting times of three to four hours at Whipps Cross hospital in London.

Mrs. Currie: As this is a local matter, my hon. Friend might like to contact the chairman of Waltham Forest health authority.

Storm Damage

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to assist the South East Thames regional health authority and district health authorities in southern England with the cost of damage caused to hospitals and other buildings under their control during the storm on Friday 16 October 1987.

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what extra financial provision he intends to make for the Mid-Downs health authority to deal with storm damage.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friends to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 4 November, at columns *781-82*.

Residential and Nursing Homes

Mr. Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total expenditure made by his Department in each of the last five years on payments to residents in *(a)* residential homes and *(b)* nursing homes.

Mr. Portillo: The only benefit payable to people in residential care and nursing homes for which there is information on total expenditure is supplementary benefit. The table sets out the position for the last five years., 1986 being the most recent year for which information is available.

Supplementary benefit for people in residential care and nursing homes

Year	*Expenditure (£ million)*	*Total expenditure (£ million)*
1982		39
1983		104
1984		200
1985[1]		—
1986[2]		
Residential care homes	330	459
Nursing homes	129	

[1] There are no figures for 1985 because for operational reasons there was no inquiry in that year.

[2] Until 1986 it has not been possible to identify separately expenditure on people in residential care homes and nursing homes.

Source: DHSS Annual Statistical Enquiry.

Smoking

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representation he has received from the tobacco manufacturers or from lobbying organisations seeking the reduction of public funding for anti-smoking campaigns.

Mrs. Currie: None.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what action he is taking to discourage smoking in workplaces;

(2) if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prohibit smoking in public places or to reduce the number of public places in which it is permitted;

(3) when the report by the independent scientific committee on smoking and health on the effects of the involuntary inhalation of tobacco smoke by non-smokers will be published.

Mrs. Currie: We expect to receive the fourth report of the independent scientific committee on smoking and health around the end of the year, after which a decision on publication will be taken. I understand that the report will include references to the dangers associated with breathing environmental tobacco smoke, on which the committee made an interim statement earlier this year. We shall then be able to consider any further action that may be needed on smoking in public places and the workplace. The Government's "Look After Your Heart" campaign is working with employers to encourage the introduction of no-smoking policies at the workplace, and through the newly introduced "Heartbeat Award Scheme" we hope to encourage more no-smoking areas in restaurants.

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the latest estimate of the number of deaths caused by smoking in one calendar year in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Currie: It is not possible to be precise. Most deaths associated with cigarette smoking arise from three diseases: lung cancer, chronic bronchitis and "heart attacks" due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart. However, the proportion of deaths attributable to smoking from each of these diseases varies. Furthermore, smoking is also implicated in certain other conditions where no estimate of the numbers of the deaths caused by smoking is available—for example, obstruction of the arteries of the lower limbs, and strokes.

It is estimated that at least 90 per cent. of deaths from cancers of the lung, lip, oesophagus and larynx, and 90 per cent. of deaths from chronic bronchitis obstructive lung disease, chronic pulmonary heart disease and aortic aneurysm are attributable to smoking. The total number of deaths from these conditions involved is given in the table.

United Kingdom—1986

ICD Code[1]		*Number*
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	40,139
140-149	Malignant neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx	1,906
150	Malignant neoplasm of oesophagus	5,227
161	Malignant neoplasm of larynx	945
416	Chronic pulmonary heart disease	844
441	Aortic aneurism	8,342
490-492, 496	Bronchitis and emphysema, chronic airways obstruction, not elsewhere classified	30,043

In 1983 the Royal College of Physicians in its report "Health or Smoking" estimated that perhaps 20 per cent. of deaths due to obstruction of the arteries of the heart were related to smoking. The medical term for this condition is "ischaemic heart disease" but it is commonly referred to as "coronary heart disease". The total number of deaths from this condition for United Kingdom is as follows:

United Kingdom—1986

ICD Code[1]		*Number*
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	181,491

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Industrial Diseases

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive a report from the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council into respiratory disease in textile workers.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the council is still considering the evidence it has received on this subject. I cannot say when its report will be produced.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any proposals to classify bronchitis and emphysema as industrial diseases.

Mr. Scott: No. The Secretary of State for Social Services is advised on the prescription of industrial diseases by an independent statutory body, the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council. The council has conducted an investigation into bronchitis and emphysema and its report is expected by the end of the year. We shall give careful consideration to any recommendations it may make.

Elections (Psychiatric Patients)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what help and opportunities psychiatric patients in British hospitals received in order to exercise their right to vote in the last general election, according to the Representation of the People Act 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The Representation of the People Act 1983 ensures that informal patients in mental hospitals who are not registered as electors in respect of their home address are able to register as electors by making a "patient's declaration." This declaration entitles patients to have their names included on the electoral register in respect of an address outside the hospital where they would be resident if they were not in hospital (or, if the patient cannot provide such an address, a former address). Patients who are unable to vote in person at an election may apply to vote by post or by proxy.

Current guidance from the Department to health authorities in England recommends that at the time of an election a member of the hospital's administrative staff—that is, someone who is not directly involved in the patient's treatment—should personally deliver the voting documents to the patient and then, or subsequently, be present not only to assist the patient, if required, but also to ensure the patient may record his vote without any person seeing how he has recorded it.

Leaflets for the use of the patients notifying these provisions and telling them how to register to vote in elections have been provided by the Department. Health authorities are urged to take all practicable steps annually to ensure that patients are informed of their entitlements; and the staff of the hospital should help patients who have difficulty in reading the leaflet.

Responsibility for help and opportunities given to psychiatric in-patients in Scotland and Wales to enable them to exercise their right to vote in parliamentary, European or local government elections, is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

War Widows (Pension)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received to increase the non-discretionary amount of war widows' pension disregarded in the calculation of housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: Over the past year representations on this issue have been received from two organisations representing war pensioners. Additionally, about 50 letters have been sent by individual pensioners.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the percentage increase in the social security budget if all war widows' pensions were disregarded in the calculation of housing benefit.

Mr. Portillo: We do not have the necessary information to make a very precise estimate, but in the context of a social security budget of around £46·5 billion in the current financial year, a full disregard of all war widows' pensions and allowances in the calculation of housing benefit would increase expenditure by less than 0·1 per cent.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has plans to increase the non-discretionary amount of war widows's pension disregarded the calculation of housing benefit when phase 2 of the Social Security Act 1986 becomes effective in April 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Yes. The statutory disregard is being increased by 25 per cent. from £4 to £5 when the revised housing benefit scheme is introduced in April 1988.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of patients awaiting *(a)* urgent and *(b)* non-urgent operations in (i) Leeds Eastern health authority and (ii) Leeds Western health authority on the latest available figures; and if he will give the figures for the previous six and 12 months, respectively.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for surgical specialties

District Health Authority	*31 March 1986*		*30 September 1986*		*31 March 1987*	
	Urgent	*Non-Urgent*	*Urgent*	*Non-Urgent*	*Urgent*	*Non-Urgent*
Leeds Eastern	595	4,939	493	4,543	445	5,523
Leeds Western	555	3,650	401	3,744	343	3,989

At 31 March 1986, 1,345 non-urgent cases had been on the waiting list more than one year in the Leeds eastern district health authority. This represented 23·8 per cent. of the total list. By 31 March 1987 the figure had fallen to 907 (15·0 per cent.). In the Leeds western district health authority at 31 March 1986, 807 non-urgent cases (18·4 per cent.) had been on the list for more than one year. By 31 March 1987 this had fallen to 732 (15·4 per cent.).

Abortions

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps have been taken by his Department to monitor the number of deaths abroad of overseas women upon whom abortions had recently been performed in England and Wales;

(2) what specific steps have been taken by his Department to monitor the number of emergency admissions for treatment abroad of overseas women upon whom abortions had recently been performed in England and Wales.

Mr. Newton: Non-resident abortion patients are provided with an information sheet and a discharge letter for their own doctor usually in their own language. In general, after-care is a matter for the doctors and medical institutions involved in any individual case.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown by health authority of the numbers of abortions which have been performed upon non-resident women in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table.

Legal abortions: Regional Health Authority of Termination, Non-Residents, 1982 to 1986, England and Wales

Regional health authority of termination	*Non-residents of England and Wales*				
	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
England and Wales	34,469	34,782	33,605	30,772	24,667
England	34,469	34,782	33,604	30,771	24,667
Wales	—	—	1	1	—
Northern	9	32	22	12	17
Yorkshire	306	288	348	356	414
Trent	6	11	18	23	26
East Anglian	15	12	9	3	—
North West Thames[1]	17,311	6,679	7,404	6,829	7,324
North East Thames[1]	2,922	13,310	12,670	10,001	3,802
South East Thames[1]	10,654	10,641	9,484	9,887	9,494
South West Thames[1]	1,380	1,475	1,384	1,296	1,335
Wessex	56	38	39	33	46
Oxford	4	3	4	4	3
South Western	3	3	1	2	3
West Midlands	574	467	417	370	376
Mersey	1,209	1,728	1,694	1,607	1,464
Northern Western	20	95	110	348	363

[1] Figures for the London Teaching Hospitals have been included with those of the Regional Health Authorities for the appropriate geographical area.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths of overseas women upon whom abortions have been performed in England and Wales have been drawn to his attention by the Governments of other member countries of the EEC in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Newton: None.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for the latest year for which figures are available, the number of abortions on *(a)* non-residents and *(b)* residents at 18 weeks and over together with the statutory grounds for abortion, place of residence for *(a)* and age.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 27 October 1987]:* The information requested is in the tables.

Number of notifications of legal abortions for gestation weeks 18 and over by country of usual residence for non-residents of England and Wales, 1986

Country	*All ages*
British Isles	445
Scotland	123
Northern Ireland	72
Irish Republic	224
Channel Island	21
Isle of Man	5
Other European[1]	3,101
Austria	38
Belgium and Luxembourg	28
France, Monaco	1,716
German Federal Republic	63
Italy	338
Malta	4
Netherlands	26
Portugal	19
Spain	826
Switzerland	36
Rest of the World[1]	142
Algeria	47
Australia	2
Republic of South Africa	48
United States of America	15
Zimbabwe	5

[1] Only countries where the number of terminations exceeds 24 (all gestation weeks) are included.

Number of notifications of legal abortions to resident and non-resident women of gestation weeks 18 and over by statutory grounds, 1986

Statutory grounds	*Residents*	*Non-residents*
Total	4,588	3,688
1 (with any other)	15	1
2 (alone)	3,656	3,614
3 (with or without 2)	280	62
4 (alone)	570	3
4 (with any other except 1)	65	8
5 or 6	2	—

Definitions of statutory ground.

1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
5. In emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman.
6. In emergency to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

Number of notifications of legal abortions to resident and non-resident women of gestation weeks 18 and over by age-group, 1986

	Residents	*Non-residents*
All ages	4,588	3,688
Under 15	61	52
15	178	102
16-19	1,481	991
20-24	1,467	1,275
25-29	680	590
30-34	338	338
35-39	256	213
40-44	110	105
45+	17	22
Unknown	—	—

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the numbers of abortions according to the grounds for termination in 1986 for 18 weeks and each week thereafter to 28 weeks.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table.

Number of notifications of abortions between 18 and 28 weeks gestation by statutory grounds
England and Wales 1986

Statutory Grounds[1]	*Gestation Weeks*										
	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
All Grounds	2,611	1,553	1,389	753	876	880	185	11	14	3	1
1 (With other)											
2 (Alone)	2,306	1,338	1,187	657	788	829	158	4	3	—	—
3 (With or without 2)	144	79	43	27	30	16	3	—	—	—	—
4 (Alone)	131	125	138	60	52	28	20	7	9	2	1
4 (With any other except 1)	26	8	18	6	4	5	3	—	2	1	—
5 or 6	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Definitions of grounds

1. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
3. The continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk or injury to the physical or mental health of any existing child(ren) in the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
4. There is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
5. In an emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman.
6. In an emergency to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in respect of the regulations governing the payment of social security benefits to elected members of local authorities who may be, or are authorised to be, in receipt of attendance allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: In 1986 and earlier this year previous Ministers in this Department received representations about the adverse effect of eligibility for local government attendance allowances on a councillor's entitlement to incapacity benefits. As a result a scheme was introduced last May under which ex gratia payments are being made to councillors. The effect of these payments is to overcome the previous abrupt withdrawal of benefits and to ensure that councillors' available income is at least equal to the full amount of incapacity benefits payable in normal circumstances and in most cases greater.

Since May we have received three letters about the scheme and one about the effect of attendance allowances on supplementary benefit. More recently several hon. Members have drawn our attention to the impending lobby by the Association of Councillors in support of an alternative approach to the interaction of attendance allowances and incapacity benefits.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the number of people who have died during the last year for which figures are available, whilst an application for an attendance allowance for them was *(a)* being considered and *(b)* in the process of appeal.

Mr. Scott: This information is not recorded as a matter of course and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Social Fund

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will announce the allocation of the social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 to the Dunstable local office of his Department.

Mr. Portillo: The allocations for grants and loans for 1988-89 are £39,269 and £90,778 respectively. The inclusion of these figures brings the total allocations to offices in the London, north social security region given in my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81* to £7,545,089 for grants for £17,672,023 for loans.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a revised version of the information contained in the document, "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", issued in October 1987, so as to show the income effects on claimants after April 1988 and their position at the time the Social Security Act 1986 received the Royal Assent, in particular taking into account changes to housing benefit in April 1987; and if he will provide, with each table, a list of the main assumptions used to arrive at the totals contained therein.

Mr. Portillo: The information could be prepared only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown of the extra £100 million to be spent on families with children on income support, referred to in his statement of 27 October, *Official Report*, column 181.

Mr. Scott: £100 million is a rounding down of the figure arrived at by multiplying the total number of families with children on income support by the average gain in real terms after meeting housing costs shown in the revised technical annex. A breakdown is provided below:

Type of claimant	*Numbers (thousands)*	*Average real terms gain*	*Increase in expenditure £ million*
Lone Parent	600	2·60	81
Unemployed and others	510	1·50	40
Total	1,110	2·10	121

Elderly People (Residential Care)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies on residential care for the elderly of the different arrangements in respect of the payment of increase in retirement pension paid to *(a)* those in local authority funded residential care and *(b)* those funded primarily by his Department in private residential accommodation.

Mr. Portillo: At present there are no differences in the arrangements for payment of retirement pension or increases in it as between pensioners in local authority residential care and private residential accommodation. The Department has, however, consulted local authority associations with proposals for easing administrative difficulties for authorities and residents over the encashment of pension order books for pensioners in local authority residential homes or sponsored by authorities in private and voluntary homes. Further proposals are expected to be made shortly, taking account of views expressed in the consultation.

Speech Therapist

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many speech therapist posts there are in the North Staffordshire district health authority, how many are vacant; and what is the waiting time between referral and an appointment.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available centrally. Staff-in-post figures for qualified speech therapists in North Staffordshire district health authority as at 30 September are shown in the table:

	Whole time equivalent
1985	19·4
1986	19·7

The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of North Staffordshire health authority for the information she requires.

Health and Community Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimated outturn in 1987-88 for health and community services current expenditure.

Mr. Newton: The voted provision for the hospital and community health services in England in 1987-88 is £10,339,619,000. This sum is cash-limited and expenditure is expected to be contained within it.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money he has allocated to local authorities in accordance with the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986.

Mr. Scott: Individual local authorities in England will not be allocated particular sums of money specifically for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 but account of the costs will be taken in determining planned figures for personal social services spending nationally.

Doctors (Career Structure)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to propose a career structure for medical doctors which ensures that the demands of National Health Service work do not oblige them to abandon teaching and research.

Mr. Newton: "Achieving a Balance: Plan for Action", published on 27 October on behalf of health departments, regional health authorities and the joint consultants committee, deals specifically with the career structure for hospital doctors. As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 27 October at column *258* its aims are to improve the quality of patient care by a number of measures designed to correct the present imbalance in hospital medical staffing. One of these measures is to relate the number of doctors in the training grades more closely to expected career opportunities.

The steering group which drew up the "Plan for Action" fully recognised the importance of teaching and research, both in their own right and as an integral part of doctors' postgraduate training. In particular, it recognised the special need of academic medicine to be able to respond quickly to unforeseen academic developments. The mechanisms set out in the "Plan for Action" therefore make special provision for additional posts to be set up where exceptional circumstances indicate this, while ensuring that the total number of academic and research posts in the training grades is brought into line with future opportunities.

Benefit Claims

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of outstanding claims for social security benefits in the Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices of his Department on the latest available date; and what were the figures for the same months in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: Details of the number of claims outstanding at the two offices concerned are shown in the table.

	26 October 1982	*25 October 1983*	*23 October 1984*	*22 October 1985*	*21 October 1986*	*20 October 1987*
Dundee, West						
Sickness/Invalidity benefit	250	122	92	89	68	66
Injury benefit	43	—	—	—	—	—
Severe disablement allowance	—	—	—	—	22	20
Maternity benefit/Allowance	26	29	33	24	13	8
Retirement pension	64	67	264	100	61	80
Supplementary benefit claims	52	64	84	155	110	121
Dundee, East						
Sickness/Invalidity benefit	268	177	78	72	60	61
Injury benefit[1]	38	—	—	—	—	—
Severe disablement allowance[2]	—	—	—	—	22	38
Maternity benefit/Allowance	50	89	26	14	39	11
Retirement pension	108	166	380	107	103	106
Supplementary benefit	70	292	181	201	141	192

[1] Injury benefit was abolished in April 1983.

[2] No figures were kept before June 1986 for the number of severe disablement allowance claims outstanding.

Note: Figures prior to 1982 are no longer available.

Single Payments

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appeals against decisions relating to single payments for people on supplementary benefit are currently being dealt with by the Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices of his Department on the latest available figures; and how many were made up each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: At 10 November 1987 Dundee, East and Dundee, West local offices had respectively 25 and 45 appeals against decisions on supplementary benefit single payments where the appeal had been forwarded to the local social security appeal tribunal but a submission by the adjudication officer on the appeal had not yet been made. An adjudication officer's submission had been forwarded to the local social security appeal tribunal in respect of a further 331 and 357 single payment cases respectively and these appeals are awaiting a hearing.

I regret that the equivalent figures for each year since 1979 are not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many single payments for people on supplementary benefit are currently being made by the Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices of his Department on the latest available figures; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The number of single payments made to people receiving supplementary benefit from the Dundee, East and Dundee, West local offices of my Department are given in the table below. The figures are for the years April to April.

Year	*Dundee East*	*Dundee West*
1979–80	6,021	4,307
1980–81	5,442	4,009
1981–82	5,060	3,837
1982–83	7,372	4,608
1983–84	10,867	7,391
1984–85	20,976	13,463
[1]1985–86	22,857	17,868
[1]1986–87	17,028	14,184

[1] The figures for the years 1985–86 and 1986–87 are provisional.

Pensioners

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners he estimates now receive a full rate rebate but are not on supplementary benefit or supplementary pension; and if he will give his estimate for *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Portillo: The information is not available in the form requested. It is estimated that in the autumn of 1986, 280,000 people in Great Britain were in receipt of a full rate rebate but were not on supplementary benefit or supplementary pension.

Trainee Social Workers

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the shortages of placements for trainee social workers; and what assessment he has made of the implication for social work education.

Mr. Newton: National data on practice placements are not collected either by the Department or the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, the statutory independent council responsible for promoting and validating social work training. Reports to CCETSW from social worker training courses however do confirm that shortages exist in some regions. Further information on the position is expected to be available from a survey recently carried out by the Association of Directors of Social Services.

In correspondence earlier this year between the chairman of CCETSW and myself about the council's reforms to social work training, emphasis was placed on the immediate improvements which could be made to current training. As a result, and through a grant of £250,000 from the Department, CCETSW will be addressing with social services departments ways of increasing the quantity and improving the quality of practice placements.

Social Work Students

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will monitor the means by which social service departments make available student placements to social work students in polytechnics and universities.

Mr. Newton: Monitoring the availability of practice placements is not a matter on which we propose to take action. It is best dealt with by those with a direct involvement in social work education — the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, the social worker training centres and the employers. CCETSW has promoted a new examination of how to secure practice placements of good quality through the recent publication of its discussion document "Accreditation of Agencies and Practice Teachers in Social Work Education".

Children's Hospital, Birmingham

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he gave his consent to the partial closure of the cardiac unit at the children's hospital, Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that a number of beds in this unit have had to be closed temporarily, so as to maintain a safe standard of nursing care. Health authorities are not obliged to consult Ministers before implementing a temporary closure for this reason.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why there has been a reduction in paediatric nursing care at the children's hospital, Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie: The provision of paediatric nursing care at this hospital is the responsibility of the Central Birmingham health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of Central Birmingham health authority for the information he requires.

Sick Children's Nurses

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recruitment, training and retention of registered sick children's nurses in Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie: Information on the recruitment, training and retention of registered sick children's nurses in Birmingham is not held centrally. The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority for the information he requires.

Maternity and Funeral Payments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what amounts he has allowed for *(a)* maternity payments and *(b)* funeral payments in the budget for the social fund for 1988-89.

Mr. Portillo: Maternity and funeral payments under the social fund are not subject to budget discipline and are not therefore a part of the social fund budget announced recently.

Supplementary Budget

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of families with children claiming supplementary benefit were in receipt of one or more additional requirements at the latest date available.

Mr. Scott: At February 1986, the latest date for which information is available, 75·5 per cent. of supplementary benefit claimants with dependent children under 19 had one or more additional requirements.

Source: Annual statistical inquiry.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the current average waiting time for a decision on supplementary benefit claims in his Department's Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices; and what are the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The average number of days taken to process claims to supplementary benefit are shown in the table.

	Dundee, West	*Dundee, East*
26 October 1982	4	4
25 October 1983	1	6
23 October 1984	2	4
22 October 1985	3	3
21 October 1986	3	2
20 October 1987	3	3

Figures prior to 1982 are no longer available.

Invalid Care Allowance

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider taking steps to amend the Supplementary Benefit (Conditions of Entitlement) Regulation 6*(b)* to insert a specific reference to receipt of the invalid care allowance being an acceptable reason to exempt a person from the requirement to register and be available for employment in order to receive supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: At the moment a person receiving invalid care allowance is usually exempt from the requirement to be available for work under the provisions of Supplementary Benefits (Conditions of Entitlement) Regulation 6*(b)* which applies where there are no alternative means of caring for a disabled person in receipt of attendance allowance. From the start of the income support scheme in April next year there will be a specific exemption for persons in receipt of invalid care allowance by virtue of paragraph 4*(a)* of schedule 1 to the draft Income Support (General) Regulations.

Homeless Persons

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance his Department give to local authorities concerning the resettlement of homeless persons outside their own borough in relation to the provision of health and social services.

Mrs. Currie: People from one borough who are accommodated in another are entitled to the full range of health and social services in the same way as any other resident. No specific guidance has been issued to local authorities.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will advise regional health authorities to ignore district health authorities' raising of income when allocating resources; and if he will ignore the extent to which income is raised in each region when allocating resources to the regional health authorities.

Mr. Newton: The allocation of funds between regional health authorities is concerned with net Exchequer resources and takes no account of the income which health authorities may raise and retain. The allocation of funds to districts is a matter for regions, and we have no plans to issue advice on this point.

Heating Allowances

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what precise guidelines he proposes to issue on heating allowances covered by the social fund.

Mr. Portillo: As my hon. Friend announced on 26 October at column *184*, we intend to provide for a regulated system of help towards the cost of heating in cold weather. This will be paid as a right in a similar way to the arrangements for maternity and funeral payments under the social fund. Precise guidelines will be considered in the light of this winter's experience. Heating allowances are not included in the social fund though loans may be offered, in certain circumstances, for payment of fuel bills. The new income support scheme will continue to give people money to pay for heating. Extra help will be directed more effectively through the premiums to those in greatest need—pensioners, sick and disabled people and families.

Rating Reform

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if there will be a rebate for those paying water rates under the proposed community charge legislation.

Mr. Scott: When the community charge rebate scheme is introduced, it will not include rebates in respect of liability for water charges. In setting the levels of income support for April 1988, account was taken of the overall amount spent in supplementary benefit on water charges. This will be carried forward and reflected in community charge rebate thresholds.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if pensioners and low-income families, now on full rate rebates but not claiming supplementary benefit or the new income support, will be eligible for the 80 per cent. community charge rebate.

Mr. Scott: People eligible for income support will be eligible for the maximum community charge rebate of 80 per cent. irrespective of whether they claim income support.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Social Services whether *(a)* any rebate on the community charges will be paid separately to the husband and wife and *(b)* any rebate on the 20 per cent. for which they are liable, will be paid separately to the husband and wife.

Mr. Scott: The intention is that in normal circumstances each partner in a couple should receive separate demand notices showing their individual community charge liabilities, and that where the couple is entitled to a rebate the liabilities should be appropriately reduced. The maximum community charge rebate will be 80 per cent. and there will be no rebate on the remaining 20 per cent.

Wakefield District Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names, addresses and ages of the chairman, deputy chairman and members of the Wakefield district health authority, together with their nominating bodies.

Mrs. Currie: The chairman of Wakefield health authority is Sir Jack Smart, CBE, JP, aged 67 years. He may be contacted at the health authority offices at Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield. The responsibility for appointing health authority chairmen is entirely that of my right hon. Friend and is not a matter of direct nomination. The members of Wakefield health authority are appointed by the Yorkshire regional health authority and Wakefield city council. Details are not held centrally but may be obtained from the chairman of the regional health authority.

Tax Benefit Model Tables

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the tax benefit model tables for April 1987.

Mr. Portillo: I am placing copies of these tables in the Library today.

Cash Limits

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there has been any change in the cash limits or running costs to his Department for 1987-88.

Mr. Scott: The cash limit for class XV, vote 5 (Administration and Miscellaneous Services) has been reduced by £3·049 million (from £1,342·968 million to £1,339·919 million).

The revision takes account of a number of changes, namely reductions of £2·6 million, arising from revised assumptions for unemployment, and £1,132 million in respect of the Department of Employment's 1986-87 cash limit overspend, (both reflected on this vote in reduced agency payments to the Department of Employment); an increase of £0·818 million following a reassessment in the announced abatement in respect of the DHSS 1986-87 cash limit overspend (from £4·284 million to £3·466 million), and transfers to the Department of Trade and Industry and the Welsh Office of £0·050 million and £0·085 million respectively.

As a result of the above-mentioned transfers to the Department of Trade and Industry and the Welsh Office, the gross running costs limit of the Department of Health and Social Security is reduced by £0·135 million from £1,700·813 million to £1,700·678 million.

Psychiatric Hospitals (Deaths)

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of deaths from accidents or suicide in psychiatric hospitals in England in each of the last five years; and if he will list in the *Official Report* each such hospital where more than three deaths occurred in any one year, giving the total for that hospital in that year.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: I regret that the full information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, my hon. Friend may be interested in the tables, which show readily available figures.

Table 1

Number of deaths registered as (a) accidental and (b) suicide occurring in NHS and non-NHS psychiatric hospitals, persons all ages. England and Wales 1981—1984. Usual residents of England 1985.

ICD[1] *code*	*Cause of Death*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
E800—E949 E960 E999	All accidental and violent deaths (excluding suicide)	205	201	172	185	180
E950 E959	Suicide and self-inflicted injury	37	32	44	38	43
E800—E999	All accidental and violent deaths	242	233	216	223	223

[1] International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.

Table 2

Number of deaths registered as (a) accidental and (b) suicide occurring in NHS and non-NHS psychiatric hospitals, persons all ages. Usual residents of England and Regional Health Authorities (RHA), person all ages *1985*

Area of usual residence	*Cause of death*	
	(a) All accidental and violent deaths (excluding suicide)	*(b) Suicide*
	E800—E949 *E960—E999*	*E950—E959*
England	180	43
Northern RHA	23	5
Yorkshire RHA	10	1
Trent RHA	9	3
East Anglian RHA	7	1
North West Thames RHA	11	2
North East Thames RHA	8	3
South East Thames RHA	9	3
South West Thames RHA	14	4
Wessex RHA	15	3
Oxford RHA	9	4
South Western RHA	15	6
West Midlands RHA	25	3
Mersey RHA	14	4
North Western RHA	11	1

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members (Salaries)

Mr. George: To ask the Lord Privy Seal how many right hon. and hon. Members are currently drawing their full parliamentary salary.

Mr. Wakeham: Six hundred and forty-nine right hon. and hon. Members are currently drawing their full parliamentary salary. The one hon. Member who is not receiving a parliamentary salary is not eligible to do so, since he has not yet taken the oath.

Select Committee on Welsh Affairs

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will list by date the reports issued by the Welsh Affairs Select Committee since 1979 together with the dates on which Government replies were received.

Mr. Wakeham: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows (dates of reports are the dates when the report was made to the House):

Session 1979-80

First Report: The Role of the Welsh Office and Associated Bodies in Developing Employment Opportunities in Wales —HC731 (30 July 1980); *Government Observations*—Cmnd 8085 (December 19[illegible]).

First Special Report: Sub-Committees — HC417 (9 February 1980).

Session 1980-81

First Report: Supplementary Estimates — HC61 (9 December 1980); *Government Observations* contained in the *First Special Report*—HC122 (January 1981).

Second Report: Broadcasting in the Welsh language and the implications for Welsh and non-Welsh speaking viewers and listeners — HC448 (23 July 1981); *Government Observations*—Cmnd 8469 (January 1982).

First Special Report: Supplementary Estimates—HC122 (28 January 1981).

Session 1981-82

First Report: Welsh Water Authority: Establishment of Local Consumer Advisory Committees—HC335 (21 April 1982); *Government Observations* contained in *First Special Report*—HC499 (July 1982).

Session 1982-83

First Report: Water in Wales — HC229 (24 February 1983); *Government Observations* — Cmnd 9138 (February 1984).

First Special Report: The impact of the European Community on Wales—HC377 (11 May 1983).

Session 1983-84

First Report: The impact of regional industrial policy on Wales — HC427 (9 May 1984); *Government Observations* contained in the *Second Special Report*—HC576 (18 July 1984).

First Special Report: Response from the Welsh Water Authority to the Committee's First Report of session 1982-83 (Water in Wales)—HC237 (1 February 1984).

Session 1984-85

First Report: Public Transport in Wales — HC35 (21 January 1985); This inquiry was undertaken in response to a Government Consultation paper. No Government response was expected.

Session 1985-86

First Report: Coastal Sewage Pollution in Wales — HC101 (10 December 1985); *Government Observations* — Cmnd 9764 (7 April 1986).

First Special Report: Response of the Welsh Water Authority to the Committee's First Report of session 1985-86 (Coastal Sewage Pollution in Wales) — HC401 (14 May 1986).

Session 1986-87

First Report: Tourism in Wales — HC256 (26 March 1987); Government Response awaiting appointment of new Committee.

Second Report: The condition and repair of privately-owned housing — HC230 (13 May 1987); Government Response awaiting appointment of new Committee.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will give the dates on which reports of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee have been discussed by the House of Commons.

Mr. Wakeham: As far as I am aware, no report from the Welsh Affairs Committee has been cited as being directly relevant to a debate. However, in recent years there has been a debate, as near as possible to St. David's day, when the subject of any of these reports could have been raised.

Security Vetting

Mr. Wray: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the criteria which the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) consider should be used in the vetting of staff of hon. Members, as envisaged in paragraph 23 of its second report, HC 195, Session 1984-85, indicating those organisations membership of which would be proscribed.

Mr. Wakeham: The Services Committee has made no recommendation about the criteria to be used in checking staff, and has not suggested the proscription of any particular organisation.

Recycled paper

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will make available recycled paper in equivalent styles and sizes to the House of Commons notepaper currently available for use by hon. Members, their staff, and staff of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Recycled paper for use as House of Commons stationery has been considered in the past, but was rejected as not being of satisfactory quality. However, a further request for updated information has been put to Her Majesty's Stationery Office and, once that advice has been received, the matter will be re-considered by the relevant sub-committee of the Services Committee.

DEFENCE

NFR 90 Frigate

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost to the United Kingdom of the NFR90 collaborative frigate project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The estimate of current expenditure on NFR 90 is £1·7 million on the feasibility study. A decision is to be made shortly whether the United Kingdom will enter the next phase, which is project definition, at a cost of about £10 million. Any further expenditure will depend on the outcome of project definition and on subsequent decisions.

Low-flying Aircraft

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians have been killed in accidents involving low-flying aircraft in Britain since 1983.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Departmental Statistics

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total civilian work force employed by his Department in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: The number of full-time equivalent civilian staff, excluding casual staff, employed by the Ministry of Defence in Wales as at 1 October 1987 was 5,944.

Corresponding figures for each year from 1979 to 1986 are as follows:

	Number
1979 (1 January)	7,659
1980 (1 October)	7,600
1981 (1 October)	7,273
1982 (1 October)	7,024
1983 (1 October)	6,925
1984 (1 October)	6,680
1985 (1 October)	6,396
1986 (1 October)	6,236

For the purposes of consistency and comparability the above figures exclude personnel employed at Royal Ordnance factories, which ceased to be part of the Ministry of Defence on 2 January 1985.

Ministry of Defence full-time equivalent staff in Wales have therefore reduced by 12·9 per cent. between 1 January 1979 and 1 October 1987. Although the figures for

Scotland and England are not available in precisely the same form, it is estimated that the corresponding reductions for Scotland and England are 10 per cent. and 26 per cent., respectively.

AIDS

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States authorities regarding AIDS testing of United States service personnel based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Freeman: None. The United States forces in Europe are autonomous in medical matters. At a medical level the MOD maintains liaison with the United States armed forces.

Arms and Ammunition (Security)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his replies of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *338*, to the hon. Member for Burnley, he has any proposals to tighten security at locations where the Air Training Corps and similar bodies store arms and ammunition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Arrangements for the security storage of arms and ammunition in the service cadet forces are kept under constant review.

In the Air Training Corps a major programme of works services to improve units' physical security has been under way for the past three years. Custom-made steel containers have been installed for the storage of ammunition and rifle bolts, and new alarm systems are being installed. New buildings will have concrete armouries fitted with steel doors. A programme of security education has been undertaken for all ATC personnel. Crime prevention surveys of all units are also being carried out.

In the Army Cadet Force and Combined Cadet Force a survey is currently being conducted into the standard and state of existing armouries. Some new armouries are being provided and older armouries are being strengthened by the provision of window grilles, stronger doors and more secure locks. Structurally approved armouries are being upgraded by installing alarm systems linked to police stations or private homes.

In the Sea Cadet Corps naval security staff carry out regular and spot checks of each unit's security arrangements and if these are not up to standard arms and ammunition are removed until security has been improved. Special contingency plans have been agreed with the police to deal with any thefts, especially in inner city areas.

Security arrangements for the storage of arms and ammunition by the service cadet forces are prescribed centrally by my Department and comply fully with the requirements of the Firearms Act 1968.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his replies of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *338*, to the hon. Member for Burnley, he will give the place and details regarding each of the 53 break-ins which occurred over the past 12 months at sites where the Air Training Corps and other similar bodies store arms and ammunition.

Mr. Freeman: Details of break-ins involving arms and ammunition (including inert drill purpose items) over the 12 month period October 1986 to September 1987 at service cadet corps sites are as follows:

	Date	*Place*	*Unit*	*Stolen*	*Recovered*
Air Training Corps (ATC)					
1.	October 1986	Woodford	241 (Wanstead and Woodford) Squadron	610 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	
2.	October 1986	Bideford	1146 (North Devon) Squadron	2 × ·22 in. rifles 700 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	
3.	October 1986	Birmingham	165 (Castle Bromwich) Squadron	450 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	
4.	November 1986	Montrose	2288 (Montrose) Squadron	100 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	All rounds
5.	March 1987	Folkestone	99 (Folkestone) Squadron	1,300 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	
6.	March 1987	Berkhamsted	1113 (Berkhamsted) Squadron	1 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifle bolt	
7.	March 1987	Blackpool	2459 (Poulton Le Fylde) Squadron	2 × ·22 in. rifles 2 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifles 62 rounds of ·303 in. drill purpose ammunition	
8.	March 1987	Smethwick	494 (Smethwick) Squadron	520 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	
9.	April 1987	Mid Glamorgan	2318 (Aberkenfig) Squadron	1 × ·22 in. rifle 800 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	Rifle and 738 rounds
10.	June 1987	Bristol	2386 (Kingswood) Squadron	3 × ·303 in. drill purpose bolts 2 × ·303 in. drill purpose magazines	
11.	September 1987	Burnley	352 (Burnley) Squadron	35 rounds of drill purpose ammunition 12 × ·303 in. drill purpose magazines 12 × ·303 in. drill purpose bolts 5 × ·22 in. bolts 397 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition	All items apart from ·22 in. ammunition
Army Cadet Force (ACF) and Combined Cadet Force (CCF)					
1.	October 1986	Glenrothes	Kennoway Det. ACF	2 × air rifles 1 × ·303 in. skeleton drill purpose rifle	
2.	December 1986	Hilsea	6 Pl B Coy, Hants and I.O.W. ACF	1 × LMG drill purpose 10 rounds of drill purpose ammunition	

	Date	*Place*	*Unit*	*Stolen*	*Recovered*
3.	January 1987	Bury St. Edmunds	Ixworth Pl, Suffolk ACF	3 × ·22 in. rifles (less bolts) 4 × ·177 in. air rifles	
4.	February 1987	Brigg	Brigg Det, Humberside ACF	262 rounds of ·22 in. ammunition 1,000 × ·177 in. air rifle pellets	62 rounds and all pellets
5.	February 1987	Dunmow	Dunmow Det, Essex ACF	9 × rifle bolts 1 × LMG breech block drill purpose	
6.	February 1987	Kilmarnock	Kilmarnock Det, Ayr and Renfrew ACF	2 × ·22 in. rifles 2 × air rifles	All items
7.	February 1987	Newbiggin	Newbiggin Det, Northumbria ACF	6 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifle bolts	
8.	March 1987	Cwm	Cwm Det, Gwent ACF	1,000 × air rifle pellets	
9.	April 1987	Dundee	RA Det, Angus and Dundee BN ACF	3 × ·177 in. air rifles	All items
10.	May 1987	Wallington	149 Cadet Det, Wallington	10 × drill purpose rounds	
11.	June 1987	Aberdeen	Woodside Det, Gordon Highlanders ACF	1 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifle 1 × ·303 in. drill purpose magazine 10 × ·303 in. drill purpose rounds	1 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifle
12.	July 1987	Plympton	King Tamerton School ACF	2 × ·22 in. air rifles	
13.	July 1987	Oldham	Heywood Det, Manchester ACF	3 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifles 2 × ·177 in. air rifles 4 × bolts 20 × ·303 in. drill purpose rounds	
14.	July 1987	Cullompton	Cullompton Det, Devon ACF	6 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifles 55 × ·303 in. drill purpose rounds 2 'tubes' containing 20 air rifle pellets	
15.	August 1987	Poole	Lytchett Matravers Det, Dorset ACF	1 × ·22 in. air rifle 3 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifles 1 × LMG drill purpose	
Sea Cadet Corps (SCC)					
1.	May 1987	Winsford	Winsford-Middlewich Unit, Cheshire	2 × ·303 in. drill purpose rifles	
2.	September 1987	Guildford	Guildford Unit, Surrey	1 × drill purpose machine gun	

These figures have been compiled using the latest information available and update the figures previously provided. Twenty-two break-ins included in my previous answer did not involve arms or ammunition, while three others fall outside the given period.

Search and Rescue Service

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what control his Department proposes to exercise over a privatised search and rescue service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We continue to study the proposals put forward by Bristow Helicopters Ltd., advocating the transfer to commercial contractors of the search and rescue helicopter service, currently provided by the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. No conclusions have yet been reached and no decisions taken.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the financial implications for mountaineers of a privatised search and rescue service.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) on 27 October 1987, at column *241*.

Noise Insulation (Leuchars)

Mr. Menzies Cambell : To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to his Department of noise insulation and double glazing grants so far provided because of the arrival of the conversion squadron at RAF Leuchars earlier in the current year; and how many such payments have been made.

Mr. Freeman: It is not possible to provide the information in the form requested. However, the extension to the noise insulation grant scheme, which was introduced in March this year, took account of the predicted increase in aircraft activity that would result from the arrival of the Phantom operational conversion unit at RAF Leuchars. To date, some £45,000 has been paid in grants under the extended scheme and a total of 30 payments made. Grant applications have so far been received from more than half of the estimated 620 homes within the area of the new scheme.

Foxhunter Radar

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by how much the Foxhunter radar programme has been overspent; and why information about the cost of this programme has been deleted from the major project list in volume 2 of the Defence Estimates.

Mr. Sainsbury: Negotiations are continuing with Marconi Defence Systems towards a firm price for the remaining work necessary to achieve the required radar performance. Information about the cost of the Foxhunter programme was not included in volume 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" to avoid prejudicing these commercial negotiations. By the same token it would be inappropriate to give details now, while negotiations continue.

Trident

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimated cost of the Trident programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: As I announced to the House on 27 January this year, the latest estimated cost of Trident is £9,265 million at 1986-87 prices and £1 = $1·50.

Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the outcome of the audit carried out by John Brown of the Aldermaston redevelopment; what cost overruns were revealed; what action is being taken to remedy them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: A contract was let following competition to John Brown Engineers and Constructors Ltd. in March 1987 to advise and assist the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Aldermaston, with the co-ordination and integration of key projects in the programme of new capital facilities at the Establishment.

Following advice from John Brown as part of its initial task, competitive tenders have now been issued for the provision of an integrated project management service to the establishment, through to the completion of the capital programme.

Information on the cost of the capital works programme at AWE Aldermaston is included in the report by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the "Control and Management of the Trident Programme" (HC27). A statement on the report would be inappropriate at this time for the reason I gave in my answer to the hon. Member on 30 October at column *485*.

RNAD Milford Haven and RAF Trecwn

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the report on the future of RNAD Milford Haven and RNAD Trecwn is to be published; and what period will be allowed for consultation.

Mr. Sainsbury: The report has yet to be considered by management. No date has been fixed for publication of a consultative document version of the report.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of *(a)* full-time staff, *(b)* part-time staff, and *(c)* apprentices employed at *(a)* RNAD Milford Haven and *(b)* RNAD Trecwn in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Sainsbury: Information is available only from 1978. This is as follows:

	Trecwn		*Milford Haven*	
	Full-time Staff	*Apprentices*	*Full-time Staff*	*Apprentices*
31 January 1978	480	7	287	23
31 January 1979	497	7	275	23
31 January 1980	483	8	271	19
31 January 1981	454	8	258	17
31 January 1982	427	8	252	16
31 January 1983	425	9	254	18
31 January 1984	[1]448	11	[1]278	12
31 January 1985	[1]454	30	[1]268	9
31 January 1986	[1]389	45	[1]241	6
31 January 1987	[1]370	50	[1]238	3

No part-time staff have been engaged over this period.

[1] Includes Ministry of Defence Police.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total wage and salary bill of *(a)* RNAD Milford Haven and *(b)* RNAD Trecwn in 1986-87.

Mr. Sainsbury: The information is as follows:

(a) RNAD Milford Haven
£2·191 million + £0·416 million for pension and gratuity.

(b) RNAD Trecwn
£3·483 million + £0·662 million for pension and gratuity.

Military Personnel (Private Activities)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of all occasions in the past three years when serving members of the armed services have been engaged in activities associated with private individuals, companies, associations and in each case provide details of the number of military personnel involved and the cost charged to the user.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *600*, if he will provide details of the standard procedures adopted by the Directorate of Naval Recruiting when the services of military personnel are sought by commercial companies.

Mr. Freeman: Such requests are considered in the light of prospective training, publicity and recruiting benefits, the availability of the relevant personnel and the adequacy of safety and financial arrangements.

Harrier Aircraft

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had on the future of the AV8B/Harrier GR5 on his recent visit to the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Secretary of State on 10 November, at column *148*.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Harrier GR5 aircraft have been ordered from British Aerospace; how many have so far been delivered; and how many are scheduled for delivery in each financial year up to 1995.

Mr. Sainsbury: Sixty-two Harrier GR5s have to date been ordered from British Aerospace, including two prototypes. Seven have been delivered, although not all of them are in RAF service. Deliveries will continue at a rate of some 20 a year until early 1990.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the AV8B/Harrier GR5.

Mr. Sainsbury: Sixty-two Harrier GR5 aircraft are currently on order from British Aerospace and deliveries have begun; a further order is under consideration. As far as the United States Government's position on AV8B is concerned, I would refer the hon. Member to my replies of 6 July 1987.

Hunting and Polo

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) to what extent military personnel in corps and units not holding Army horses participate in hunting and polo during duty time;

(2) if he will take action to ensure, that the benefits of equestrian training bestowed by hunting or playing polo in those units which hold Army horses are shared equally between officers and other ranks.

Mr. Freeman: Military personnel of all ranks serving in mounted units have the opportunity to derive the benefits of equestrian training afforded by hunting when this is done using military horses. However, hunting also takes place as a recreational activity on the same basis as polo and other sports in duty time, other duties permitting, at the commanding officer's discretion. In these circumstances, privately owned horses only are used and personnel in mounted and non-mounted units participate largely at their own expense. It is for individuals to decide whether they wish to spend their money in this way.

Gulf

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has of the current average monthly cost of the Royal Navy's mine counter-measures and escort activity in the Gulf.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) on 5 November 1987 at column *888*.

BP Flotation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *600*, when he expects to announce the precise costs to be recovered by the Directorate of Naval Recruiting from BP for services rendered on 15 October.

Mr. Freeman: The costs to the Ministry of Defence of the Royal Marine participation in the BP share launch ceremony total £2,293 and this sum is being recovered from the publicity company employed for the event.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to publish the doctrine for the use of British tactical nuclear weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The British Army of the Rhine operates Lance surface-to-surface missiles and artillery systems which are capable of firing nuclear warheads supplied by the United States. Battlefield nuclear weapons are an important and effective element of the deterrent forces maintained by NATO in support of its strategy of flexible response. As is the case with all of NATO's nuclear forces, the employment of battlefield nuclear weapons in the defence of the Alliance would be governed by general political guidelines agreed by the Nuclear Planning Group. These guidelines are classified.

Battlefield Artillery Target Engagement System

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost to date of the battlefield artillery target engagement system to Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total expenditure to date on all phases of the BATES programme is some £130 million at 1987-88 average outturn prices.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the in-service date for the battlefield artillery target engagement system as specified in the battlefield artillery target engagement system original contract is on schedule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 2 November at column *605*.

Civilian Workers

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total civilian work force employed by his Department in Scotland; and what was the corresponding figure for each year since 1980.

Mr. Sainsbury: The number of full-time equivalent civilian staff, excluding casual staff, employed by the Ministry of Defence in Scotland as at 1 October 1987 was 12,258.

Corresponding figures for each year from 1980 to 1986 were:

	Number
1 October 1980	19,439
1 October 1981	18,850
1 October 1982	18,430
1 October 1983	18,645
1 October 1984	18,440
1 October 1985	18,162
1 October 1986	18,257

For the purpose of consistency and comparability the above figures exclude personnel employed at royal ordnance factories, which changed from being part of the Ministry of Defence to independent Companies Act status on 2 January 1985.

The reduction in numbers between October 1986 and October 1987 is largely due to the transfer of some 5,700 royal dockyard, Rosyth staff to commercial management on 6 April 1987.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the progress of the European fighter aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 10 November to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Intergovernmental Conference

10. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will now reconsider his decision not to place in the Library minutes of the Anglo-Irish Conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The position remains as stated by my right hon. Friend in his reply to the hon. Member on 29 June. A copy of the joint statement issued after the meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 21 October has been placed in the Library.

17. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference last discussed the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: At the last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference on 21 October.

21. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subjects were discussed at his last meeting with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

36. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the measures agreed at the last meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference to gain the support of the minority in Northern Ireland for the administration of justice.

Mr. Tom King: At its meeting on 21 October the Intergovernmental Conference discussed, among other things, a report from the official group which reviewed the progress that had been made and the further measures that had been proposed to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice. It was agreed that the two sides should remain in close contact on this issue.

"Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process"

12. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received following the publication of the discussion paper "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process".

30. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has received to his consultative document concerning the conduct of elected representatives.

34. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received regarding his discussion paper "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process" in Northern Ireland.

41. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the discussion paper "Elected Representatives and the Democratic Process".

Mr. Needham: The discussion paper invited comments by 30 November. To date we have received 11 letters on the subject and we have been given a number of comments orally.

Equal Opportunity

13. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he intends to publish his White Paper on equality of opportunity.

Mr. Viggers: We shall announce details of our legislative proposals on equality of opportunity as soon as possible in the new year.

31. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the Government's intention to legislate following on the standing advisory committee report on equality of opportunity.

Mr. Viggers: I refer the hon. Member to my answer earlier today to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

Security

16. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 23 July, 29 people have been killed in incidents arising from the security situation. These include a number of believed terrorists killed by their own devices. Against that serious background, the security forces have achieved some significant results. So far this year, 394 people have been charged with serious offences, including 25 with murder. A total of 230 weapons and approximately 1,300 rounds of ammunition and 12,725 lb of explosives have been recovered.

In addition, the Garda Siochana has recovered 118 weapons, 10,000 rounds of ammunition and some 4,000 lb of explosives. In addition, the House will be aware of the substantial arms seizure on the Eksund for which we are most grateful to the French authorities.

As I informed the House, I am having further urgent discussions with my security advisers in the light of the recent outrages. I shall also be having early discussions with Irish Ministers about security matters.

The House will be aware of the universal condemnation that Sunday's outrage in Enniskillen has received. It is vital that that condemnation is backed by the fullest help and support from all sides of the community to the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the security forces in their vital fight against terrorism.

24. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of cross-border security co-operation.

Mr. Stanley: The Anglo-Irish Agreement has given us the best opportunity we have so far had for enhancing security co-operation with the authorities in the Republic of Ireland. In the last two years we have made worthwhile advances, and look forward to making still further progress in enabling the security forces both north and south of the border to deal more effectively with the terrorist threat.

33. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in the Province.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the security position in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) and the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the current operation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement regarding security matters.

Mr. Tom King: The Anglo-Irish Agreement has given us the best opportunity we have so far had for enhancing security co-operation with the authorities in the Republic of Ireland. In the last two years we have made worthwhile advances, and look forward to making still further progress in enabling the security forces both north and south of the border to deal more effectively with the terrorist threat.

Abortion

18. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent consideration has been given to extending the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland.

19. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent consideration has been given to extending the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland.

26. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent consideration has been given to extending the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland.

27. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent consideration has been given to extending the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise).

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of convictions in Northern Ireland for procuring an illegal abortion in each year since 1957.

Mr. Needham: Police records show that since 1975, two persons have been found guilty of procuring an illegal abortion—one each in 1981 and 1983. Information is not available for the period prior to 1975.

Extradition

20. **Mr. John David Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the reasons why the legislation for extradition in accordance with the European convention for the suppression of terrorism has not been brought into effect by the Government of the Republic of Ireland, as referred to by the Prime Minister at Hillsborough on 15 November 1985; what representations he has made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland in this respect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The Extradition (European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism) Act 1987, which was enacted on 21 January this year, provides for it to come into effect on 1 December. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made clear to the Irish Government the importance we attach to this.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current state of extradition agreements between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Extradition arrangements with the Republic of Ireland are governed by the backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 and by similar legislation in the Republic. Since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, both Governments have been working to make existing arrangements more effective.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests for the extradition of persons from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland have been received in each of the last five years, and how many of these requests have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of persons sought*	*Number extradited*	*Number of requests refused*
1983	5	1	0
1984	15	13	0
1985	0	0	0
1986	6	6	0
1987	3	1	0

Note: In no case was an extradition request refused. Where the number extradited is less than the number whose extradition was sought, this is because the others concerned either could not be located in Northern Ireland or they surrendered voluntarily to the Garda in the Republic or were arrested by them.

Employees (Religious Beliefs)

22. **Mr. McCusker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what success he is having in his campaign to compel employers in Northern Ireland to keep records of the percentage of religious beliefs of their employees.

Mr. Viggers: The Government have strongly recommended, in the "Guide to Effective Practice", published on 15 September, that employers in Northern Ireland should monitor the religious affiliation of their employees. It is too early to assess the response of employers to this recommendation, but I am aware that monitoring is already under taken by a number of employers in both the private and public sectors. I urge other employers to follow their example.

Maguire Family

23. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received concerning the case of the Maguire family.

Mr. Tom King: None.

Kincora Boys' Home

25. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is prepared to re-open investigations into events at the Kincora boys' home.

Mr. Needham: No.

Shoot-to-kill Policy

28. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement about the investigation by Mr. Colin Sampson into the alleged shoot-to-kill in 1982.

Mr. Tom King: I have informed the House that I will make a statement about any aspects of the report that fall within my responsibility at the earliest appropriate time. I am not yet in a position to make that statement.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

29. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a further statement on the effects on the people of Northern Ireland of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

37. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest developments in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I refer my hon. Friends to the answer I gave earlier to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison).

42. **Mr. A. Cecil Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what evidence he has on the level of support from the Unionist population for the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I take note of Unionists' views expressed by right hon. and hon. Members of this House and others, and of the findings of such independent research as is available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Anglo-Irish Agreement following his recent meeting with the Tanaiste, Mr. Lenihan.

Mr. Tom King: Substantial progress has been made towards the objectives of reassuring the majority on the status of the Province, increasing confidence in the minority community in Northern Ireland, and enhancing security co-operation with the Republic of Ireland.

Youth Training Programme

32. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people in Northern Ireland have *(a)* refused a YTP place and *(b)* left prematurely from a YTP scheme, in each year since 1983.

Mr. Viggers: The numbers of minimum age school leavers who refused the guaranteed offer of a training place in each year since 1983 are:

	Number
1983-84	2,348
1984-85	1,974
1985-86	1,080
1986-87	1,257

Records of premature leavers were not recorded for each of the years in question.

Jury Trials

35. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to bring forward legislation to reintroduce jury trials in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: Trial by jury already takes place in all contested cases in the Crown court involving non-scheduled offences and in those contested cases involving scheduled offences which have been "certified out" by the Attorney-General.

Last year the list of scheduled offences which the Attorney-General can "certify out" was extended but, because of the risk of intimidation of jurors and perverse verdicts by juries, we do not believe that it is possible at present to reintroduce jury trials generally for scheduled offences.

Planning Appeals

38. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many planning applications were approved on appeal to the planning appeal commission during the last three years; and how many of these approvals had conditions attached.

Mr. Needham: In each of the last three years the figures were 52, 71, and 94. Conditions are attached to all planning permissions.

Salmon Farming

39. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action has been taken by Her Majesty's Government to support Northern Ireland private enterprise efforts to develop salmon farming; and what assessment he has made of the effects on the Ulster economy which are likely to accrue from such an enterprise.

Mr. Viggers: Over the past year the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland made two offers of grant-aid for salmon farming projects in Northern Ireland. Whilst salmon farming would have a positive effect on the Northern Ireland economy, the siting of projects has to take account of environmental factors and other interests.

North Down (Hospital Facilities)

40. **Mr. Kilfedder:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide a new hospital and better hospital facilities for the North Down area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Decisions on the planning and delivery of hospital services for the local population of the North Down area are primarily a matter for the eastern health and social services board. I understand it has consulted a wide range of interests about its proposals for hospital services in the area.

Final decisions have yet to be taken, but I understand that the board's policy is to consolidate acute services at the Ulster hospital, Dundonal, with appropriate support from the Ards and Bangor hospitals.

Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new houses the Housing Executive has constructed from 1982 to 1987 in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: This is primarily a matter for the Housing Executive. I understand from the chairman that in the period from 1 April 1982 to 31 March 1987 the Housing Executive has completed the following numbers of dwellings in these areas:

	Number
Downpatrick Office	387
Kilkeel Office	72
Banbridge Office	163
Newry No.1 Office	202
Newry No.2 Office	153

Terrorism

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the names and party political affiliation of elected representatives at all levels in the United Kingdom murdered by Irish Republican Army terrorists since 1968.

Mr. Needham: The information that is readily available regarding Northern Ireland elected representatives murdered by terrorists is set out in the table. The murder of elected representatives from other parts of the United Kingdom is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Date	*Members of Parliament Westminster*	*Members of Parliament Stormont/ Northern Ireland Assembly*	*Sitting Councillor*	*Party*	*Terrorist Organisation Responsible*
December 1971	—	Senator Jack Barnhill	—	OUP	OIRA
December 1972	—	—	Mr. William Johnston	OUP	PIRA
June 1973	—	Senator Paddy Wilson	—	SDLP	UFF
June 1980	—	—	Mr. John Turnley	IIP	UFF
January 1981	—	Sir Norman Stronge[1] Mr. James Stronge[1]	—	Unionist	PIRA
November 1981	Rev. Robert Bradford	—	—	OUP	PIRA
November 1983	—	—	Major Charles Armstrong	OUP	PIRA
December 1983	—	Mr. Edgar Graham	—	OUP	PIRA

[1] Note: No longer serving elected representatives when murdered.

Key

SDLP—Social Democratic and Labour Party
OUP—Official Unionist Party
OIRA—Official Irish Republican Army
PIRA—Provisional Irish Republican Army
INLA—Irish National Liberation Army
UFF—Ulster Freedom Fighters
IIP—Irish Independent Party

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons died as the result of terrorist activity in Northern Ireland in *(a)* 1985, *(b)* 1986 and *(c)* 1987 to date; and of these how many in each year were murdered by terrorists.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 10 November 1987]:* The information up to 9 November 1987 is as follows:

	1985	*1986*	*1987*
Number of persons murdered by Terrorists (also includes those murdered as a result of internal disputes)	48	55	76
Number of persons believed to be terrorists and assumed to have been killed by their own devices or weapons	1	—	4
Number of persons believed to be terrorists killed by the security forces	3	4	8
Total deaths associated with terrorist activity	52	59	88

Explosives

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of commercial explosive recovered in Ulster during 1985, 1986, and 1987 to date, can be traced back to the Republic of Ireland; and if he will define this in terms of weight.

Mr. Stanley: The percentage and weight of commercial explosive recovered in Northern Ireland having been manufactured in the Republic of Ireland in each of the years in question was approximately as follows:

	Percentage	*Weight kgs*
1985	59	47
1986	69	61
[1]1987	74	58

[1] To date.

Homelessness

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the proposed Northern Ireland legislation on homelessness will be published.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 6 November 1987, at column *950.*

Republic of Ireland (Ministerial Meeting)

Mr. Flannery: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his last meeting with the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I last met Mr. Lenihan on 21 October, at a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. A joint statement was issued after the meeting, and a copy has been placed in the Library.

Fire Service

Mr. John David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many full-time fire stations there are in Northern Ireland; what is the size of population served by each of these stations; what is the size of population served by Newtownards fire station; and when he proposes to provide a complete full-time unit in Newtownards.

Mr. Needham: There are seven full-time fire stations in Northern Ireland — six in Belfast and one in Londonderry.

The six Belfast stations service a population of approximately 300,000. The Londonderry station services a population of approximately 63,000. The Newtownards retained fire station services a population of approximately 28,000.

The Fire Authority for Northern Ireland completed its review of fire cover in Northern Ireland in 1986. The review recommended an enhancement of fire services throughout the province, including a one pump full-time fire station in Newtownards. The fire authority has embarked on the first phase of a development programme providing for a number of new fire stations. Newtownards is not included in this first phase, but on its completion in the early 1990s the Newtownards position will be considered again in the light of circumstances prevailing at that time.

Road Bridges

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has completed a survey into the damage caused to road bridges in Northern Ireland as a result of the floods on 21 October; if he will list *(a)* the bridges damaged, *(b)* the bridges destroyed and, *(c)* those which will have to be demolished and replaced; and what is his estimate of the cost of (i) repairing damage and (ii) replacing bridges.

Mr. Viggers: There are approximately 5,000 bridges in Northern Ireland and it has not yet been possible to complete a detailed survey. To date, 25 bridges have been found to be damaged. They are:

Glasker Bridge, Rathfriland, County Down
Tullyah, Camlough, County Armagh
Maintain, Camlough, County Armagh
Ashtree Hill, Laurelvale, County Armagh
Fry's Bridge, Dromara, County Down
Kilnhill Road, Dromara, County Down
Old Mill Road, Scarva, County Down
Ballyroney Road, Rathfriland, County Down
Darkley Road, Keady, County Armagh
Drumhillery Road, Middletown, County Armagh
Tassagh, Keady, County Armagh
Cladybeg, Markethill, County Armagh
Dromore Road, Lurgan, County Armagh
Aghadowey (2), County Londonderry
Legavallon Pot, Limavady, County Londonderry
Ahoghill Road, Randalstown, County Antrim
Parkgate, County Antrim
Crumlin, County Antrim
Magheramason, County Tyrone
Greencastle, County Tyrone
Usnagh Burn, County Tyrone
Drumbinnion, County Tyrone
Railway Bridge, Newtownstewart, County Tyrone

At this stage it is not possible to say whether these bridges will need to be demolished and replaced or can be strengthened. All necessary precautions have been taken to safeguard and assist traffic movement.

The following seven bridges have been washed away:

Rathtrillick, County Armagh
Derryhennet, County Armagh
Carrick, near Clogher, County Tyrone
Drumnakilly, County Tyrone
Killymaddy, County Tyrone
Footbridge, Sionmills, County Tyrone
Cullycapple, County Londonderry

Estimates of the cost of refurbishing and replacing these bridges are not yet complete, but are unlikely to be less than £1 million.

Democracy

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information he has in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors, which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, as to whether any member of any of the delegations has taken part in any official or unofficial march, leading to outbreaks of violence or riotous behaviour;

(2) what information he has in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors, which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, as to whether any member of any of the delegations had appeared on a platform or marched in procession with others dressed in para-military uniform;

(3) what information he has, in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, as to whether any member of any of the delegations had threatened, or implied their support of, the use of force by speaking or being present at a meeting of an organisation such as the Ulster Clubs, the Ulster Defence Association or the Provisional Sinn Fein, in each case listing the organisation;

(4) what information he has, in relation to the 20 delegations of councillors which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) saw, concerning the discussion paper on elected representatives and the democratic process in Northern Ireland, as to whether any member of any of the delegations had participated in the organisation of the 1974 Ulster workers' stoppage or similar acts or had demonstrated outside the Maryfield headquarters of the Anglo-Irish secretariat.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* Information about the elected representatives of the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland is not available in a form which would enable me to answer these questions. I would deprecate, however, any illegal or irresponsible behaviour by elected representatives from either end of the political spectrum.

Widdicombe Report

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to implement in Northern Ireland any of the proposals contained in the

Widdicombe committee report on the conduct of local government; what advice his Department is giving to local councillors on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 November 1987]*: The report of the committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business related to local government in Great Britain. When decisions are taken on the application of the report's recommendations to local authorities in Great Britain, we shall assess their relevance to local government in Northern Ireland.

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of each health and social services board which has contractual arrangements with a private non-National Health Service hospital to provide acute medical services, showing *(a)* the hospital with which a contract is made, *(b)* the number of patients treated by that hospital during 1986-87, *(c)* the total amount spent by each health and social services board on treatment under the contract during 1986-87 and *(d)* the amount which *(c)* represents as a percentage of the overall health and social services budget for 1986-87.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: Only the Southern health and social services board has any such contractual arrangements. Details are as follows:

(a) St. John of God Hospital, Newry
(b) 188
(c) £81,029
(d) 0·1 per cent.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of all new contracts awarded by each health and social services board, by hospital, since 31 December 1986, for *(a)* portering, *(b)* catering, *(c)* laundry, *(d)* cleaning and *(e)* other ancillary work: and if he will give the estimated annual savings for each contract awarded.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: No new contracts for catering, laundry or cleaning have been awarded by Northern Ireland health and social services boards since 31 December 1986. Information about portering and other ancillary work is not available centrally.

Terrorists (Escapes from Custody)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many incidents of escapes of terrorists there have been from police custody and from prisons in Northern Ireland since 1968 to date; from which police stations, courts or prisons each such escape took place; how many persons escaped on each occasion; and to which terrorist group or groups they belonged.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 10 November 1987]*: Information is not available for the whole period requested nor are details of terrorist affiliations, but such information as is readily available is shown in the table:

Numbers of escapes from custody per year to date

	1970	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1980*	*1981*	*1983*	*1984*
Belfast Prison	—	2(1) (9)	4(1) (1) (1) (1)	2(1) (1)	—	—	1(1)	—	1(8)	—	—
Maze Prison	—	—	—	3(1) (1) (1)	—	1(1)	1(9)	—	—	2(38) (1)	1(2)
Magilligan Prison	—	—	1(1)	—	1(1)	4(2) (1) (2) (1)	1(2)	—	—	—	—
Royal Courts of Justice	1(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Crumlin Road Courthouse	—	—	—	1(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Newry Courthouse	—	—	—	—	1(1)	1(12)	—	—	—	—	—
Belfast Petty Sessions	—	—	—	—	1(1)	1(3)	—	—	—	—	—
Larne Court	—	—	—	—	—	—	1(1)	—	—	—	—
Antrim Petty Sessions	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1(1)
Royal Victoria Hospital	—	—	—	—	1(1)	2(1) (1)	—	—	—	—	
Mater Hospital	—	—	1(1)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Altnagelvin Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	1(1)	—	—	—	—	—
Gransha Hospital	—	—	—	—	—	1(1)	—	—	—	—	—
Gough Police Office, Armagh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1(1)	—	—	—

Notes:

Figures in brackets identify numbers of escapees per incident.

The figures do not include prisoners who have not returned from Home Leave, those who were convicted of non-scheduled offences and those who were detainees. Statistics are only available from 1970 onwards.

There were no escapes from custody for the years 1977, 1978, 1979, 1982, 1985, 1986, and 1987 (to October).

AIDS

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what advice his Department is giving to employers about preventing discrimination against people with HIV and haemophilia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers: In January 1987 the Department of Economic Development posted copies of a booklet "AIDS and Employment" to all known employers in Northern Ireland. The purpose of the booklet is to prevent unnecessary fear and worry at work which could lead to discrimination against those who might be infected. No general advice has been provided by the Department in respect of haemophilia. In addition the employment medical advisory service of the Department has medically qualified staff available to give free advice to employers and employees about all occupational health matters including AIDS and haemophilia. The Labour Relations Agency is also available to give expert advice on the employment aspects of such matters.

River Roe

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the minimum, mean and maximum flow of the River Roe recorded at Ardnargle, Limavady, in each of the last five years and on 21 October.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 November 1987]:* Mean flows at the Ardnargle gauging station are not normally calculated (and cannot be produced within the time available).

The other information requested is as follows:

	Maximum cubic metres per second	*Minimum cubic metres per second*
1982	163·0	1·09
1983	100·8	0·99
1984	179·0	0·75
1985	170·4	0·99
1986	148·3	0·91
[1]1987	171·0	0·91

[1] To date.

The maximum flow recorded so far in 1987, 171 cu m per second occurred at 0200 on 22 October. However in the flood of 21-22 October 1987 the banks were widely breached upstream of the automatic recording gauge resulting in a lower figure being recorded than would have been the case had the flow been contained within the floodbanks.

Cullycapple Road (River Bridge)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the drainage division of the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, first received a report of a tree lying across the arch of the bridge on the Cullycapple road, County Londonderry; and why it was not removed before the flood of 21 October.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 10 November 1987]:* The report was received on 19 October 1987, but high water levels on 20 October prevented the removal of the fallen tree from the river. The tree was removed on 27 October when water levels had fallen sufficiently to allow the work to proceed.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the bridge over the Agivey river on the Cullycapple road to be replaced and the road reopened for traffic; whether he intends to erect a temporary bridge or a permanent structure in the first instance; and what is the estimated cost of the replacement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer, 10 November 1987]:* It is intended to erect a temporary Bailey bridge in the first instance. The road is scheduled to reopen on Monday 15 November 1987. The design of the permanent replacement bridge will be included in the current emergency repair programme and construction will take place as soon as possible. The estimated cost of a permanent replacement bridge is £110,000.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 13 November 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Scientists

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures for the number of British scientists leaving to work abroad.

Mr. Jackson: There are no figures from official sources, but a recent sample of universities, research council institutes and Government and industrial research laboratories, carried out by the Royal Society and the Fellowship of Engineering, showed that in five major fields of science there were 931 emigrants from the United Kingdom over the period 1975-85. Over the same period there were 685 immigrants, including 183 returning Britons. For members of university research groups the emigration rate averaged about 2 per cent. annually. For staff from industry, Government and research establishments the rate was 0·5 per cent. or less.

Teachers

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give *(a)* the number of teachers' representatives to be included in the newly proposed teachers' negotiating group, *(b)* the number of representatives on the management side to be included in the teachers' negotiating group and *(c)* the number of management members who will be his representatives; and if he will make a statement about who the other management representatives are likely to be.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Green Paper "Teachers' Pay and Conditions: A Consultative Document", considers two main alternative types of arrangements which have been proposed in recent months and then sets out proposals for a teachers' negotiating group. It sets out the Government's view that the Secretary of State's representatives should have a majority of votes on the management side of the teachers' negotiating group. Paragraphs 7.25 to 7.52 identify various issues about the details of a teachers' negotiating group on which views are sought, which include issues raised by the hon. Member.

Trade Union Education

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the memorandum of arrangements 1987-88 governing Government grants towards spending on trade union education and training by independent trade unions not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress will be issued.

Mr. Jackson: The memorandum of arrangements for 1987-88 will be issued this month and will be circulated to all trade unions not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy that the grant available for trade union education and training by independent trade unions not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress will rise at least in line with inflation, in the light of the fact that the grant for 1986-87 remained at the same level in cash terms as in 1985-86.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has recently determined that the grant available for education and training by trades unions not affiliated to the Trades Union Congress should be continued for the financial year 1987-88 at a rate 3 per cent. higher than that agreed for 1986-87.

Antarctica

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special provision he has made for research in Antarctica within the additions to the science budget which he announced on 3 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Within the sums I announced for the science budget, the additions specifically for research in Antarctica are £8·6 million in 1988-89, £17·7 million in 1989-90 and £3·7 million in 1990-91. This additional funding will help to maintain and advance the high quality of United Kingdom research in Antarctica supported by the Natural Environment Research Council through the British Antarctic Survey. The greater part will be used to purchase a new research and supply ship. This will make important contributions to marine geology, geophysics and biology in the southern oceans and will support more scientists in Antarctica. Atmospheric research will continue from a new base at Halley, with further studies of the "ozone hole" discovered by BAS scientists. The additional funds will also support other research programmes of global relevance: on the continent's animal and mineral resources and on ice and climate, including the "greenhouse effect" caused by increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

Bogus Degrees

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Government intends to legislate against bogus degrees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has today issued a consultation paper outlining the Government's legislative proposals. These are to define genuine United Kingdom degrees as being those awarded by bodies authorised by royal charter or Act of Parliament to award them, and to make it an offence for any other person or institution to award what purported to be such a degree. Subject to the outcome of consultation we intend to add the necessary provisions at Committee stage of the Education Bill to be introduced later this month. Copies of the consultation paper have been placed in the Vote Office.

NORTHERN IRELAND

"Ulster Year Book"

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why publication of the "Ulster Year Book" has ceased; and for what reasons.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer, 12 November 1987]*: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to a similar question from the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 9 November 1987 at column *61*.

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter of 5 November to Conservative hon. Members concerning electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: No.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that planning by local authorities for emergencies arising from accidents or incidents at nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom or abroad takes precedence over planning for war emergencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. The Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1983 impose a number of civil defence duties on local authorities, and under the Civil Protection in Peacetime Act 1986 civil defence planning may take into account the possibility of a peacetime emergency. No statutory requirements are imposed on local authorities in relation to planning for accidents at nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom, but in practice all local authorities recognise the need to make plans in consultation with the operators of sites in their areas, and with other agencies involved. As regards incidents arising from nuclear installations overseas, the position was explained by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 30 June.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the principal differences between current plans for civil nuclear emergencies on the one hand, and war emergencies on the other, with particular reference to the evacuation of the civilian population and the role and location of emergency services.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Planning for a wartime emergency requires consideration of a wide range of possible scenarios, from a period of international tension to a nuclear attack. Plans for dealing with an accident at a nuclear installation are based on coping with the worst accident considered to have a practicable chance of occurring. The operations of an installation are required to draw up emergency plans (approved by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive) in collaboration with local authorities and emergency services to deal with on-site and off-site aspects of an accident. Plans for each site cover all relevant factors, including questions of evacuation.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for casualty numbers of implementing current civil defence advice to the public to stay put in the event of a nuclear attack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Detailed assessments of this kind are not made. As the emergency planning guidance to local authorities makes clear, the effects of nuclear attack would be determined by such factors as the strategic intentions of the enemy and meteorological conditions.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether authorities charged with a duty to plan for the protection of the public in war will receive guidance from his Department on planning for a wartime rescue service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A report by the joint local authority-Home Office working group is currently under consideration. Guidance to local authorities will be issued in due course.

Prison Industries

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the progress of his inquiries into the possibility of involving the private sector in running prison industries.

Mr. John Patten: The prison service industries and farms board of management includes two non-executive members from the private sector and private sector expertise has been engaged in several aspects of PSIF work such as marketing, computerising management information, and developing strategies for different areas of work. Further progress will be considered in the context of the management of the prison system as a whole, taking account of the need to implement and absorb the major changes associated with fresh start.

Licensing Laws

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many representations he has received against or expressing concern about proposed changes in the licensing laws in England and Wales in response to the Government's document outlining those proposals;

(2) how many representations he has received in favour of changes to the licensing laws in England and Wales in response to the Government's document outlining those proposals.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 545 representations have been received since we published our proposals for the reform of the licensing laws on 4 August. It is not possible to divide representations between those expressing support and those expressing concern about the published proposals. Many supported some proposals, but opposed others. While many opposed any relaxation of the licensing laws, there were others who opposed the proposals because they were not sufficiently radical.

Greater Manchester (Crime Detection)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the current crime detection rate in greater Manchester.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Information on offences cleared up is collected centrally for police force areas for different types of offence and is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1986" (Cm 233), tables 2.18 and 2.19. In 1986 the clear-up rate for notifiable offences in greater Manchester was 27 per cent.

Police Helicopters

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of maintaining the Metropolitan police force's helicopters in 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the estimated cost of the Metropolitan police air support unit in 1985-86 and 1986-87 was £1,383,000 and £1,422,000 respectively. Estimated expenditure between 1 April and 31 October 1987 is £840,000.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many times Metropolitan police helicopters have been used during the last year over *(a)* London and *(b)* Southwark; how many times their use has been (i) as a specific response to an incident or (ii) for general surveillance purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that between 1 November 1986 and 31 October 1987 a total of 4,460 assignments were carried out, 119 of which were in the Southwark area. Of the total assignments, 3,980 responded to emergency and other direct calls for assistance; the remainder involved routine patrol duties.

Hooligans

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he had at the Trevi conference on 14 and 15 October of permanent correspondents on football hooliganism on the problem of extreme right-wing hooligans who attach themselves to football and who travel to the continent for violent and racist activities; what action his Department is taking to stop such travel; and what actions are being taken within Britain to rid association football of such extreme Right-wing sympathisers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The conference in London on 14 and 15 October was a meeting of officials to discuss the means by which EC member countries exchange information to prevent and deal with football hooliganism. They will report the outcome of their discussions to Trevi senior officials and Ministers in due course. Against the general background of freedom of travel within the European Community, member states are seeking to improve the effectiveness of international co-operation against football hooliganism.

The ultimate objective of the partnership between the Government, the police and the football authorities is to rid football of all those who indulge in violent and racist behaviour. The measures adopted have brought a marked improvement in crowd behaviour at football matches in the last two years. The police have for some time been aware that there are those who seek to orchestrate violence, often without themselves becoming directly involved in it. The success of the police in targeting such hard-core hooligans was demonstrated earlier this year in the outcome of the Metropolitan police operation "own goal". Criminal proceedings have been instituted against many other individuals as a result of similar operations elsewhere.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many guinea pigs have been used in cyanide poisoning tests at Porton Down since 1980, by year;

(2) what other species apart from guinea pigs and dogs have been used in cyanide poisoning tests at Porton Down since 1980, by year.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given on 22 July 1986 to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) at columns *161-2*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mozambique

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the rehabilitation of the railway routes across Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: Aid-financed contracts awarded to British companies for work on the Limpopo line are shown in the table. For aid-financed work on the Beira line no contracts have yet been placed.

Date	*Contractor*	*Purpose*	*Amount £*
August 1986	Mott, Hay and Anderson International	Projection supervision	1,900,000
January 1987	British Steel Corporation	Rail	1,900,000
October 1987	Plessey	Telecommunications	1,500,000
March-April 1987	Pandrol	Track components	960,000
February 1987	Deugro	Shipping services	600,000
May 1987	Goodwin Barsby	Quarry plant	400,000
April 1987	Henry Boots	Rail equipment	360,000
September 1987	D[illegible]Mac	Sleeper Moulds	245,000
July 1987	Av[illegible]g Barford	Specialised vehicles	216,000
August 1987	Somerset Wire	Wire	168,000
April 1987	Leyland Trucks	Vehicles	150,000
July 1987	Blackwood Hodge	Bulldozer	131,000

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the rebuilding of two Mozambican locomotives.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have financed the rebuilding of two Mozambican locomotives for use on the Nacala line at a cost of £191,000. The work was undertaken by Malawi Railways in Malawi. Information is not readily available on the extent to which they placed orders with British suppliers.

Malawi (Rail Link)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the northern route railway linking Malawi to Dar-es-Salaam.

Mr. Chris Patten: This project is still at the planning stage and no contracts have yet been awarded.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the upgrading of the rail link between Malawi and Mozambique.

Mr. Chris Patten: In 1984 we financed a study of the management and operation of the Nacala line linking Malawi and Mozambique. The study was undertaken by Transmark in association with Peat, Marwick, Mitchell and Company and Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners.

We are now assisting the Mozambican authorities to improve railway operations in support of the rehabilitation of the line. The contract for consultancy services was awarded to Mott Hay and Anderson International in April. Requirements for telecommunications and re-railing equipment are being studied by the consultants.

Jordan

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to railway projects in Jordan.

Mr. Chris Patten: There have been no aid-financed contracts for the railway sector in Jordan in recent years.

Kenya

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the overhauling of railway locomotives in Kenya.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Date: 1983
Contractor: G.E.C.
Purpose: Rehabilitation of locomotives
Amount: £1·4 million

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to management assistance to the Kenya Railways Corporation.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the inception of phase I of the Kenya railways sector aid project in 1983, the following consultancy contracts have been awarded:

	Consultant	*Purpose*
1983	Crown Agents	Supervision of locomotive rehabilitation
1984	Rendel, Palmer and Tritton	Organisation of railway workshops
1984	Henderson, Busby International in association with Coopers & Lybrand	Assessment of motive power requirements
1984	Coopers & Lybrand	Review of organisation of Kenya Railways Corporation
1984	Coopers & Lybrand	Review of training schemes
1984	Crown Agents	Study of administration of supplies
1985	Coopers & Lybrand	Preparation of donors action plan for railways
1986	Coopers & Lybrand	Preparation of Corporate Plan for Kenya railways

India

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the 1983 railway projects grant of £5·8 million to India.

Mr. Chris Patten: Under the 1983 United Kingdom—India railway sector grant, which is for £30 million, the following contracts have been signed between United Kingdom firms and Indian Railways:

Date	*Company*	*Purpose*	*Amount* £
January 1986	Atlas Engineering Company	Universal multi-purpose armature machine	368,000
March 1984	British Steel Corporation Exports Ltd.	Steel for Krishna Bridge	332,000
March 1986		Rails	2,482,000
January 1985	British Steel Corporation Track Products Ltd.	Rails	8,901,000
March 1984	British Electrical Machines Ltd.	Commutator segments and traction motors	475,000
January 1987	Bronx Engineering Company Ltd.	Bar straightening machine	204,000
January 1985	Butler Machine Tool Company Ltd.	Universal milling and boring machines	803,000
January 1987	Delta Drawn Metals Ltd.	Commutator punched segments	114,000
December 1984	Fairbank Brearley Ltd.	Eye forming machine	645,000
January 1986	Field and Grant Ltd.	Miniature plug-in track relays	247,000
March 1986	GEC Traction Ltd.	Spares for traction motors	107,000
March 1985	Harvin Exports Ltd.	Piston rings	1,829,000
March 1986		Core after cooler	269,000

Date	*Company*	*Purpose*	*Amount* £
March 1986		Main bearing shells	80,000
March 1984	International Computers Ltd.	Computer system	210,000
January 1985	Pratt Bros. Stourbridge Ltd.	Bar cropping machine	66,000
October 1986	Stuart Davis Machines Ltd.	Double moromatic machine	64,000
January 1984	Thomas Bolton & Sons Ltd.	Commutator segments traction motors and air brake components	393,000
January 1985	Westinghouse Brakes Ltd.	Transport system components	573,000
March 1986		Air brake equipment	195,000
March 1987		Air-flow measuring valves and gauges	65,000
July 1986	Westinghouse Signals Ltd.	Miniature plug-in track relays	177,000
March 1985	William Asquith 1981 Ltd.	Radial drilling machines	63,000

Sudan

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the contracts that have been granted to British companies relating to the Gezira railways project in the Sudan.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information is as follows:

Date	*Contractor*	*Purpose*	*Amount* £
1985–87	Hunslet Holdings	Locomotive rehabilitation kits, spares and tools	1,570,000
1985	Wickham Gensol	High pressure washing kit	9,000
1985–86	SKS (Plant and Equipment)	Micrometers and tools	14,000
1986	Atlas Engineering	Wheel lathe	300,000
1985	Newelco	Tyre heater	45,000
1986	Powell Duffryn	Oil and water tanker wagons	185,000
1985-86	Railway, mine and plantation equipment	Wheel and axle sets, rail and machinery	995,000
1985	British steel rail and ring rolled products	Steel tyres	74,000
1985-87	Wickham Trolleys	Hand and motor trolleys	235,000
1985	Wild Heerbrugg	Survey equipment	14,000
1985	Chaney and Ball	Fishbolts	7,000
1985	GSJ Engineering Supplies	Tirefords	80,000
1986	Grant Lyon Eagre	Point and crossings	57,000
1985	Unatrac	Motor graders	199,000
1984	Pye Telecom	VHF radio sets	45,000
1986	Pandrol	Pandrol fittings	8,000
	Various (each contract under £4,000 in value)	Miscellaneous	13,000

Sri Lanka

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase the level of aid to Sri Lanka, particularly for emergency housing and medical care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 19 September, I approved an additional £1·5 million of relief assistance for Sri Lanka. I anticipate that a substantial proportion of this will be channelled through British voluntary agencies in support of a variety of relief activities, including those of a kind to which my hon. Friend refers. I also expect to approve a contribution to a medium-term programme of reconstruction to be discussed at a meeting of donors being held under World Bank auspices next month.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid to Sri Lanka.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on 9 November at column *18*.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of maintaining the information department within the Overseas Development Administration in each year since 1979.

Mr. Chris Patten: The cost of maintaining the information department of the Overseas Development Administration in each financial year from 1983-84 is as follows:

	£
1983-84	281,000
1984-85	275,000
1985-86	293,000
1986-87	305,000

Comparable figures are not available for earlier years.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information department within the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Chris Patten: The number and grade of personnel currently employed in the information department of the Overseas Development Administration are:

1 Grade 5
1 Grade 7
3 Senior Information Officers
2 Information Officers
1 Higher Executive Officer (Development)
1 Executive Officer
1 Administrative Assistant.
1 Personal Secretary

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

AE-Turner and Newall (Takeover)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department has yet completed its inquiries into the proposed takeover arrangements concerning AE and Turner and Newall; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Inquiries concerning AE plc and Hill Samuel and Co. Limited to which the hon. Member presumably refers continue.

Hungary

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current level of import and export trade between the United Kingdom and Hungary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: For nine months to September 1987 United Kingdom trade with Hungary was: imports—£58·8 million; exports—£79·4 million.

Lonrho

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster pursuant to the answer of 29 October, at column *361*, if he will specify the extent to which Lonrho's accounts currently contain the information which the company has assured him that they will contain fully in future.

Mr. Maude *[holding answer, 12 November 1987]:* The accounts of Lonrho plc for the company's 1985-86 financial year contain information on the valuations of the company's fixed assets and investments, but do not contain all the detailed information referred to in my answer to my hon. Friend on 28 October at column *301*.

PRIME MINISTER

Lord Havers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister if she will appoint the former Lord Chancellor, Lord Havers, as a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Announcements on such matters will continue to be made at the appropriate time in the appropriate way.

Balderton Hospital

Mr. Irving: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Department of Health and Social Security and the Home Office of Government policy towards the possible closure of the Eastdale unit at Balderton hospital.

The Prime Minister: No decision has been taken to close this unit which was established to provide rehabilitation for patients in the special hospitals. Its future is currently being considered and the Central Nottinghamshire district health authority will shortly be issuing a consultation paper to interested organisations. The Department of Health and Social Security and the Home Office will be among those consulted, and remain in close touch on the matter.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Sentencing

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the particular types of offence on which the Lord Chancellor, as president of the Magistrates' Association, has expressed his personal view on the approach to sentencing since 1979.

The Attorney-General: The types of offence on which the Lord Chancellor, as president of the Magistrates' Association, has expressed his personal views on the approach to sentencing since 1979 include hooliganism and violence to the disruption of the public peace, cruelty or violence to the person, offences against those who serve the public, for example, the police, postmasters, transport staff and licensees, profit-related offences, theft from shops, badger digging, public health, safety of employees or public, pollution, the overloading of commercial vehicles, driving with defective tyres, brakes or steering, and road traffic offences generally.

Legal Aid

Mr. Battle: To ask the Attorney-General how many representations have been received *(a)* in favour and *(b)* against the White Paper "Legal Aid in England and Wales: A New Framework"; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Representations have been received from 24 individuals and organisations commenting on various aspects of the White Paper. In almost all cases they have concentrated on specific proposals and it would not, therefore, be appropriate to classify them as "in favour" or "against" the White Paper as a whole. The centrepiece of the White Paper—the establishment of a legal aid board to assume responsibility for administration of the legal aid scheme—has been widely supported.

TRANSPORT

Pilot Fatigue

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the extract from the current issue of the British Airline Pilots' Association's magazine *The Log* concerning fatigue and its effects on pilots, a copy of which has been sent to him; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is wholly responsible for aviation safety regulation. I will ask the chairman of the authority to respond to the hon. Member's inquiry about fatigue and its effect on pilots.

British Airways (London-Newcastle Route)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, if he will refer the commercial activities of British Airways' London to Newcastle route to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; if he has plans to allow more competition on the London to Newcastle air route; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: References to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are for my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and for the Director General of Fair Trading, as the case may be. Neither has any plans to refer British Airways' activities on the London to Newcastle route to the commission. Both British Airways and Dan-Air provide services on the route, British Airways from Heathrow and Dan-Air from Gatwick. Any operator who considers that there is a demand for further flights may apply to the Civil Aviation Authority for a licence on that route. Under Heathrow rule 3 of the traffic distribution rules 1986 further services from Heathrow would be permitted only if the user benefits were expected to override the economic and efficient use of the airport as a major international airport.

Cars

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any proposals for European Economic Community regulations to limit the use of old-fashioned cars on British roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no such proposals.

DEFENCE

Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the next British Army equipment exhibition will be held; and on which dates it will be open to *(a)* overseas customers, *(b)* the press and *(c)* the British public.

Mr. Sainsbury: The next British Army equipment exhibition is from 27 June 1988 to 1 July 1988 and will be open each day to overseas customers and the defence-related technical press. On 26 June there is a press day which the national, provincial and technical press may attend. The exhibition is not open to the public.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the list of names of countries to which invitations to the next British Army equipment exhibition have been extended.

Mr. Sainsbury: In common with all my predecessors, I do not intend to publish a list of names of individuals or countries invited to the British Army equipment exhibition.

Weather Forecasts

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the size of the geographic areas for which weather forecasts are given.

Mr. Sainsbury: Weather forecasts for the United Kingdom made as part of the free public service and not intended for specialised use are necessarily rather general in their application. The national forecasts supplied thrice daily to the Press Association, which cover the ensuing day and the outlook for a further 48 hours, refer to 29 areas of the country, although these are grouped according to the prevailing weather. The scripts provided for broadcast by radio or television deal with areas that depend upon the service area of the broadcasting station, those for local radio applying more precisely in geographical terms.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total value of current British contracts arising out of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) on 6 November at column *924*.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what figure NATO has determined as the minimum number of nucleer weapons it requires in Europe in order to fulfil its strategy of flexible response; and whether that number is contingent on the number of nuclear weapons possessed by the USSR.

Mr. Ian Stewart: NATO's nuclear planning group Ministers agreed at Montebello in 1983 to reduce the Alliance's nuclear stockpile in Europe to 4,600 warheads. This has now been achieved. It is and will remain NATO's policy to maintain only the minimum number of nuclear weapons necessary for credible deterrence. The strategy of flexible response does not require us to match Warsaw Pact forces weapon for weapon.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his statement, 27 October, column 211, what further moves he would like the USSR to make if he is to have confidence in its commitment to a chemicals weapons ban; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the House on 27 October at column 211, the recent visit by conference on disarmament participants to the Soviet chemical weapons facility at Shikhany, was a welcome, albeit limited, step. However, it was only in April this year that the Soviet Union, which has a very substantial chemical warfare capability, admitted publicly for the first time that it possessed chemical weapons. In order to have confidence in the Soviet Union's commitment to a chemical weapons ban, we shall need far greater openness on their part about their stockpiles of, and production facilities for, chemical weapons. I understand the United States and USSR have discussed the possibility of bilateral exchanges of information on chemical weapons. Such a development would help to give the USSR the opportunity to demonstrate the increased openness we are seeking on their part.

Biological Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement of the Minister of State, the hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), 22 October, column 1013, what is his precise assessment of the USSR's biological weapons threat; and upon what evidence he bases it.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in his statement of 22 October at column 1013, was drawing attention to the tremendous Soviet advantage in chemical weapons. So far as the Soviet biological weapons threat is concerned, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 28 November 1986 at column *382*. However, the Soviet Union is known to possess a significant microbiological research capability, the potential military implications of which we have to take into account.

Rainfall

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the amount of rainfall in the catchment areas of the rivers most affected by the recent flooding; and how the amount of rainfall on this occasion compares with other widespread rainfalls in those same areas and falling in the same time scale in recent years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer, 6 November 1987]:* Data from the Northern Ireland raingauge network are still being received by the Meteorological Office and subjected to quality control. Early returns do, however, show that during the latter half of October the heaviest rainfalls occurred in south Armagh, over the Mountains of Mourne, over parts of County Antrim in and around Belfast and northwards to Glen Whirrey, over Ballypatrick forest and from north-east of Londonderry through County Tyrone down to County Fermanagh. In these areas the daily rainfall totals were very rare with estimated return periods of around 200 years or more.

Ballistic Missile Attacks

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what would be the length and nature of the warning to the population as a whole in the event of a Soviet ballistic missile attack on the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding Answer 2 November]:* I have been asked to reply.

In the event of a ballistic missile attack on the United Kingdom being detected by the ballistic missile early-warning station at RAF Fylingdales, an air attack warning would be issued immediately by the United Kingdom warning and monitoring organisation to the whole country. At least four minutes before impact of the missiles, the sirens would sound a distinctive rising and falling note for one minute and the public would be informed by radio broadcasts to take cover at once. Advice on the protective measures which the public should take on the issue of warnings has been prepared for publication in a period of international tension which might lead to war.

Defence Contracts

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many competitively placed contracts with his Department since 1979 have been subject to an upward revision of price after the original acceptance date.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer, 6 November 1987]:* The information requested cannot be provided without disproportionate effort and cost. However, one objective of competition is to establish an agreed price or pricing arrangement at the outset. If the contractual requirement is varied by my Department we will consider whether an adjustment to the contract price is appropriate.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *874* (1) if he will give the number of non-competitively placed contracts subjected to selective post-costing in each year since 1979; and what was the total number of non-competitively placed contracts in each of the same years;

(2) how many non-competitively placed contracts since 1979 were *(a)* subject to selective post-costing and *(b)* found to reveal a lack of equality of information at the time the price was fixed;

(3) when was the original decision taken to subject non-competitive placed contracts to selective post-costing examination;

(4) if he will make it his policy to subject all non-competitively placed defence contracts to post-costing examination.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer, 6 November 1987]:* The total number of non-competitive contracts and value amendments placed in each financial year since 1979–80 is:

Year	*Number*
1979–80	20,453
1980–81	21,082
1981–82	20,656
1982–83	20,988
1983–84	19,539
1984–85	17,385
1985–86	16,220
1986–87	15,612

(Statistics for new contracts only are not available for the whole of the period).

These include those priced on the basis of cost plus percentage fee for profit (of which the proportion has reduced from 22 per cent. to 6 per cent. by value over this period); those priced on actual costs with incentives to minimise costs; those priced on estimates, but where the value is low and it would be inappropriate to include the right to post-cost; and those priced on estimates which include the right to post-cost. This latter category includes a very small proportion (on average some 1,200 contracts a year) of contracts placed non-competitively.

The right to post-cost contracts selectively derived from the 1968 agreement between the Government and the CBI for the pricing of Government non-competitive stores contracts. It would not be consistent with the terms of that agreement for all eligible contracts to be post-costed. However about 50 per cent. by value of eligible work is post-costed and the selection ensures appropriate coverage of companies, values and types of work.

The number of contracts post-costed in each year since 1979 is:

Year	*Number*
1979	84
1980	81
1981	80
1982	69
1983	96
1984	66
1985	78
1986	67

I will write to the hon. Member shortly about the number of contracts since 1979 where post-costing indicated a lack of equality of information at the time the price was fixed.

WALES

Teachers

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the total number of *(a)* teachers, *(b)* full-time non-teaching staff and *(c)* part-time non-teaching staff employed by each local education authority in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information for teachers in service in maintained schools and further education establishments, as at January 1987, is as follows:

	Full-time equivalent numbers
Clwyd	4,472
Dyfed	3,770
Gwent	4,910
Gwynedd	2,688
Mid Glamorgan	6,323
Powys	1,397
South Glamorgan	4,427
West Glamorgan	4,311

Comparable county figures for non-teaching staff are not centrally available. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy publish such data in "Education Statistics 1986-87 Estimates", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

School Days (Duration)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department has as to the average length of the school day in Wales in *(a)* maintained schools and *(b)* independent schools in 1957, 1967, 1977 and 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what would be the estimate charge, on the basis of current expenditure *(a)* per household and *(b)* per capita for each Welsh district if a system of local income tax were introduced.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information cannot be provided in this form. However, I have today placed in the Library of the House a table showing the rate of local income tax in each district and the bill for a single person on national average earnings. The figures are based on 1987-88 spending levels and assume full equalisation of income per head between local authorities.

Social Priority Schools

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* which schools in Wales are designated as social priority schools, and *(b)* the criteria used for social priority designation; if he will make a statement about whether there are any plans to increase the social priority allowance for teachers in these schools; and if he will make a statement about when social priority designations have been reviewed or revised since their inception and by whom.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Responsibility for this matter rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science and he will be writing to the hon. Member with a full reply as soon as possible.

Enterprise Zone (Milford Haven)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names of *(a)* all manufacturing companies together with their principal products, *(b)* all non-manufacturing companies together with their principal purpose which have been established in the Milford Haven enterprise zone since it was set up.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. My hon. Friend might wish to approach the zone authority direct.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the estimated number of new jobs created by the establishment of the Milford Haven enterprise zone in *(a)* manufacturing companies and *(b)* non-manufacturing companies since the zone's establishment.

Mr. Peter Walker: The latest available information indicates that since designation in April 1984, zone employment in non-manufacturing firms has increased by about 600 whereas manufacturing employment has fallen by 180, a net gain in jobs of 420.

Sheepmeat

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the future of the European Community sheepmeat regime and the anticipated effect of any proposed changes upon sheep farming in Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: Negotiations on the review of the sheepmeat regime are continuing and it is too early, at this stage, to anticipate the effects of any changes that may be eventually agreed.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons in Wales were engaged directly in agriculture as *(a)* employees and *(b)* self-employed persons on 1 April 1985, 1986 and 1987, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Information is not available for the dates requested. The annual censuses of agricultural holdings provide the following information on the numbers of people engaged directly in agriculture on the first Monday of June in each respective year.

	1985	*1986*	[1]*1987*
Farmers, partners and directors	36,300	35,700	33,500
Spouses working on the holding	11,500	11,600	11,700
Total employees	20,700	20,300	20,200
of which			
full-time	7,600	7,500	7,200
part-time	3,800	4,100	3,900
casual	9,200	8,800	9,100
Youth training scheme	700	600	900

[1] Provisional.

Notes:

(1) Figures are for main and minor holdings.

(2) Employees include family and hired workers.

Core Curriculum

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will deposit in the Library the analysis of the responses to the proposed core curriculum and the inclusion of Welsh as a foundation subject.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A policy statement on the implementation of the national curriculum in Wales will be published shortly, and this will take account of the responses we have received to the consultation document. No other formal analysis is available.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will arrange for copies of all responses to the proposed core curriculum and the inclusion of Welsh as a foundation subject to be deposited in the Library.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We are arranging for copies of the principal responses which have been received from organisations, institutions and other bodies in Wales to be placed in the Library of the House. The hon. Lady will understand that we are unable to publish responses from individuals without their express written permission.

Education Reorganisation

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing each of the consultation documents published by him in respect of proposals regarding the reorganisation of education in Wales and in respect of each *(a)* the date of publication, *(b)* the closing date for receipt of responses, *(c)* the number issued of each document and *(d)* the closing date of responses from (i) individuals and (ii) bodies and institutions.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is as follows:

Details of consultation exercise undertaken in Wales: Education Bill. Position at 12 November 1987

	Date of publication	*Closing date*	*Number issued*	*Responses received from Individuals*	*Responses received from Bodies/Institutions*	*Total responses*
National curriculum 5-16	24 July 1987	30 September 1987	525	247	143	390
Financial delegation to schools	20 July 1987	16 September 1987	172	1	27	28
Admission of pupils to maintained schools	13 July 1987	16 September 1987	179	0	25	25
Grant maintained schools	4 August 1987	30 September 1987	200	4	40	44
Charges for school activities	9 October 1987	4 December 1987	90	2	3	5
Maintained further and higher education in Wales: Financing, Governance and Law	13 August 1987	7 October 1987	168	3	33	36
Collective worship	8 July 1987	11 September 1987	120	13	38	51
			1,454	270	309	579

NATIONAL FINANCE

Strip Searches

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were strip searched by customs officials in 1987, 1986 and 1985; whether individuals have any right of appeal when a strip search is proposed; and whether any code of practice exists in relation to these strip searches.

Mr. Lilley: Local records of personal searches are kept at ports and airports, but Customs have only recently started to keep strip search data separately and in a way suitable for central collection. There is no record of the information sought for the periods in question. During 1986, 46,215 personal searches were made, but the major part of these involve at most removal of outer clothing only. This total figure represents about 0.1 per cent. of passengers arriving.

Under section 164(2) of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 a person who is to be searched may request to be taken before either a justice of the peace or a superior of the examining officer who will consider the grounds for suspicion and confirm whether or not the search is to take place. This right of appeal is notified to the passenger as a matter of course prior to search.

Customs officers must have regard to the revelant provisions of the code of practice provided for by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. In addition, officers are given guidance in internal departmental instructions in respect of search procedures.

Financial Strategy

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to include a target for M3 in future editions of his medium-term financial strategy.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend announced in the 1987 Budget that there would be no formal target for M3 or any other measure of broad money in 1987-88. My right hon. Friend will announce his decisions on updating the medium-term financial strategy at the time of the 1988 Budget.

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage growth in M3 for the financial year 1986-87; and whether that growth exceeded his Department's M3 target in his medium-term financial strategy.

Mr. Lilley: M3 grew by 19 per cent. in 1986-87. The 1986 medium-term financial strategy set a range of 11-15 per cent.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms exist for medium or long-term alteration of the exchange rate.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech to the International Monetary Fund of 30 September (a copy of which I have had placed in the Library). In it my right hon. Friend describes the experience gained over the two years since the Plaza meeting in September 1985 and how this should be used to build a more permanent regime of managed floating, in order to maintain the maximum stability of key exchange rates, and to manage any change that may be necessary in an orderly way.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the proposed cash increase in public expenditure which he announced on Tuesday 3 November is available to fund new services or facilities, taking into account *(a)* inflation, *(b)* pay awards, *(c)* commitments entered into or spending already being undertaken, over and above the previous public expenditure predictions on which his announcement was based, *(d)* "overspend" already taking place, *(e)* demographic changes and *(f)* announcements of increases made previously by him or other Ministers.

Mr. Major *[holding answer, 9 November 1987]*: The plans published in the Autumn Statement represent increases of about 5 per cent. a year in cash terms in general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) between 1986-87 and 1990-91. Excluding the expected effects of general inflation, as measured by the GDP deflator, the real increase is about 1¼ per cent. a year. These plans will enable significant improvements in services and new initiatives in the Government's priority areas, including the NHS, inner cities, education and prison building, while at the same time reducing the proportion of national income devoted to public expenditure. The precise extent to which these cash plans fund new or improved services will depend on the extent to which public sector managers achieve moderate pay settlements or are able to generate additional resources by securing improvements in value for money.

Expenditure Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of expenditure in the latest year for which figures are available on *(a)* food, *(b)* fuel, *(c)* children's clothes and shoes, *(d)* books, newspapers and periodicals, *(e)* bus fares, *(f)* new house building and *(g)* funerals.

Mr. Major *[holding answer, 12 November 1987]*: Some estimates of expenditure on the categories requested are compiled in the context of personal sector transactions recorded in national accounts, covering years up to 1986 and published in the 1987 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts, the 'CSO Blue Book'. Total expenditure, which would include purchases by other sectors (for example, businesses) is not available.

Current and constant price estimates for expenditure on food, fuel and power, clothing and footwear, books, newspapers and magazines and buses and coaches are available from tables 4.7 and 4.8 of the CSO Blue Book. Spending on children's clothes and shoes is not separately identified. Current price estimates up to 1986 for expenditure on dwellings (excluding existing dwellings and land) are available from tables 12.1 and 12.3 of the CSO Blue Book.

The CSO Blue Book does not contain estimates of expenditure on funerals but available information suggests that undertakers' charges amounted to about £240 million at current prices in 1986.

ENVIRONMENT

Mobile Homes

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department issues on the criteria for decisions relating to planning permission for the siting of mobile homes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Advice on the land-use planning criteria for the siting of mobile homes is contained in my Department's development control policy note 8, "Caravan sites". I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the results of virological monitoring of bathing waters undertaken by four water authorities in 1986.

Mr. Moynihan: The results were placed in the Library by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning following his reply on 30 April 1986 to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) at column *186*.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why his Department permits water authorities one bacteriological failure in 12 samples in a bathing season, whereas the EC directive 76/160/EEC allows only one failure in 20; whether the Department has notified the European Commission of this relaxation in interpretation of the directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The bathing season in the United Kingdom runs from about mid-May until the end of September. If samples are taken at fortnightly intervals during this period, as the directive requires, about 12 will be obtained. Consequently, it is not possible to apply the 1 in 20 rule. We have therefore assessed compliance on the basis that where at least 12 samples have been taken and analysed, not more than one of them should fail. The Commission is aware of this interpretation. The monitoring of the quality of the bathing waters falling within the scope of the directive continued during 1987, on this basis.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the cost to the United Kingdom water industry of meeting the World Health Organisation guidelines for recreational water quality on all designated bathing beaches.

Mr. Moynihan: The basis for United Kingdom policy is the application of directive 76/160/EEC. Application of this directive is an obligation following from the Treaty of Rome, and we have not estimated the cost of applying other standards.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the likelihood of the European Community demanding tighter standards of bathing water quality that are currently required under directive 76/160/EEC; and what assessment he has made of the cost implications.

Mr. Moynihan: I am not aware of any proposal to change the requirements of directive 76/160/EEC.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the appointment of the chairperson for the British Waterways Board.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 22 October the appointment of Mr. David Ingman as chairman of the British Waterways Board. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of the press release.

Drink Tests (Football Matches)

Mr. Denis Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice the Minister for Sport has given to football clubs regarding the precise legal authority which would enable stewards to require breathalyser tests from citizens attending football matches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer, 12 November 1987]*: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given to him on 3 November at column *660*. I have given no advice about the use of breathalysers to football clubs. It is the responsibility of each club to decide the terms and conditions under which it will admit spectators to its premises and how its stewards should enforce them.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC (Sheep Support Scheme)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals have been made by the European Community Commission with regard to the establishment of a common sheep support scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Commission have made a number of proposals for reform of the Community's sheepmeat regime which was established in 1980. A copy of the proposals, in the Commission's document 8761/87/Add 3 was deposited before Parliament on 20 October. The Ministry's explanatory memorandum was considered by the Select Committee on European Legislation on 28 October when it was recommended for further consideration by this House.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals have been made by the European Community Commission with regard to the extension of the present milk quota system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Commission has proposed the extension of quotas at their effective level in 1988-89. The proposals are described in full in document 8761/87, which was deposited before Parliament on 20 October.

Radioactivity

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library details of *(a)* the precise location and *(b)* the geology of each of the sites for the monitoring of radioactivity conducted in Yorkshire during the weeks beginning 2 and 9 November.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Because it has not been practicable to monitor for radioactivity on all holdings in the relevant area of Yorkshire, it is not fair on occupiers to single out for publication those holdings that have been monitored. I will, therefore, identify sites to their general locality and I hope that this will be sufficient for the hon. Member. The details that the hon. Member requests for the last two weeks are still in the final stages of preparation, but I will place the detailed results in the Library of the House very shortly and let the hon. Member know when I have done so. In the meantime I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend, the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) today which contains a general statement of results so far.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lambs (Skipton-Ilkley)

Mr. Curry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the results of his Department's further safety checks on lambs in the Skipton-Ilkley area.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 9 November 1987, c. 63]:* Monitoring for radioactivity in the Skipton-Ilkley area is continuing. Given in the table are the results available so far. Further vegetation samples have been taken and results on those are awaited. Monitoring of live sheep is also continuing and there are four teams currently operating in the area between Settle and Grassington, which includes the high ground of Penyghent, Fountains Fell and Darnbrook Fell. In addition to these results, the monitoring of a flock of breeding ewes grazing the moors above Grassington has shown a small number of sheep on which it would be desirable to seek confirmatory analysis of meat samples. This is in hand and the results will be announced as soon as possible.

Measurements of caesium levels in samples taken from the Skipton-Ilkley and Harrogate areas in November 1987

Locations and numbers of samples	*Range*
A. *Vegetation*	
1. Grass (including silage): Aldringham, Askwith (3), Bolton Abbey, Cracoe, Draughton, Harrogate, Silsden, Skipton, Skipton Moor (2), Thorlby (2) (14 samples in all)	Cs 134 <4–<14 Bq/kg Cs 137 <6–39 Bq/kg
TOTAL	Cs <11–49 Bq/kg
2. Heather: Barden Moor, Embsay Moor, Harrogate (3), Ilkley Moor, Skipton, Threshfield (8 samples in all)	Cs 134 <15–120 Bq/kg Cs 137 43–380 Bq/kg
TOTAL	Cs <58–599 Bq/kg
3. Bilberries: Barden Moor, Harrogate (2 samples in all)	Cs 134 22–54 Bq/kg Cs137 67–162 Bq/kg
TOTAL	Cs 89–216 Bq/kg
B. *Milk*	
Askwith (2), Bolton Abbey, Embsay, Harrogate, Rylstone, Silsden (7 samples in all)	Cs 134 <3–<8 Bq/l Cs 137 <4–<10 Bq/l
TOTAL	Cs <7–<17 Bq/l
C. *Lamb Meat*	
Skipton (2) (2 samples in all)	Cs 134 <9–25 Cs 137 <11–83
TOTAL	Cs <20–108
D. *Sheep (Live Monitoring)*	
Addingham, Askwith (2), Clifton, Draughton, Farnley, Halton East, Malham Moor, Rylstone, Settle, Silsden (3), Skipton, Threshfield (2), (20 sheep or more from each of 16 flocks—363 animals in all)	0–442 Bq/kg

EMPLOYMENT

"Opening Doors"

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to the report entitled "Opening Doors" from the disablement advisory committee of the Banking Insurance and Finance Union, a copy of which has been sent to him; if there is any action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: We shall be considering the report in the context of our future plans for employment and training services to people with disabilities. Of particular relevance is our current initiative to promote more actively the employment of people with disabilities by large companies, including those in the finance industry.

Migration

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals for the ratification by the United Kingdom of International Labour Organisation convention No. 143 concerning migrations in abusive conditions and the promotion of equality of opportunity and treatment of migrant workers (1975).

Mr. Nicholls: There are no such proposals.

YTS Agents

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what criteria are used to assess applications by YTS managing agents for approval as approved training organisations.

Mr. Cope: There are 10 criteria which managing agents must satisfy to achieve full approved training organisation status:

The ability to arrange a two-year training programme
A good previous record in training
Adequate resources
Staff competent to undertake training
Adequate premises and equipment
Proper means of assessing trainees
Effective means to review programmes
A positive commitment to equal opportunities
A positive commitment to health and safety
Financial viability

Mr. Watts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of applications by YTS managing agents for approval as approved training organisations has been given full approval in the current years *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(c)* in the south-east region; and to what factors he attributes the different rates of approval in these areas.

Mr. Cope: During the period 1 November 1986-30 September 1987, the proportion of applications by YTS managing agents awarded fully approved training organisation status was: *(a)* 51 per cent. nationally, *(b)* 54 per cent. in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(c)* 42 per cent. in the south-east region.

Decisions are made by the Manpower Services Commission regional directors. In reaching a decision they are required to take into account the evidence collected by the MSC about the ability of the applicant organisation to meet the criteria for approved training organisation status, comments on that evidence by the applicant organisation, and recommendations made by the appropriate area manager and area manpower board.

Rates of approval by region are continually changing as new decisions are reached. The MSC intends that YTS managing agents in all regions shall have achieved fully approved status by April 1988.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people resident in Milford Haven are claiming unemployment benefit; and what percentage of the total labour force this represents.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have been asked to reply. At 8 October 1987, there were 723 unemployed claimants in wards 6, 7 and 8 of the Preseli district (which have been used as an approximation for Milford Haven). Rates of unemployment are not calculated at this level.

YTS (Coventry)

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the youth training schemes provided at the latest available date, together with the number of places each is offering for Coventry, in the same form as the information provided in the answer of 14 May at column *317*.

Mr. Cope *[pursuant to his reply, 12 November 1987]*: I regret that there was an error in the original text. The correct version is as follows.

A list of YTS providers at October 1987 in the Coventry Local Authority District and the number of places offered by each is shown in the table:

Provider	*Places Offered*
Alvis Ltd.	10
Atlas (Coventry and Warwickshire Awards Trust)[1]	33
Coventry Area Health Authority	33
Coventry Chamber of Commerce	320
Coventry City Council (clerical)	60
Coventry City Council (construction)	30
Coventry and District Co-operative Society	26
Coventry City Education Department	513
Coventry Rad Heat	14
Coventry Small Business Training Scheme	12
Courtaulds plc	26
Dunlop Ltd.	55
GEC Ltd.	90
Guy Associates	56
Hotel and Catering Training Board	52
Jaguar Cars Ltd.	28
JHP Training (Coventry)	72
Lloyds British Training Services Ltd.	98
Massey Ferguson Ltd.	24
MGTS Training Services Ltd.	268
Midland Link	126
National Association for the Care and Settlement of Offenders—Coventry	30
Rolls-Royce Ltd.	32
Peugeot Talbot plc	49
Tetra Incorporated	100
Wickman Bennet	6
Post Office	31
East Midlands Butchery	30
Total	2,224

[1] Some of these places will be provided in Warwickshire.

The following list shows providers whose schemes in Coventry and Warwickshire are administered by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) large companies unit (LCU). It is not possible to separately identify schemes operating in Coventry.

Provider	*Places Offered*
Abbey National Building Society plc	1
Association of British Travel Agents	16
Association of Merchants in Trading	9
ARROW Training Associates	5
Austin Rover Group Ltd.	41
British Association of Profesional Hairdressing Employers	15
British Holiday Homes and Parks Association	3
British Home Stores plc	6

Provider	*Places Offered*
British Insurance Brokers Association	14
Builders Merchants Federation	19
Boots Company plc	10
British Office Systems and Stationery Federation	3
British Printing Industry Federation	8
British Rail	20
British Retail Florists Association	12
Burgess	6
Burton Group plc	7
C and A Modes	2
Clothing and Allied Products Industry Training Board	22
Construction Industry Training Board	320
Debenhams plc	20
Department of Employment	10
DER	1
De Vere Hotels Ltd.	13
Dewhurst	7
Dixons Group plc	4
Electricity Council	5
Electronic Rentals	3
Essanelle	4
Essex Leisure	1
Federation of Banks	18
Footballers Association Further Education and Vocational Training Society Ltd.	12
Ford Motor Company	2
Fosters Menswear	4
Gateway Food Markets Ltd.	6
GKN	1
Glass Training Ltd.	2
Grenada Television Rentals	4
Habitat	2
Halifax Building Society	2
Home Charm Group plc	18
IBM	8
Lunn Poly	8
Motor Agents Association	50
Magnet and Southerns	2
Marks and Spencer plc	5
Midland Bank plc	8
Mothercare Ltd.	4
National Institute of Hardware	3
National Pony Society	3
Owen, Owen	10
Partco	11
Plastics Processing Industry Training Board	4
Remploy	5
Rumbelows	5
J. Sainsbury plc	13
Scaffolding GB	1
Shoe Repair Industry Training Board	4
W. H. Smith & Son	3
W. H. Smith Do It All	2
Standard Tyre & Exhaust Ltd.	4
Stylo Barrett	4
Tesco Stores Ltd.	20
Trust House Forte	1
Threshold	20
Timpson Shoe Repairs	1
Trustee Savings Bank plc	2
Timber Trades Training Association	6
Wolseley Centres Ltd.	3
F. W. Woolworth plc	6
Total	894

SOCIAL SERVICES

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of Government spending is accounted for by his Department; and how that compares with 1979.

Mr. Moore: I have been asked to reply.

The proportion of Government expenditure, excluding debt interest, accounted for by my Department in 1978-79 was 36·3 per cent.; the latest comparable estimate for 1987-88 is 44·6 per cent.

Rent and Rates

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date he expects to make an announcement that will enable any tenant currently benefiting from either housing benefit or rate rebate, or both, to calculate the proportion of rent and rates for which they will be responsible after April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend announced on 27 October at columns 179-81 the proposed maximum levels of housing benefit (including rate rebates), applicable amounts, tapers and other components of the calculation which will apply from April 1988. The level of an individual's rent or rates is the other important factor in the calculations.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average number of patients on each general practitioner's list in England in 1957, 1967, 1977 and 1987 or the latest available year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Newton: The data at 1 October are:

	Number
1957	2,290
1967	2,490
1977	2,331
1985	2,068
1986	[1]2,047

[1] Estimate

Allowable Earnings

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government will raise substantially the amount of earnings allowable without loss of benefit from part-time employment for those in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to increase the amount of earnings that can be disregarded for supplementary benefit purposes. However, in the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987, which were laid before the House on 10 November, we have proposed that in the income support scheme, which replaces supplementary benefit in April 1988, the basic level of disregarded earnings be increased from £4 a week to £5. We have also proposed that the higher level of disregard, of up to £12 a week, for lone parents be replaced by a flat-rate £15 a week, and be extended to the disabled and to couples who have been unemployed and receiving supplementary benefit or income support for two years or more. In order to simplify the new scheme there will be no separate disregard of work expenses.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistics on the annual number of abortions performed in (*a*) the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and (*b*) each week from the 12th to 28th week of pregnancy are collected by or on behalf of his Department.

Mr. Newton: The total numbers of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 by gestation are given in the table. Statistics on the number of abortions by increments of gestation and by age, category of premises, marital status, type of operation, planned day care, statutory grounds, duration of stay, non-residents, parity, complications, place of residence, and previous abortions under the Act are published in "Abortion Statistics 1986", a copy of which is in the Library.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 by gestation in completed weeks, residents and non-residents
England and Wales 1986

Gestation (completed weeks)	*Number of Abortions*
0-11	129,327
12	15,530
13	5,141
14	5,151
15	2,752
16	3,609
17	2,494
18	2,611
19	2,553
20	1,389
21	753
22	876
23	880
24	185
25	11
26	14
27 and over	4
Unknown	6
Total	172,286

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the number of terminations carried out by the Sefton area health authority for the years 1980 until its abolition in 1982 and for the relevant successor authorities for the years 1982 to 1987; if he will list the number of non-National Health Service terminations by the same authorities for the same periods; and if he will provide the same information for the 98 area health authorities in England and Wales for the period 1980 to 1982 and for the relevant successor authorities for the period 1982 to 1987.

Mr. Newton: Statistics on the numbers of abortions carried out by district health authorities (DHA) are not released. The number of abortions performed in Wales and in each regional health authority in England by category of premises for United Kingdom residents are given in table 20 of the volumes "Abortion Statistics" 1980-1986, copies of which are in the Library. Statistics of the number of abortions to usual residents of DHAs by category of premises are shown in table 24 of the same volumes, and for the Sefton area in the table.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 to women usually resident in the Sefton area by category of premises—1980-1986

Year	*Category of premises*	
	Total	*Non-NHS*
1980[1]	625	507
1981[1]	604	466
1982[1]	632	325
1983[2]	692	358
1984[2]	746	441
1985[2]	732	424
1986[2]	815	467

[1] Northern (Merseyside Sefton) and Southern (Merseyside Sefton) Health Districts

[2] Southport and Formby, and South Sefton District Health Authorities

Lithotripsy

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether lithotripsy is available in the North West regional health authority.

Mrs. Currie: Yes. I am pleased to report that a lithotripter was installed in Withington hospital in May of this year.

Age Addition

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for uprating the age addition for retirement pensions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to uprate the age addition for retirement pensions. However, from April 1988, pensioners over 80 who are entitled to income support will receive premiums of £13·05 for a single pensioner and £18·60 for a couple. These premiums are respectively £2·40 and £2·35 more than those for younger pensioners. In this way, extra help will be directed to those who need it most.

Sign Language

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to give official recognition to British sign language for the deaf as a minority language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Government fully recognise the vital importance of British sign language to some deaf people. Our policy is to support the development of a wide range of methods of communication for people with impaired hearing.

Mental Illness (Halifax)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take to ensure that *(a)* adolescents, *(b* mothers with babies and *(c)* women from certain ethnic minorities who are mentally ill in Halifax receive adequate care.

Mrs. Currie: Provision of health services in Halfax is a matter for Calderdale health authority, which is accountable to Yorkshire regional health authority through the annual planning and review process for service delivery. The hon. Member may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Calderdale for information relating to local services.

Consultants (Secretarial Assistance)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to recover from consultants employed by the National Health Service the cost to public funds incurred by them in employing secretaries, paid for by the National Health Service, in connection with their private practices; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Charges for private treatment within the National Health Service, which are set to recover full cost, include an element for administrative costs.

Benefit Payments (Birkenhead)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much was paid out in each of the last five years from both Birkenhead supplementary benefit offices in single payments; and what will the annual budget for social fund expenditure be for each of these two offices in the year beginning April 1988.

Mr. Scott: The amount of single payments paid to claimants in Birkenhead North and Birkenhead South local offices in each of the last four financial years is as follows. The figures include both full and partial awards. The information for 1982-83 is no longer available.

Year April to April	*Birkenhead North*	*Birkenhead South*
	£	£
1983-84	857,229	307,391
1984-85	1,145,736	411,781
1985-86	1,557,778	712,893
1986-87	1,588,995	716,782

The social fund grants and loans budgets for Birkenhead North and Birkenhead South were listed in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-781*.

Benefit Statistics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Scotland were in receipt of *(a)* attendance allowance at (i) the higher rate and (ii) the lower rate, *(b)* invalid care allowance, *(c)* mobility allowance, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* severe disablement allowance, *(f)* industrial disablement pension, *(g)* war disablement pension, *(h)* retirement pension, *(i)* unemployment benefit, *(j)* supplementary pension and *(k)* supplementary allowance, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: The latest available information for each benefit is as follows:

	Numbers
(a) Attendance allowance	
(i) the higher rate	18,500
(ii) th lower rate	30,600
(b) Invalid care allowance	n/a
(c) Mobility allowance	59,700
(d) Invalidity benefit	126,600
(e) Severe disablement allowance	28,500
(f) Industrial disablement pension	16,200
(g) War disablement pension	18,900
(h) Retirement pension	816,500
(i) Unemployment benefit	106,200
(j) Supplementary pension	1,670,800
(k) Supplementary allowance	1,509,300

Note.—The figures for supplementary pension and supplementary allowance are based on live load counts which are the number of cases in action rather than the number of people receiving benefit; the data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Single Payments

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of single payments went to *(a)* pensioners, *(b)* two-parent families with children and *(c)* one-parent families with children in 1985-86 and in 1987; and if he will estimate what proportion of single payments will go to these categories of claimants in 1987-88.

Mr. Portillo: The following information is available from a 100 per cent. count of single payment awards:

	Awards to pensioners (000s)	*Total awards (000s)*	*Awards as percentage of total*
1985-86	510	4,375	12
1986-87	680	4,230	16
April to September 1987	130	1,060	12

Source: Management Information System.

Further information is available from the February 1986 annual statistical inquiry as follows:

	Thousands
Pensioners	
Number of awards	410
Awards as percentage of total	14
Lone parents	
Number of awards	1,000
Awards as percentage of total	33
Total awards	3,040

Note: ASI data record the number of single payments made during the 12 months preceding the date of the inquiry to persons in receipt of supplementary benefit at the time of the inquiry. As a result they do not record all the single payments made during the year.

A special survey of single payments activity in a sample of offices in October 1986 showed that of 2,041 cases in which payment was awarded 291 (14 per cent.) involved pensioners, 493 (24 per cent.) single parents, 532 (26 per cent.) couples with children. In addition three involved pensioners with children.

Income Support

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total savings in 1988-89 from uprating the illustrative figures for personal allowances in income support set out in the technical annex of the White Paper "The Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) by 4·5 per cent. to 5 per cent. instead of 6·5 per cent. to 7 per cent.

Mr. Scott: The income support personal allowances have been uprated by between 6·5 per cent. and 9 per cent. from their technical annex levels.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a breakdown of the composition of the personal allowances in the income support scheme.

Mr. Scott: The intention in the income support scheme is to give the claimant a single sum of money out of which he can budget to meet his normal weekly needs. Thus the personal allowance in income support is not broken down into individual components earmarked to cover specific expenses.

Free School Meals and Milk

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children will lose entitlement to free school meals and free welfare milk after the Social Security Act 1986 is fully implemented in April 1988.

Mr. Scott: Under the Social Security Act 1986 it is estimated that about 550,000 children will cease to receive free school meals as a result of the replacement of family income supplement by family credit and the abolition of local education authority discretionary schemes; about 200,000 children will cease to receive free welfare milk as a result of the replacement of family income supplement by family credit and the abolition of the low income scheme; there will be about 950,000 children in family credit families who will receive cash help in place of free school meals and free welfare milk.

Mr. Clay: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what compensation is allowed for in the family credit child rates for the loss of free school meals and free welfare milk; and how this is calculated.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 5 November at columns *866-7*.

The latest information from local education authorities indicates an average charge for a fixed price school meal of 65·6p. The £2·55 included in the child credit rates is rather more than the weekly equivalent of this average charge when spread over the whole year.

Pensioners

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to how many United Kingdom pensioners are at present resident *(a)* abroad, *(b)* in the United States of America and *(c)* in Canada.

Mr. Scott: The table shows the countries where United Kingdom pensioners are known to live, the number of pensioners living there, whether annual increases are paid and an estimate of the average pension paid at 31 December 1986. Pensioners living in the Channel islands are not included as there is no ready way of identifying payment to them separately from payment to pensioners in the United Kingdom.

Number of pensioners in overseas countries at 31 December 1986

Country	*Number of pensioners*	*(Including number of widow pensioners*	*Average pension at 31 December 1986 £*
Albania	6	—	14·52
Algeria	2	—	16·46
American Samoa	1	—	7·01
Andorra	106	(2)	7·90
Angola	1	—	23·98
Anguilla	63	—	14·44
Antigua	149	(7)	17·06
Argentina	140	(7)	3·88
Ascension Island	3	—	1·82
Australia	106,531	(2,735)	12·94
Austria[1]	2,191	(105)	13·80
Bahamas	114	(4)	9·48
Bahrain	18	(3)	5·94
Bangladesh	4,161	(799)	6·59
Barbados	878	(26)	17·69
Belgium[1]	3,011	(146)	14·25
Belize	8	—	19·53
Benin	1	—	23·04
Bermuda[1]	258	(13)	20·22
Bolivia	3	—	0·48
Botswana	48	(7)	7·31
Brazil	162	(19)	4·67
Brunei	8	(1)	13·57
Bulgaria	9	—	5·68
Burma	5	—	9·27
Canada	66,649	(1,925)	13·26
Cayman Islands	29	(3)	15·83
Central African Republic	2	(1)	16·50
Chile	45	(5)	4·00
China	11	(1)	1·86
Colombia	20	—	14·25
Cook Islands	4	—	10·74
Costa Rica	7	—	15·91
Cyprus[1]	2,586	(123)	20·55
Czechoslovakia	28	—	12·33
Denmark[1]	293	(33)	23·77
Djibouti	5	—	36·47
Dominica, Commonwealth of	287	(10)	14·17
Dominican Republic	147	(6)	18·84
East Germany	18	(2)	11·62
Ecuador	7	—	5·56
Egypt	46	(3)	5·40
Falkland Islands and Dependencies	8	(1)	5·12
Faroe Islands	2	(1)	24·11
Fiji	26	—	8·74
Finland[1]	54	(14)	25·06
France[1]	5,262	(196)	14·53
Gambia	7	—	31·49
Ghana	45	(1)	8·42
Gibraltar[1]	329	(24)	27·21
Greece[1]	832	(67)	16·06
Grenada	363	(17)	18·07
Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique and Reunion Island[1]	5	—	17·56
Guyana	137	(3)	10·90
Haiti	1	—	28·68
Honduras	3	—	20·42
Hong Kong	383	(21)	11·48
Hungary	158	(5)	14·12
Iceland[1]	20	(4)	16·04
India	5,914	(353)	6·00
Indonesia	21	(1)	1·48
Iraq	4	—	1·39
Irish Republic[1]	45,275	(3,663)	24·05
Israel[1]	2,134	(67)	20·76
Italy[1]	9,007	(881)	20·83
Jamaica[1]	10,951	(360)	24·22
Japan	55	(11)	6·36
Jordan	7	—	5·24
Kenya	395	(10)	4·55
Kiribati (Gilbert Islands)	3	—	6·04
Kuwait	4	—	12·40
Lebanon	26	(3)	5·41

Country	Number of pensioners	(Including number of widow pensioners	Average pension at 31 December 1986 £
Lesotho	6	—	17·97
Liberia	5	—	16·40
Luxembourg[1]	56	(7)	13·77
Madagascar	2	—	50·95
Malawi	58	(5)	2·82
Malaya	59	(7)	13·69
Malta[1]	1,628	(72)	17·64
Mauritius[1]	104	(6)	15·74
Mexico	70	(5)	5·01
Monaco	186	(6)	11·51
Montserrat	189	(1)	15·33
Morocco	35	(1)	2·13
Naura, Republic of	2	—	20·54
Nepal	20	(2)	4·15
Netherlands[1]	2,128	(182)	15·48
Netherlands Antilles	9	(1)	4·83
New Zealand	26,092	(467)	13·17
Nigeria	105	(31)	4·46
Norfolk Island	14	—	2·75
Norway	164	(14)	15·00
Pakistan	9,521	(1,159)	5·99
Panama	6	(1)	17·62
Papua New Guinea	17	(1)	4·96
Peru	35	(1)	1·99
Philippines	49	(4)	13·30
Poland	2,764	(41)	3·62
Portugal (including Madeira)[1]	1,166	(24)	13·95
Puerto Rico	5	(1)	13·51
Qatar	9	(1)	3·95
Rumania	20	(2)	9·35
St. Helena and Dependencies	28	—	16·79
St. Kitts-Nevis	303	(9)	17·08
St. Lucia	443	(8)	18·34
St. Vincent	286	(10)	16·92
San Marino	2	—	10·90
Sarawak	3	—	8·33
Saudi Arabia	34	(9)	4·17
Senegal	7	—	12·52
Seychelles	28	(2)	10·20
Shar jah	2	(1)	5·68
Sierra Leone	41	(3)	6·90
Singapore	78	(9)	7·62
Solomon Islands	3	—	15·70
Somalia	164	(21)	14·30
South Africa	22,781	(834)	12·89
South Korea	1	—	19·66
South West Africa or Namibia	13	(2)	18·43
Spain (including Balearic and Canary Islands)[1]	15,395	(586)	16·58
Sri Lanka	111	(11)	5·60
Sudan	11	(2)	11·62
Swaziland	58	(2)	10·07
Sweden	74	(5)	11·45
Switzerland[1]	1,724	(69)	19·71
Syria	2	—	19·09
Taiwan	5	(1)	16·64
Tanzania	36	(1)	2·94
Thailand	52	(5)	9·13
Tonga	3	—	9·37
Trinidad and Tobago	296	(14)	15·38
Tunisia	5	(1)	5·13
Turkey[1]	225	(20)	11·25
Turks and Caicos Islands	4	—	25·33
Uganda	16	(1)	0·91
United Arab Emirates	22	(6)	7·70
USA[1]	37,697	(1,132)	19·98
USSR	769	(7)	11·31
Uruguay	17	(1)	3·70
Vanuata (New Hebrides)	2	—	3·25
Venezuela	27	—	2·65
Virgin Islands	37	(7)	9·47
Western Samoa	8	(3)	23·82
West Germany[1]	10,123	(1,009)	15·60
Yemen Arab Republic (North)	902	(63)	14·15
Yemen People's Democratic Republic of (South)	121	(10)	15·07
Yugoslavia[1]	989	(30)	32·75
Zaire	5		0·25
Zambia	117	(12)	3·40
Zimbabwe	4,122	(162)	5·12

[1] Indicates pension increases paid.

Note: The above figures do not include 5,453 retirement pensioners and 241 widow beneficiaries residing abroad (other than in the Irish Republic) to whom the Department is making payment on behalf of the Northern Ireland authorities.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to treat British pensioners living in Canada on an equal basis with those in the United States of America, Yugoslavia and West Germany.

Mr. Scott: We cannot give any undertaking about payment of increases in retirement and widow's pensions to pensioners living in Canada.

The Government must keep a strict control over public spending as part of our long-term programme of rebuilding our economy. Extending arrangements for cost-of-living increases to further groups of pensioners abroad must be considered in relation to the Government's priorities for other improvements to our social security system.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings accrue to his Department from the lower rates of pension paid to retired Britons living in Canada.

Mr. Scott: The national insurance scheme does not in principle provide for cost-of-living increases to be paid to pensioners living outside Great Britain. It is funded on the basis that such increases are paid only where the United Kingdom has entered into a social security convention to provide for them. Consequently not paying cost-of-living increases to pensioners in Canada does not produce a saving to the scheme.

The additional cost of such payments, if there were funds available, would currently be about £41 million a year.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the basis on which cost of living payments are made to retired Britons living abroad.

Mr. Scott: Cost-of-living payments are made to recipients of British pensions if they are living in a country with which the United Kingdom has a social security convention which provides for such payments. Whether we negotiate a bilateral social security convention of this kind depends on the characteristics of the other country's scheme, how far reciprocity is possible and the extent to which the advantages to be gained by a convention justify the additional expenditure incurred by the United Kingdom.

Suicide

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what have been the rates of suicide in the Huddersfield health area for every year since 1957;

(2) what have been the rates of suicide in the Yorkshire regional health authority area in each year since 1960;

(3) what have been the rates of suicide in the United Kingdom in each year since 1960.

Mrs. Currie: The available information is shown in the table. Because of changes in boundaries and administrative areas, figures for Huddersfield from 1957 to 1973 and for Yorkshire regional health authority from 1963 to 1973 are not comparable with those for later years.

Number of deaths and death rates per 100,000 population from suicide and self-inflicted injury[1], United Kingdom, Yorkshire[2] and Huddersfield[2] 1957-86

			Area			
	United Kingdom		*Yorkshire[2]*		*Huddersfield[2]*	
Year	*Number*	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*	*Number*	*Rate*
1957	5,786	11·24	[3]—	[3]—	21	16·46
1958	5,780	11·18	[3]—	[3]—	27	21·08
1959	5,701	10·98	[3]—	[3]—	20	15·56
1960	5,583	10·66	[3]—	[3]—	23	17·81
1961	5,682	10·76	[3]—	[3]—	26	20·01
1962	6,123	11·49	[3]—	[3]—	18	12·74
1963	6,247	11·65	408	12·96	24	18·20
1964	6,070	11·24	376	11·90	33	24·95
1965	5,646	10·39	347	10·92	19	14·36
1966	5,489	10·05	363	11·38	22	16·68
1967	5,201	9·46	347	10·84	20	15·14
1968	5,056	9·16	323	10·04	23	17·56
1969	4,779	8·62	324	10·06	14	10·72
1970	4,386	7·88	297	9·22	18	13·86
1971	4,376	7·83	287	8·88	10	7·66
1972	4,238	7·56	288	8·89	21	16·13
1973	4,313	7·67	272	8·37	15	11·53
1974	4,398	7·82	272	7·82	32	8·53
1975	4,176	7·43	234	6·54	24	6·40
1976	4,314	7·68	280	7·83	29	7·79
1977	4,468	7·95	273	7·64	28	7·43
1978	4,531	8·07	305	8·53	25	6·51
1979	4,765	8·47	350	9·79	40	10·55
1980	4,917	8·73	350	9·77	32	8·41
1981	5,025	8·91	306	8·52	31	8·21
1982	4,933	8·76	327	9·09	23	6·10
1983	4,926	8·74	310	8·62	21	9·83
1964	4,943	8·75	303	8·42	22	10·31
1985	5,105	9·02	315	8·75	16	7·53
1986	4,839	8·52	304	8·44	24	11·29

[1] Suicide and self inflicted injury.
1957-67 E970-E979 International Classification of Diseases 7th Revision.
1968-86 E950-E959 ICD 8th and 9th Revision.

[2] Figures for areas reflects available data:
Yorkshire
1960-62 No data available.
1963-73 Leeds Hospital Region.
1974-86 Yorkshire Regional Health authority.
Huddersfield
1957-73 Huddersfield County Borough.
1974-81 Kirklees Metropolitan County Borough.
1982-86 Huddersfield District Health Authority.

[3] No data available.

Note: Kirklees MCD area is coterminous with that of the Huddersfield DHA.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many suicides have occurred involving patients discharged from mental hospitals in the Huddersfield health authority area since the Government's care in the community campaign began;

(2) how many suicides have occurred involving patients discharged from mental hospitals in the Yorkshire regional health authority area since the Government's care in the community campaign began;

(3) how many suicides have occurred involving patients discharged from mental hospitals in the United Kingdom since the Government's care in the community campaign began.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that it is not possible to identify former in-patients of psychiatric hospitals from the registration of deaths.

Land Holdings

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in league order, with the highest at the top, the acreage of land held in each district health authority area within the National Health Service in England and Wales; and why those authorities whose land holding is not known do not hold such information.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not readily available centrally. From 1 April 1988, we are asking authorities in England to produce an aggregated annual return of their land holdings. These returns will be received from June 1989 and held on computer. Once that is done, to produce information of the sort requested will be a simple process. Information for Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Hepatitis B Vaccine

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will expedite his decision as to whether general practitioners may prescribe courses of hepatitis B vaccine to all the at-risk groups recommended by the British Medical Association, including policeman and prison staff.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The joint committee on vaccination and immunisation, which advises the health Departments on all aspects of immunisation, has all but finalised revised guidance on vaccination against hepatitis B. We hope to be able to gather all our own advice to promulgate this guidance at an early date.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of each district health authority which has contractual arrangements with a private non-National Health Service hospital to provide acute medical services, showing *(a)* the hospital with which a contract is made, *(b)* the number of patients treated by that hospital during 1986-87, *(c)* the total amount spent by the district health authority on treatment under the contract during 1986-87 and *(d)* the amount of *(c)* expressed as a percentage of the district health authority's overall budget for 1986-87.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: Health authority annual accounts do not identify the financial information requested by the hon. Member. The latest available statistical information is given in the table.

District health authorities having contractual arrangments with institutions outside the National Health Service to provide acute medical services in 1986

District Health Authority	*Hospital*	*In-patient cases*	*Out-patient attendances*
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority			
Northallerton	St. John of God Hospital, Richmond	35	365
Airedale	Sue Ryder Home, Keighley	52	0
Trent Regional Health Authority			
Sheffield	St. Luke's Nursing Home, Sheffield	441	0
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
Cambridge	RAF Hospital, Ely	1,102	3,572
Norwich	All Hallows Hospital, Bungay	105	0
North West Thames Regional Health Authority			
Hounslow and Spelthorne	Trinity Hospice, London SW4	14	0
Riverside	Trinity Hospice, London SW4	82	0
	St. Christopher's Hospice, London SE26	1	0
North East Thames Regional Health Authority			
City and Hackney	St. Joseph's Hospice, London E8	1,018	182
South East Thames Regional Health Authority			
Eastbourne	Horder Centre for Arthritics, Crowborough	30	0
Greenwich	Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15	1	0
West Lambeth	St. Christopher's Hospice, London SE26	22	0
South West Thames Regional Health Authority			
South West Surrey	Holy Cross Hospital, Haslemere	28	993
	King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst	0	121
North West Surrey	Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15	1	0
West Surrey and North East Hants	Tadworth Court Children's Hospital, Tadworth	2	0
Mid Surrey	Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15	1	0
	Hydon Hill Home, Godalming[2]	1	0
Chichester	Holy Cross Hospital, Haslemere	0	183
	King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst	897	3,008
Mid-Downs	King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst	131	512
	Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15	3	0
	Grafton Manor, Towcester	1	0
	Paxhill Park Nursing Home, Haywards Heath	1	0

District Health Authority	*Hospital*	*In-patient cases*	*Out-patient attendances*
Croydon	St. Christopher's Hospice, London SE26	128	27
	Trinity Hospice, London SW4	4	0
Kingston and Esher	Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15	1	0
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables, London SW15	0	147
Wandsworth	Trinity Hospice, London SW5	107	0
	St. Christopher's Hospice, London SE26	3	0
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	Holy Cross Hospital, Haslemere	0	373
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	King Edward VII Hospital, Midhurst	28	179
	Bordean House, Petersfield	61	0
	Westbury House Nursing Home, Petersfield	85	0
Oxford Regional Health Authority			
Wycombe	The Leonard Cheshire Family Care Scheme, Gerrards C[illegible]s	0	52
South Western Regional Health Authority			
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	St. Michael's Hospital, Hayle	282	1,841
Plymouth	Blackdown Nursing Home, Tavistock	10	0
Torbay	Rowcroft Hospice, Torquay	258	1,274
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
Kidderminster and District	Park Attwood Therapeutic Centre, Bewdley	4	0
	St. Mary's Hospice, Birmingham B29	4	0
Worcester	St. Mary's Hospice, Birmingham B29	9	0
	St. Michael's Hospice, Hereford	22	0
Shropshire	Derwen Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre, Oswestry	50	0
Mid Staffordshire	Compton Hall, Wolverhampton	35	0
	St. Gile's Hospice, Lichfield	58	0
North Staffordshire	Douglas Macmillan Home, Stoke-on-Trent	241	0
South East Staffordshire	St. Gile's Hospice, Lichfield	128	432
Rugby	Myton Hamlet Hospice, Warwick	22	0
North Warwickshire	St. Gile's Hospice, Lichfield	21	68
	Myton Hamlet Hospice, Warwick	17	0
South Warwickshire	Royal Pump Rooms, Leamington Spa	0	7,152
	Myton Hamlet Hospice, Warwick	138	0
Coventry	Myton Hamlet Hospice, Warwick	146	0
Dudley	Compton Hall, Wolverhampton	84	0
Sandwell	Compton Hall, Wolverhampton	49	0
	St. Mary's Hospice, Birmingham B29	43	0
Walsall	St. Mary's Hospice, Birmingham B29	2	0
	St. Gile's Hospice, Lichfield	42	160
	Compton Hall, Wolverhampton	47	0
Wolverhampton	Compton Hall, Wolverhampton	190	0
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
Liverpool	Sunnybank Marie Curie Home, Liverpool L2	127	0
North Western Regional Health Authority			
Lancaster	St. John's Hospice, Lancaster	293	0
Blackpool	Fylde Coast Hospital, Blackpool	316	0
South Manchester	St. Ann's Hospice, Worsley	630	0
Salford	St. Ann's Hospice, Worsley	357	0
Wigan	Wigan Hospice, Wigan[2]	188	0

[1] Figures are provisional.

[2] 1985 data substituted (1986 data not yet available).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Chile

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he makes of the safety with which Chilean exiles may return to their homeland, in the light of the detention on 3 September of former refugees in Britain Luis Tricot and Rocio Reyes, and the subsequent alleged torture of Senor Tricot.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of the practical difficulties faced by Chileans who are now returning to their own country, and of the concern felt in the United Kingdom for their security. I conveyed these concerns to the Chilean Foreign Minister of 23 October 1987. Her Majesty's ambassador is in regular touch with returnees from the United Kingdom. We have made representations on behalf of the Irish Government about Senor Tricot's case.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the refugee problem in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Eggar: We have received a number of letters about the refugee problem in Sri Lanka, both from private individuals and from Sinhala and Tamil organisations.

Belau

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if he will raise in the United Nations Security Council the breaches of human rights, the intimidation of voters and the murder of Mr. Bedor in Belau; and if he will raise with the United States Government their obligation under the United Nations Trusteeship Council to promote the development of the inhabitants to self-government and independence and protect them against the loss of their lands and resources.

Mr. Eggar: The compact of free association which will terminate Palau's trusteeship status was approved by public referendum in Palau on 21 August. The referendum was observed by a United Nations team of observers. Several weeks after the vote there was some violence and a murder in Palau. The United States has registered its firm opposition to this violence and is assisting the Palau Government in investigations. In these circumstances we see no need to raise the matter with the United States Government.

European Council

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the cost of holding recent meetings of the European Council.

Mrs. Chalker: The cost of the London European Council in December 1986 was £234,050. We understand that the equivalent figure for The Hague European Council in June 1986 was approximately £295,000.

Hong Kong

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the treatment of foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received three letters from right hon. and hon. Members and several letters from members of the public about this subject.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Hong Kong Government to alleviate the plight of foreign domestic helpers who find on arrival in the colony that their employers are willing to pay them wages less than the contractually agreed account, and consequently leave their employment to work elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to any recent change of policy by the Hong Kong Government concerning the treatment of foreign domestic helpers whose employment has been terminated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The revised conditions of stay for domestic helpers in Hong Kong, announced by the Hong Kong Government on 16 April, state that if a foreign domestic helper's contract is terminated, he or she will be allowed to stay in Hong Kong for the remainder of his or her six-monthly period of stay, or for two weeks after the termination of the contract, whichever is the shorter. In special circumstances, a foreign domestic helper will be allowed to stay in Hong Kong for longer than two weeks after the termination of his or her contract, or will be allowed to change his or her employer.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review the lawfulness of the new condition of stay imposed upon all new foreign domestic helpers arriving in Hong Kong since 21 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The conditions of stay are determined by the Hong Kong director of immigration under regulations made under the Hong Kong immigration ordinance. Any review of their lawfulness would therefore be a matter for the Hong Kong courts. The conditions of stay have recently been challenged in the Hong Kong High Court and Court of Appeal. Both courts upheld the Hong Kong Government's right to impose the revised conditions.

Hungary

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the state of political and diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Hungary.

Mr. Mellor: Relations with Hungary are increasingly varied and productive. My right hon. and learned Friend had useful discussions during a visit to Budapest in March, as I did during my visit in September. We hope to receive the Hungarian Prime Minister in London in the first half of 1988. Lively contacts and exchanges at all levels form an important part of our relationship.

Peter Hall and Monica Chambers

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what action has he taken concerning the case of Peter Hall and Monica Chambers, imprisoned in Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has concerning the date of a hearing or trial in the case of Peter Hall and Monica Chambers, imprisoned in Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has made to the Saudi Arabian ambassador concerning the case of Peter Hall and Monica Chambers, imprisoned in Saudi Arabia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Saudi Arabian authorities have indicated that the trial is scheduled to commence on 21 or 22 December 1987. Her Majesty's embassy at Riyadh has maintained regular contact with Mr. Hall throughout his period of detention and has closely monitored the progress of the case with the Saudi Arabian authorities.

Mrs. Hall, neé Monica Chambers, is, however, an Irish citizen; we, therefore, have no official standing to intervene on her behalf. Her case is being handled by the Irish embassy at Riyadh which is in close touch with our officials.

We have not made any representations to the Saudi Arabian ambassador about Mr. Hall's case.

Intermediate Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, under the terms of an intermediate nuclear forces treaty, the United Kingdom will have the right of veto over the inspection of United Kingdom territory by Soviet inspectors.

Mr. Mellor: The details of the INF verification regime are still being discussed. We have been fully consulted at every stage by the United States on their proposals. Any provision in the verification regime relating to access by inspectors to the territory of the United Kingdom will have been agreed in advance by us. We expect to conclude an agreement with the United States setting out in detail the arrangements for inspections in this country. We also expect to conclude an agreement with the Soviet Union which will safeguard British sovereignty and security.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his statement, *Official Report*, 22 October, column 949, that NATO wishes to ensure that an intermediate nuclear forces agreement could not be circumvented by missiles of slightly shorter range, what is NATO's policy towards preventing circumvention of the agreement by the deployment of new or additional missiles of similar range but different type, namely sea or air launched.

Mr. Mellor: There is no question of NATO circumventing an INF agreement. The INF treaty in prospect only concerns land-based intermediate range missiles. We and our NATO allies believe that nuclear weapons will be necessary for our security for the foreseeable future. Only the minimum number of weapons will be maintained. NATO defence Ministers recently reaffirmed our commitment to continue to implement those measures required to maintain the effectiveness and credibility of the Alliance's nuclear deterrent.

UNESCO

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet the new director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation to discuss the possibility of Her Majesty's Government rejoining the organisation.

Mr. Eggar: We congratulate Professor Mayor on his appointment. We have no present plans to meet him, but would be happy to do so if he should suggest coming to London at an appropriate time to discuss UNESCO questions.

Bulgarian Foreign Minister (Visit)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the recent visit to United Kingdom by the Bulgarian Foreign Minister, Mr. Peter Mladenov.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Mladenov visited the United Kingdom on 16-17 September. We had useful discussions on bilateral matters and international questions. Mr. Mladenov signed two agreements, on bonded debt and on the avoidance of double taxation. We look forward to further progress in relations with Bulgaria to the benefit of both sides.

SCOTLAND

School Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the submissions he has received concerning his proposals for school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked for copies of responses to the consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents" which were not marked as confidential to be available for public inspection on the open file in St. Andrew's House library. Photocopies of these responses can be obtained at cost by application to the Scottish Office librarian. In addition, to meet the hon. Gentleman's request, I will arrange for the open file to be transferred to the House Library on 3 December.

Rating Reform

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify the documents and sources which poll tax registration officers will use in compiling the basic register and any secondary registers; what steps will be taken to ensure that the full safeguards ensued in the Data Protection Act apply to such personal information on both registers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Sections 17 and 18 of the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 set out the arrangements for the provision of information to community charges registration officers. The main sources of information will be a "responsible person" who will respond to canvass inquiries in respect of each address, and individuals who are required to notify the registration officer when their registration details change. The registration officer will also have access to relevant records held by the electoral registration officer, other community charges registration officers, and local authorities and other housing bodies (new town development corporations and the Scottish Special Housing Association) in his registration area. Draft regulations on registration matters were recently issued by the Scottish Office for comment by interested bodies.

The 1987 Act makes no change in the provisions of the Data Protection Act, and in addition, under section 20(1) of the 1987 Act, each person registered in the register has the right to inspect the whole of each entry in the register relating to him.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the number of adults in Scotland who will be liable to pay the community charge in 1987-88 and whose names should be registered in the community charge register for that year.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has made no estimate of the number of people who would be liable to pay the personal community charge in 1987-88, were the new system already in place, or of the number of people who will be liable to pay the charge in 1989-90. It is estimated that in Scotland there are some 3·9 million people aged 18 and over.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has advised community charge registration officers to run cross-checks with other lists such as the electoral register when they are compiling their community charge registers in order to obtain greater accuracy in the compilation of such registers.

Mr. Lang: No. The responsibility for preparing and maintaining the community charge register rests with the community charges registration officer.

Housing Associations

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by name, the housing associations which are registered in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I suggest that the hon. Member approaches the Housing Corporation in Scotland for this information.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of tenants living in Scottish Special Housing Association rented accommodation within the Glasgow, Central constituency in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held centrally by constituency area.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the public information division within the Forestry Commission.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Principal Information Officer
Senior Information Officer
Information Officers (2)
Principal Photographer
Senior Photographer
Executive Officer
Administrative Officers (2)
Administrative Assistants (2)
Personal Secretary.

"School Management and the Role of Parents"

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has any plans to place in the Library any of the submissions he has received in response to his consultative paper "School Management and the Role of Parents".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have asked for copies of responses to the consultation paper "School Management and the Role of Parents" which were not marked as confidential to be available for public inspection on the open file in St. Andrew's House library. Photocopies of these responses can be obtained at cost by application to the Scottish Office librarian. In addition, to meet my hon. Friend's request, I will arrange for the open file to be transferred to the House Library on 3 December.

Rates

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost to local authorities in Scotland of collecting domestic rates in each of the last five years for which figures are available, expressed in cash terms and as percentages of local authority revenue expenditure in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Centrally held information on costs of rate collection does not distinguish between domestic and non-domestic rates. The precise information requested is therefore not available.

Electoral Register

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the cost of compiling the electoral register in Scotland in each of the last five years for which information is available.

Mr. Rifkind: The information given in the table is the best available. Some authorities do not distinguish between expenditure on registration of electors and expenditure on lands valuation, both being services provided by the regional or islands assessor.

Year	*£000*
1983-84[1]	2,348
1984-85[1]	3,489
1985-86[2]	3,432
1986-87[3]	4,254
1987-88[4]	4,898

[1] Final Outturn.
[2] Near Final Outturn.
[3] Provisional Outturn.
[4] Budget Estimates.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of adults in Scotland whose names appear on the electoral register for the latest year in which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to table 2 in the "Office of Population Censuses and Surveys Monitor EL 87/1" issued on 22 April 1987, a copy of which is in the Library.

Expenditure

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the annual expenditure, expressed per head of population, in each of the cities of Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh for each of the last 10 years from *(a)* the European regional development fund, *(b)* the European social fund, *(c)* the Scottish Development Agency, *(d)* the urban programme and *(e)* rate support grant.

Mr. Lang: Figures for expenditure under the European social fund and the urban programme are not readily available in the form requested; figures in respect of the others are:

(1) *European Regional Development Fund*

£ per head of population

	Dundee	*Aberdeen*	*Glasgow*	*Edinburgh*
1976	2·03	2·46	0·39	0·95
1977	0·74	—	0·01	0·12
1978	—	—	—	1·16
1979	0·56	5·43	5·67	0·51
1980	3·13	14·70	4·23	—
1981	14·29	12·85	8·28	3·21
1982	6·64	—	4·58	—

	Dundee	*Aberdeen*	*Glasgow*	*Edinburgh*
1983	7·72	—	22·02	—
1984	23·38	—	11·64	—
1985	7·07	—	22·91	0·03
1986	30·56	—	33·97	—

Notes:

(i) Figures are in respect of ERDF commitment for infrastructure projects.

(ii) ERDF is allocated by the European Commission mainly to assisted areas. Exceptionally, a project located outwith an assisted area may receive assistance if it can be demonstrated that it is an essential complement to the infrastructure of an adjacent assisted area.

(2) Rate Support Grant
(£ per head of population)

	Dundee	*Aberdeen*	*Glasgow*	*Edinburgh*
1977-78	18·72	18·03	18·79	12·73
1978-79	23·75	15·21	33·84	14·98
1979-80	25·26	18·57	42·79	16·69
1980-81	26·37	23·60	53·17	23·41
1981-82	24·87	25·21	49·34	25·75
1982-83	28·98	23·09	57·22	23·71
1983-84	32·11	25·29	59·36	25·80
1984-85	31·03	25·71	54·77	15·01
1985-86	36·61	16·37	58·17	21·76
1986-87	28·43	12·71	52·92	16·90

Note:

Rate support grant is paid to both regional and district councils with the larger part going to the regions. The above figures only include the grant to the district councils since the grant to regional councils cannot be apportioned to their constituent districts.

(3) Scottish Development Agency

(£ per head of population)

	Dundee	*Aberdeen*	*Glasgow*	*Edinburgh*
1981-82	21·1	1·6	26·5	7·0
1982-83	29·2	1·0	23·9	6·4
1983-84	34·5	2·7	30·6	10·4
1984-85	23·2	14·9	34·6	9·7
1985-86	31·9	35·4	34·3	9·9
1986-87	30·0	15·1	43·3	5·8

Note:

No information on SDA expenditure is available before 1981-82.

Homicide

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons in Scotland have been convicted of homicide in the period since 1965 who had previously been convicted and sentenced for homicide; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since 1965, four people with a previous murder conviction have been convicted of murder. Comparable information about homicides other than murder is not readily available and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Medical Staff (Report)

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he will be taking to implement the recommendations of the report "Hospital Medical Staff: Achieving a Balance—Plan for Action"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I shall be looking closely at what action should be taken in Scotland on the report. Although the basic principles apply with equal force north and south of the border, detailed arrangements to put them into practice in Scotland will need to be separately determined in consultation with professional and health board interests.

I have therefore decided to set up a working group, chaired by Dr. Graham Scott, the deputy chief medical officer of the Scottish Home and Health Department, which will include representatives of health boards, the Scottish Joint Consultants Committee, Scottish universities medical schools, the Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical Education and the Department. The group will consider what action needs to be taken in Scotland. The aim will be to help bring hospital medical career and training grades into balance, and ensure quality of service to patients.

GEAR Project

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total expenditure by the Scottish Development Agency in the former GEAR area of Glasgow since the formal ending of the GEAR project to date.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The agency intends to spend some £13 million over the three years from March 1987 when phase I of the GEAR project is concluded. During the current financial year the agency has spent £1·8 million in the GEAR area.

Cowlains Industrial Estate

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the success in attracting new companies to the Cowlains industrial estate.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: All seven blocks of factory units are occupied and the Scottish Development Agency is undertaking a feasibility study with a view to providing small units to meet market demand.

Council House Sales

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, by constituency, the number of public sector houses sold and repossessed in each of the years since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: Information on public sector house sales is not collected centrally by parliamentary constituency. The available figures for the years 1980 to 1986 are set out in the table. Statistics on repossessions of houses are not collected centrally.

Sales of Public Sector houses by Authority—Scotland 1980-86

Area	*Year*						
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Scotland	6,482	11,170	15,106	18,315	17,239	15,630	14,152
Local authorities	2,936	7,336	11,811	13,006	12,832	11,594	10,426
Borders	28	219	274	358	468	330	211
Berwickshire	27	45	44	65	93	52	75
Ettrick and Lauderdale	1	68	80	140	193	144	100
Roxburgh	0	74	101	97	142	107	21
Tweedale	0	32	49	56	40	27	15
Central	173	275	655	1,095	1,159	826	685
Clackmannan	83	79	109	169	121	102	95
Falkirk	35	170	490	748	698	511	346
Stirling	55	26	56	178	340	313	244
Dumfries and Galloway	58	718	513	463	381	420	452
Annandale and Eskdale	0	164	171	103	96	102	99
Nithsdale	0	234	180	170	143	163	215
Stewartry	58	130	81	49	46	54	59
Wigtown	0	190	81	141	96	101	79
Fife	614	804	1,377	1,801	1,727	1,247	1,026
Dunfermline	0	414	612	834	707	385	330
Kirkcaldy	508	138	463	583	748	638	489
North East Fife	106	252	302	384	272	224	207
Grampian	166	784	1,126	1,738	1,733	1,509	1,103
Aberdeen	44	114	492	769	698	602	328
Banff and Buchan	34	210	167	322	399	357	301
Gordon	0	55	237	274	276	150	144
Kincardine and Deeside	0	184	73	90	71	96	61
Moray	88	221	157	283	289	304	269
Highland	37	662	565	518	367	408	389
Badenoch and Strathspey	5	68	29	28	21	16	44
Caithness	5	158	113	105	48	83	59
Inverness	0	119	232	176	103	137	97
Lochaber	1	36	54	47	52	52	65
Nairn	0	44	27	31	35	29	16
Ross and Cromarty	0	156	70	86	77	60	78
Skye and Lochalsh	1	38	6	10	18	14	25
Sutherland	25	43	34	35	13	17	5
Lothian	543	1,093	1,772	1,753	2,854	1,614	1,362
East Lothian	0	57	387	341	436	279	248
Edinburgh	347	904	801	733	1,727	850	715
Midlothian	2	16	411	421	437	243	177
West Lothian	194	116	173	258	254	242	222
Strathclyde	1,017	2,013	4,235	4,021	3,008	4,150	4,233
Argyl and Bute	0	69	105	126	141	142	130
Bearsden and Milngavie	32	79	23	53	49	25	35
Clydebank	0	0	86	91	83	72	138
Clydesdale	6	30	22	40	50	88	55
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	21	26	23	36	38	49	73
Cumnock and Doon Valley	0	111	38	67	69	52	98
Cunninghame	369	122	140	172	217	191	324
Dumbarton	0	0	124	62	113	76	121
East Kilbride	0	52	31	22	23	33	28
Eastwood	71	71	22	42	26	35	48
Glasgow	143	336	1,836	1,556	735	1,427	1,039
Hamilton	14	57	192	237	127	169	249
Inverclyde	63	94	99	182	104	316	225
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	0	124	76	169	191	199	231
Kyle and Carrick	232	125	148	258	310	355	400
Monklands	16	67	122	101	71	122	190
Motherwell	0	109	254	172	188	213	290
Renfrew	50	288	721	476	385	411	416
Strathkelvin	0	253	173	159	88	175	143
Tayside	299	474	1,144	1,083	1,053	992	868
Angus	38	115	388	305	378	324	259
Dundee	52	78	263	222	323	411	366
Perth and Kinross	209	281	493	556	352	257	243
Orkney Islands	0	113	21	20	7	22	22

Area	*Year* *1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Shetland Islands	0	46	65	70	26	28	28
Western Isles	1	135	64	86	49	48	47
Newtowns	2,129	1,845	1,362	2.390	1,963	1,573	1,653
Cumbernauld	598	565	203	419	448	311	388
East Kilbride	1,003	832	501	874	614	575	467
Glenrothes	352	279	379	635	508	378	349
Irvine	19	21	55	93	98	84	165
Livingston	157	148	224	369	295	225	284
SSHA	1,417	1,989	1,933	2,919	2,444	2,463	2,073

Answers to Written Questions

Monday 16 November 1987

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates (Teesside)

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Attorney-General what are the criteria which the Lord Chancellor uses in deciding whether to appoint stipendiary magistrates; whether the Teesside bench of magistrates meets such criteria; and if the Lord Chancellor will consider appointing stipendiary magistrates for Teesside.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor is at present examining the criteria which would lead to consideration of the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate for a petty sessional division or commission area. The policy has been for the Lord Chancellor to act on a request for the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate from the justices themselves. No such request has been received from the Teesside justices.

The Lord Chancellor is always ready to consider the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate in any commission area where the need is established.

Mr. Delvin: To ask the Attorney-General what is the size of the lay bench of magistrates at Teesside; and what is the average size of lay benches in England.

The Attorney-General: There are 265 lay justices of the peace assigned to the Teesside petty sessional division. As at 1 January 1987, there were 27,650 active justices in England and Wales and 583 benches, giving an average size of 47·7.

ENERGY

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list by grade the number of personnel currently employed in the information division within his Department;

(2) if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the directorate concerned with marketing, publicity and promotion within the Energy Efficiency Office.

Mr. Parkinson: The number of personnel currently employed in the Department of Energy's information division is shown in column 1; those concerned wholly with marketing, publicity and promotion for the Energy Efficiency Office are shown in column 2. Other staff in the division also contribute to the work as part of their duties.

	Column 1	*Column 2*
Grade 5	1	—
Grade 6	1	—
Grade 7	3	1
Senior Information Officer	12	2
Information Officer	4	1
Assistant Information Officer	6	—
Senior Executive Officer	1	—
Higher Executive Officer	1	—
Executive Officer	2	2
Administration Officer	5	—
Administration Assistant	2	—
Personal Secretary	1	—
Agency Staff	3	1
	42	7

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the cost of maintaining the information division within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: The information is as follows:

Year	*£*
1979	467,000
1980	580,000
1981	606,000
1982	565,000
1983	616,000
1984	614,000
1985	686,000
1986	758,000

Energy Efficiency Office

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the cost of maintaining the directorate concerned with marketing, publicity and promotion within the Energy Effciency Office in 1986.

Mr. Parkinson: The marketing directorate of the Energy Efficiency Office is part of my Department's information division. The cost of maintaining those employees concerned wholly with energy efficiency in 1986 was £158,000. Other personnel in the information division also contribute to this work as part of their duties.

Oil Exploration Licences

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what response he has had to his invitation to apply for onshore exploration licences in the second round which he announced on 21 July.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The second onshore round closed on 28 October and I am pleased to report that 78 applications were received from a total of 79 companies either as individual applicants or members of a group of applicants. This response underlines the continuing interest in onshore exploration in Great Britain. The results of the round, which I hope to announce early next year, should help to maintain the momentum generated by the first round.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will list the projects supported since !985 by the Offshore Supplies Office which are North sea oil-related and with no impact on the other non-North sea oil-related industries.

(2) if he will list the projects supported since 1985 by the Offshore Supplies Office which are not mainly North sea oil-related.

Mr. Peter Morrison: All research and development projects funded by the Offshore Supplies Office are principally aimed at the offshore oil and gas markets either on the UKCS or elsewhere. Provided this criterion is met, the subsequent exploitation of the developed product is a matter for the companies concerned.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Parkinson: None.

Electricity Industry

Mrs. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will take steps to ensure that whatever the timing of the privatisation of the electricity industry there will be no delays on the investment programme on existing and future expenditure.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government are determined to ensure that privatisation does not delay any necessary investment.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Peter Shipley

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister under what terms and conditions Mr. Peter Shipley was employed in the policy advisory unit attached to her office, whether his appointment was subject to the same approval procedures as apply to Civil Service appointments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Mr. Peter Shipley was employed as a special adviser in the policy unit in my Office between September 1982 and September 1984 on the standard terms applied to special advisers. The approval of the Civil Service Commission to such appointments is not required.

Civil Servants

Mr. Key: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the numbers of *(a)* industrial and *(b)* non-industrial civil servants employed in each year since 1979.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

	Thousands as at 1 April each year		
Year	*Non-Industrial*	*Industrial*	*Total*
1979	566	166	732
1980	547	157	705
1981	540	150	690
1982	528	138	666
1983	519	130	649
1984	504	120	624
1985	498	101	599
1986	498	96	594
1987	507	90	598

I refer my hon. Friend to the historical series published on page 33 of "Civil Service Statistics 1987", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library, for the basis on which the figures are collected.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

North-South Interdependence

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have any plans to make a financial contribution to the European public campaign on North-South interdependence and solidarity, organised by the Council of Europe.

Mr. Chris Patten: As an indication of our support for the aims of this worthwhile campaign, I am making a contribution of £40,000 available to the British national organising committee plus a £30,000 contribution to the European organising committee. These funds are in addition to our long-standing agreement to meet the costs incurred by the United Kingdom reprsentative to the European organising committee and bureau.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Iraqi Nationals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Iraqi nationals he has allowed to remain in the United Kingdom on the grounds that they faced execution if deported to Iraq; and how many Iraqi nationals he has deported to Iraq in each of the last five years.

Mr. Renton: The grounds on which a person might claim asylum are varied and it is not possible to identify the number of occasions on which a claim of threatened execution was a principal factor in the decision to allow an individual to remain in the United Kingdom. Information on the outcome of all applications for asylum from Iraqi nationals decided in each year from 1979 to 1986 is given in tables 2 to 4 of the Home Office statistical bulletin "Refugee Statistics, United Kingdom, 1986" (Issue No. 13/87).

The numbers of Iraqi nationals deported in each of the last five years were:

	Numbers
1982	5
1983	2
1984	2
1985	2
1986	1

Those deported had not necessarily applied for asylum. Information is not available on the country of destination of persons deported but it is normally the country of which the person is a national.

Immigration

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make a decision about the immigration case involving Mr. M. B., Home Office reference B431103.

Mr. Renton: A decision on Mr. B's application to remain here with his wife was made on 27 October. He was given leave to remain until 7 October 1988.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the current delays in interviewing people at the various immigration offices.

Mr. Renton: The available information is given in the table and shows the approximate period of time which has elapsed between the receipt of the file at the immigration office and the interviews currently taking place:

Port Office	*Entry Clearance Interviews*	*Other Interviews*
Aberdeen Airport	2 weeks	2 weeks
Avonmouth	2 months	—
Birmingham Airport	6 weeks	6 weeks
Cardiff	1 week	2 weeks
East Midlands Airport	6 weeks	6 months
Edinburgh	—	3 months
Felixstowe	2 months	2 months
Folkestone	6 weeks	6 weeks
Gatwick Airport	2 months	1 month
Glasgow	2 months	2 months
Gravesend	2 months	2 months
Hartlepool	2 months	2 months
Heathrow (Harmondsworth)		
Interview Unit	1 month	1 month
Intelligence Unit	—	6 months
Hull	2 months	2 months
Leeds/Bradford Airport	2 months	3-4 months
Liverpool	4 months	4 months
London (Isis House)	6 weeks	6 weeks
Luton	2 months	2 months
Manchester	3-4 months	3-4 months
Middlesbrough	2 months	2 months
Newcastle Airport	2 months	2 months
North Shields	2 months	2 months
Norwich	6 weeks	6 weeks
Plymouth	1 month	1 month
Sheerness	5 weeks	—
Southampton	—	2 months
Stanstead Airport	3 months	3 months

Files have not been sent to immigration offices during the peak summer months other than for urgent interviews. Additional staff resources have now been deployed at the ports to deal with the backlog of cases. Variations in waiting times reflect the concentrations of applications in particular areas.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes there are outside the Greater London area.

Mr. John Patten: The latest available information suggests that there are now just over 35,000 such schemes.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Hurd: This information is not readily available and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Misuse of Drugs Act

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given classifying the drugs temgesic and temazepam under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Temgesic (buprenorphine) is not a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, but we are ready to reconsider this in the light of any recommendation from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, which currently has this drug under review. Tamazepam, together with other benzodiazepine drugs, was brought within the controls of the Misuse of Drugs Act in 1986 following consultation with the advisory council.

Firearms

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy with regard to the imposition of a limit as to the number of part I firearms that can be held by an individual.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There is at present no limit on the number of 'section 1' firearms that can be held by an individual certificate holder. However, the local chief officer of police must be satisfied that the certificate holder has a good reason for possessing each weapon that he wishes to acquire, and that the security arrangements are adequate for the number of weapons held. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary announced during the debate on firearms in the House on 26 October at columns 28-69, we are considering a number of issues relating to firearms controls in addition to the measures already announced, and we hope to make known our comprehensive proposals by the end of November.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the past year officers of police have asked to see the firearms register of a gun dealer in the metropolitan district in accordance with section 40(4) of the Firearms Act 1968.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The register of a gun dealer will be examined at least annually when the dealers application for renewal of registration is under consideration.

Mr. Patrick Mackay

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date Patrick Mackay was released from Wormwood Scrubs; whether he participated in a pre-release scheme involving his being housed in a hostel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Information about inmates or ex-inmates is not normally given without the consent of the prisoner concerned.

Laboratory Animals

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has completed his consideration of the report "The Use of Non-Human Primates as Laboratory Animals in Great Britain"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have completed my consideration of this helpful document. In doing so I have been much helped by the Animal Procedures Committee which has, at my request, made a detailed examination of the report and the proposals in it.

I entirely share the concern for non-human primates which underlies the report. There is a difficult balance to strike between the need to use these animals in some medical and scientific research, and the special care that is needed in looking after them and their increasing scarcity. This joint initiative by the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, the Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation and the British Veterinary Association has provided a most helpful opportunity to consider in detail the way in which the new controls under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 may be used to strike this balance correctly. I am pleased to say that I am able to accept many of the recommendations made in the report. The following is a summary of the resultant action which has been taken or is now in hand.

(i) The Home Office is to explore the possibility of encouraging certain establishments where non-human primates are used for scientific or experimental purposes to set up a special course or courses for the benefit of licensees and others who work with non-human primates used for experimentation.

(ii) A detailed breakdown of the use of non-human primates, using a classification scheme suggested in the report will be included in the annual published statistics of procedures carried out under the 1986 Act.

(iii) In examining project licence applications which propose the use of endangered non-human primate species, a high level of proof that the use of such species is necessary will be required for the application to be successful.

(iv) Establishments will be encouraged, wherever practicable, to use non-human primates which have been bred in captivity, as opposed to wild-caught animals.

(v) Establishments will be encouraged to ensure that the lowest possible order of species is used.

(vi) The Animal Procedures Committee will be notified of all projects where the use of non-human hominidae (the gibbon, siamang, the orang-utan, the chimpanzee and the gorilla) is proposed. The committee will have the opportunity, if it wishes, to examine any such application and to advice me of its views on the application.

(vii) When the controls of the 1986 Act are extended to cover establishments which breed or supply non-human primates, such establishments will be required to keep lifetime records for all non-human primates bred at breeding establishments, and for all wild-caught non-human primates lifetime records from the date of importation will be required. Similar records are already required at establishments where non-human primates are used for scientific or experimental purposes authorised under the 1986 Act.

(viii) Particularly close scrutiny will be given to all project licence applications which include proposals to keep primates in isolation.

(ix) The Animal Procedures Committee will be notified of all applications for work involving non-human primates which includes any procedure in the substantial severity category. The committee will have the opportunity to examine any such application and to advise me of its views on the application.

The particular importance of safeguarding non-human primates is recognised in the 1986 Act, section 5(6) of which specifies that a project licence authorising the use of non-human primates (or cats, dogs or equidae) may not be granted unless it is established that animals of no other species are suitable for the purposes of the programme to be specified in the licence or that it is not practicable to obtain animals of any other species that are suitable for those purposes. In addition, we shall do everything possible to ensure that the use of non-human primates is restricted to establishments which provide facilities of a very high standard for their husbandry and welfare.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Repairs)

29. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the implications for the work of the House of the current repairs to the exterior of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: Currently there are no repairs to the exterior of the Palace of Westminster being carried out. However, a survey of the Central Lobby Tower is in hand prior to restoration and cleaning. This work will not start until next summer.

Data Storage

31. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he has any plans to provide secure, fireproof data storage points for the use of right hon. and hon. Members at any place or places within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: No, Sir. But I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern about this matter and am sure the Services Committee would be prepared to consider any points he has to make.

Select Committees

34. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal what representations he has received about the establishment of departmental Select Committees.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received representations from a number of right hon. and hon. Members, both on and off the Floor of the House.

Photography

35. **Mr. Stanbrook:** To ask the Lord Privy Seal why hon. Members need the consent of the Central Office of Information before they reproduce the photograph of the House in session.

Mr. Wakeham: Photographs of the House in session are subject to crown copyright. Authority to reproduce resides with HMSO, and has been delegated to the Central Office of Information. As my hon. Friend will no doubt realise, crown copyright exists, unless restrictions have been agreed in the contract with the person commissioned to do the work, in all original work prepared or published by, or under the direction and control of, a Government Department. My hon. Friend has raised a very interesting point and I will ask the Services Committee to look at this matter.

Charities (Payroll Deductions)

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Lord Privy Seal what representations he has received regarding facilities for hon. and right hon. Members to participate in the payroll deduction scheme giving money to charities.

Mr. Wakeham: My predecessor and I have received letters from three hon. Members asking when the payroll deduction scheme will be available for Members and their staff. Additionally, two written parliamentary questions have been answered on this subject on 4 March 1987 at column *630* and on 20 July 1987 at column *10*. The Fees Office is at present negotiating with an agency, approved by the Inland Revenue, to set up a formal scheme for Members and their staff. Detailed arrangements will be circulated shortly.

Members' Assistants

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Lord Privy Seal how many secretarial and research assistants in the Palace of Westminster are citizens of the United States of America.

Mr. Wakeham: One hundred and three.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will give a breakdown, by party affiliation of employer, of the number, of the full or temporary *(a)* secretarial pass-holders and *(b)* research assistant pass-holders in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Wakeham: The numbers of Members' staffs broken down by party affiliation is as follows:

Party	*Number of Members*	*Number of staff employed*
Conservative	307	641
Labour	173	417
Liberal	17	63
Social Democrat	5	20
Plaid Cymru	2	4
Scottish Nationalist	1	1
Ulster Unionist	3	3
Democratic Unionist	2	2

I regret it has not been possible to subdivide these figures into secretarial and research assistant passholders without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will give a breakdown of pass-holders in the Palace of Westminster who are citizens of *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* of other foreign countries, broken down by party affiliation of employer where appropriate.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest available figures show that 126 Palace of Westminster photo-identity passholders are American nationals and 319 are from other foreign countries. These figures could only be subdivided by party affiliation of employer at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will commission a study on the reasons why children in Northern Ireland secure, on average, more high grade passes in O and A-level examinations compared with children in the rest of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The examination performance of Northern Ireland children relative to the rest of the United Kingdom has already been the subject of academic study, which has served mainly to emphasise the complexity of the factors involved, which in turn makes the drawing of firm conclusions difficult. I do not, therefore, consider that any useful purpose would be served by commissioning further study.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money from public funds has been spent providing hospitality for Ministers and officials attending meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference or of its secretariat since 15 November 1985; and if he will publish this information broken down by month.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: Information is not available in the form requested and would be disproportionately expensive to obtain, but I can tell the hon. Gentleman that total costs so far assessed in this financial year in respect of conference meetings and associated meetings between officials is £1,275.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures have been agreed, pursuant to paragraph 6 of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 17 June 1986, to ascertain the number of Irish speakers in Northern Ireland; what financial support has been agreed for Irish language-related cultural activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: A number of questions on the use of and interest in Irish and other languages have been included in the Government's continuous household survey of social trends in Northern Ireland. Support for Irish language-related cultural activities is being provided through the Department of Education, through the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, and through public funding of research into Irish place names. I recognise and respect the special importance of the Irish language to a number of people in Northern Ireland. I am ready to consider further support where an appropriate level of demand for the use of the Irish language can be established.

School Leavers

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what qualifications for school leavers are recognised by his Department other than O-levels; what proportion of pupils leaving school qualify in these examinations; what are the proportions for O-level; and if he will publish statistics for school-leavers with a breakdown of the qualifications they gain.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: For the purposes of the annual statistical survey of school leavers in Northern Ireland, the qualifications, other than GCE O-levels, recorded by my Department are GCE A-level, CSE, and other qualifications such as City and Guilds certificates, RSA certificates, Pitman's certificates, BTEC certificate and diplomas, and certificates of pre-vocational education.

Based on the latest information available (1985-86) the proportion of school leavers with "other" qualifications, irrespective of whether they obtained GCE A-level or O-level or CSE qualification, is 17·6 per cent.

A breakdown of the highest qualifications obtained by school leavers in 1985-86 is as follows:

	Number	*Proportion (Percentage)*
3 or more 'A' levels	3,529	13·2
2 'A' levels	1,763	6·6
1 'A' level	1,014	3·8
5 or more higher grade 'O' levels[1]	3,297	12·3
1-4 higher grade 'O' levels[1]	5,865	21·9
Other GCE/CSE grades[2]	5,498	20·4
Other qualifications	628	2·3
No qualification	5,237	19·5
Total	26,831	100·0

[1] Grades A-C only and Grade 1 CSE.

[2] Includes CSE (grades 2-5) and GCE 'O' level (grades D-E).

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available to right hon. and hon. Members copies of the code of conduct for the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 27 October at column *227*.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will detail the nature and extent of research into multiple sclerosis.

Mr. Jackson: The Medical Research Council is the main Government agency for the direct support of biomedical research. The council is supporting a number of research projects on multiple sclerosis, including both basic work on the nature of the disease and clinical studies of its treatment. In the financial year 1986-87, the council spent £404,000 on research into multiple sclerosis. The council is always willing to consider soundly based research grant applications in competition with other applicants.

Research into multiple sclerosis is also carried out in universities and medical schools using funds for teaching and research allocated on advice from the University Grants Committee. In addition the medical charities are funding relevant research. The Government are not in a position to influence directly the scale and nature of these research activities.

AIDS

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what special provisions are being made to allow for adequate schooling for people with haemophilia and HIV.

Mr. Dunn: It is for individual local education authorities to ensure that appropriate educational provision is available for all pupils in their areas. The Government have made it clear that, since there is no evidence that HIV infection can be passed on through everyday social contact in a school setting, pupils who are known to be HIV antibody positive should be free to attend school in the normal way.

Education Reform

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps are being taken to ensure that the reconstituted National Council for Vocational Qualifications consults the Secondary Education Council and other bodies to bring vocationally-oriented A and AS levels within the eventual new framework.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Council For Vocational Qualifications has not yet considered in detail the linkages and progression between its qualifications framework and A and AS levels, but the principle of such an association was clearly defined in Cmnd 9823 "Working Together—Education and Training". In recognition of the importance of such defined linkages, the Secondary Examinations Council has full observer status on the NCVQ, has a close day-to-day working relationship with the national council and its subgroups, and there are regular meetings between the chairmen of the two bodies. We expect such co-operation to continue when the SEC is replaced by the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he has taken to ensure that opportunities within the proposed national curriculum will not only continue to exist for, but will expand, the potential for development education issues to be taught in schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Topics such as development education may be taught through the relevant foundation subjects of the national curriculum where appropriate, or among the non-foundation subjects. The working groups drawing up attainment targets and programmes of study for foundation subjects are being reminded of the need to take account of related cross-curricular themes. It will be for schools to decide what to teach in the space available for non-foundation studies.

Merseyside (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's visit to Merseyside.

Mr. Dunn: Whilst in Merseyside on Thursday 12 November 1987, I visited Childwall CE primary and the King David high school.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Broughton Hall High School

Mr. Terry Fields: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when his Department intends to reply to correspondence dated 1 September about Broughton Hall high school.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is still pursuing inquiries with the Liverpool local education authority. He will reply shortly.

O and A-Level Pass Rates

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each local education authority in England and Wales pupil to teacher ratios, per capita costs and O and A-level pass rates.

Mr. Dunn *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The information requested for England is given in the table. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

		[2]Net Institutional Expenditure Per Pupil			*[3]16 and 18 Plus Examinations*	
	[1]Overall PTR	*Nursery Schools (£)*	*Primary Schools £*	*Secondary Schools (£)*	*One or more Higher Grade at 'O' Level/CSE*	*One or more A Level Passes*
Barking	17·1	—	915	1,260	35·4	6·7
Barnet	15·7	1,320	930	1,330	67·3	30·0
Bexley	18·4	1,015	815	1,195	56·3	16·2
Brent	13·8	2,145	1,025	1,590	49·0	12·7
Bromley	18·1	—	855	1,255	57·4	20·3
Croydon	17·1	1,165	865	1,355	54·6	14·7
Ealing	16·2	1,580	1,050	1,460	51·6	12·9
Enfield	17·4	—	775	1,245	53·6	17·6
Haringey	13·5	910	1,160	1,710	43·3	10·9
Harrow	16·6	—	875	1,340	68·8	26·9
Havering	17·3	—	825	1,325	57·8	16·9
Hillingdon	18·6	945	895	1,315	51·9	14·6
Hounslow	16·3	—	955	1,290	52·3	14·6
Kingston upon Thames	16·8	1,270	825	1,325	62·8	22·3
Merton	17·3	[4]na	[4]na	[4]na	52·7	15·8
Newham	15·1	[4]na	[4]na	[4]na	37·2	7·3
Redbridge	17·9	—	835	1,290	53·7	18·1
Richmond upon Thames	17·1	1,215	900	1,200	55·0	—
Sutton	19·0	1,235	750	1,135	58·4	22·7
Waltham Forest	15·0	1,590	980	1,540	41·5	9·5
Inner London	13·5	2,505	1,315	2,085	43·2	10·9
Birmingham	17·7	1,225	745	1,175	44·5	10·5
Coventry	16·6	730	850	1,310	49·7	11·8
Dudley	17·6	1,520	735	1,125	48·8	9·2
Sandwell	16·8	875	875	1,230	37·5	6·7
Solihull	18·2	—	755	1,115	57·0	18·9
Walsall	16·4	1,065	830	1,185	48·5	13·1
Wolverhampton	15·9	920	920	1,225	42·7	9·2
Knowsley	16·0	—	845	1,320	37·1	6·6
Liverpool	16·4	1,350	875	1,250	44·2	12·1
St. Helens	17·2	1,385	770	1,150	49·9	13·7
Sefton	18·3	1,120	740	1,125	55·6	20·0
Wirral	18·0	1,535	720	1,125	52·9	15·0
Bolton	18·1	1,090	720	1,115	52·5	15·9
Bury	17·0	1,270	715	1,175	59·7	16·0
Manchester	15·8	1,665	905	1,425	43·1	11·9
Oldham	17·8	—	815	1,095	44·4	8·7
Rochdale	16·4	1,280	795	1,275	51·2	11·5
Salford	16·8	1,350	790	1,200	48·2	12·1
Stockport	18·1	1,215	740	1,115	59·3	16·6
Tameside	17·8	1,500	815	1,160	54·5	10·4
Trafford	18·6	—	735	1,140	60·4	15·7
Wigan	16·3	695	785	1,230	56·0	10·6
Barnsley	17·2	1,330	865	1,165	37·3	7·5
Doncaster	17·5	—	870	1,145	43·7	12·1
Rotherham	17·7	1,040	800	1,070	44·3	12·1
Sheffield	16·6	1,520	980	1,260	49·3	12·6
Bradford	16·9	1,585	850	1,085	41·7	10·7
Calderdale	17·0	1,265	800	1,110	49·0	13·3
Kirklees	18·0	1,020	785	1,055	50·7	14·0
Leeds	16·9	1,085	795	1,060	49·2	14·4
Wakefield	18·6	1,540	875	1,090	40·8	5·7
Gateshead	17·0	1,475	900	1,185	45·0	10·3

		[2]Net Institutional Expenditure Per Pupil			[3]16 and 18 Plus Examinations	
	[1]Overall PTR	Nursery Schools (£)	Primary Schools £	Secondary Schools (£)	One or more Higher Grade at 'O' Level/CSE	One or more A Level Passes
Newcastle Upon Tyne	15·6	1,325	930	1,345	44·6	12·4
North Tyneside	14·7	1,110	900	1,295	49·4	13·0
South Tyneside	15·8	1,245	865	1,255	47·5	10·5
Sunderland	17·8	1,235	775	1,150	48·7	9·1
Avon	18·5	1,170	780	1,160	54·0	14·8
Bedfordshire	17·8	1,195	815	1,140	55·0	15·1
Berkshire	17·8	1,275	790	1,150	55·9	17·6
Buckinghamshire	19·2	1,090	755	1,140	62·3	21·0
Cambridgeshire	19·1	1,300	730	1,040	53·7	13·2
Cheshire	18·3	1,100	760	1,090	55·5	16·1
Cleveland	18·0	1,070	795	1,175	52·3	15·0
Cornwall	18·1	1,000	710	1,045	56·7	14·5
Cumbria	17·2	1,340	775	1,095	54·0	13·8
Derbyshire	17·7	1,225	780	1,125	51·1	11·7
Devon	18·4	940	725	1,095	55·2	10·9
Dorset	18·0		770	1,030	59·8	14·9
Durham	18·6	1,280	825	1,095	48·2	10·9
East Sussex	18·5	1,190	760	1,085	55·6	17·7
Essex	19·3	1,215	730	1,115	55·9	14·6
Gloucestershire	18·6		740	1,095	55·4	16·2
Hampshire	19·0	1,070	730	1,065	57·0	13·1
Hereford and Worcester	18·3		745	1,060	53·8	15·6
Hertfordshire	17·9	1,335	780	1,180	61·0	18·9
Humberside	17·4	1,080	865	1,125	48·4	12·7
Isle of Wight	18·6		730	1,030	51·8	12·8
Kent	19·0	1,400	695	1,015	52·9	17·6
Lancashire	18·5	1,275	720	1,095	54·6	9·8
Leicestershire	17·6	1,430	805	1,205	48·9	16·2
Lincolnshire	18·7	1,070	720	1,025	53·6	14·0
Norfolk	18·3	1,225	760	1,095	49·8	10·9
North Yorkshire	18·0	1,255	775	1,110	59·3	20·3
Northamptonshire	17·2	1,130	740	1,110	51·0	12·7
Northumberland	18·0	1,995	755	1,075	57·2	18·9
Nottinghamshire	17·4	1,400	840	1,220	43·9	11·7
Oxfordshire	17·2	1,060	815	1,190	57·6	17·8
Shropshire	17·4	1,265	765	1,125	57·2	14·5
Somerset	19·0		700	1,040	51·7	8·9
Staffordshire	18·0	1,060	815	1,125	51·5	13·6
Suffolk	18·3	980	770	1,030	50·3	13·1
Surrey	18·1	1,365	730	1,110	62·5	21·7
Warwickshire	18·6	1,145	765	1,085	58·6	16·0
West Sussex	18·9	1,015	705	1,060	61·8	19·3
Wiltshire	19·0		745	1,055	51·6	12·1
ENGLAND	17·6	1,370	815	1,175	52·1	14·0

[1] January 1986. Source: Form 7 Schools Census and Form 618G.

[2] 985-86 Cash Terms: Where institutional expenditure per pupil is not given for nursery schools no such schools are provided by the authority.

[3] Percentages of school leavers averaged over the academic years 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86. Source: School Leavers Survey. Data subject to sampling error. Data exclude 'A' Level passes achieved by candidates in Tertiary and other FE Colleges. Some LEAs, eg Richmond-upon-Thames, concentrate Sixth Form provision in these areas.

[4] Two authorities have not submitted 1985-86 Expenditure returns; they are shown as 'na' (not available).

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: This information is not readily available and could only be supplied at disproportionate cost.

Argentina

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he had with the Football Association regarding inviting Argentina to play in the Rous cup in May 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: None.

Consular Services

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what (1) salary and (2) other expenses are payable to the honorary consuls at *(a)* Nice and *(b)* Perpignan.

Mr. Eggar: The honorary consul in Nice receives an honorarium of £800 per annum. In addition, he is entitled to a refund of expenditure incurred on official business, including postage, telephone calls and travel. He receives allowances of £175 per annum to cover the cost of secretarial assistance, and £190 per annum for entertainment expenses.

The post of honorary consul in Perpignan is currently unoccupied.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what rent is currently paid in respect of *(a)* office costs and *(b)* residential accommodation for his Department's staff based in Marseilles; and what allowance is currently paid to honorary consuls in *(a)* Nice and *(b)* Perpignan to cover office and residential costs.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's Government own the British consulate-general offices in Marseilles, and currently pay £10,200 annually for a maintenance and service charge and for car parking spaces.

The consul-general's residence is owned by Her Majesty's Government. That of Her Majesty's consul is rented at an annual cost of £8,400, including a condominium charge.

The honorary consuls in Nice and Perpignan receive no allowances for office and residential rents.

Hungary

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he intends to seek to visit Hungary.

Mr. Mellor: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) on 21 October, we hope that the Hungarian Foreign Minister will visit Britain next year. My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to visit Hungary again thereafter.

United Nations Conventions

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government intend to ratify the United Nations convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, which was signed on 15 March 1985.

Mr. Eggar: We intend to ratify the United Nations convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment as soon as possible. We need first to introduce legislation, mainly due to the extensive provisions of the convention regarding jurisdiction; we also need to ensure that our law covers that part of the convention's definition of torture as including severe mental suffering. The legislation timetable this session is very full, but we intend to bring in the necessary legislation as soon as we can.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information branch within the Office of Fair Trading;

(2) what was the cost of maintaining the information branch within the Office of Fair Trading in each year since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: I will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the British Overseas Trade Board publicity unit within his Department;

(2) what was the cost of maintaining the British Overseas Trade Board publicity unit within his Department in each year since 1979;

(3) if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the fairs and promotions branch of the British Overseas Trade Board within his Department;

(4) what was the cost of maintaining the fairs and promotions branch within the British Overseas Trade Board in each year since 1979;

(5) he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information division within his Department;

(6) what was the cost of maintaining the information division within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Butcher: The personnel currently employed, listed by grade, are as follows:

	Number
Information Division	
Grade 4	1·0
Grade 6	2·0
Grade 7	6·0
Senior Information Officer	17·0
Senior Executive Officer	1·0
Information Officer	16·0
Higher Executive Officer	4·0
Assistant Information Officer	10·0
Executive Officer	2·0
Senior Photographer	3·0
Photographer	1·0
Senior Personal Secretary	1·0
Personal Secretary	2·0
Administrative Officer	25·5
Administrative Assistant	12·0
Typist	5·0
Senior Paper Keeper	1·0
Paper Keeper	1·0
	110·5

In the information division there are 63 professional and managerial staff. In addition, a further 17·5 are engaged in the inquiry and reception point, and 30 on clerical and other support duties.

	Number
Fairs and promotion branch	
Grade 5	1·0
Grade 6	1·0
Grade 7	4·0
SEO	4·0
SIO	8·0
HEO	10·0
IO	22·0
EO	34·0
AIO	27·0
AO	36·0
AA	15·0
PS	2·0
	164·0

	Number
British overseas trade board publicity unit	
Grade 6	1·0
SIO	2·0
IO	6·0

	Number
AIO	1·0
PS	1·0
AO	4·0
AA	[1]3·5
	18·5

[1] Includes 1 part-time member of staff.

Three other staff are currently employed on period contracts, one on a full-time basis.

The direct running costs of these organisations, excluding accommodation and overheads, have been as follows:

£000s

	1985-86	*1986-87*	[1]*1987-88*
Information Division	1,316	1,493	1,553
Fairs and Promotions Branch	2,396	2,561	2,545
BOTB Publicity Unit	204	262	244

Note—Costs for earlier years are not readily available.

[1] Estimated.

GATT

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made at the Uruguay round of talks concerning the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Butcher: We are nearing the end of the first phase of this important negotiation, which will set the rules for the international trading system into the next century. It is essential to re-establish respect for the multilateral trading system in order to stop the tendency for countries to take unilateral trade action. GATT therefore has a crucial part to play. A large number of issues for negotiation and specific negotiating proposals have been put forward by many participants, including the European Community. These cover such topics as reform of agricultural support, trade in services, better protection for intellectual property, GATT disputes settlement mechanisms, tariffs and the treatment of tropical products. There is a good basis for the phase of substantive negotiation, which begins next year. The Uruguay round is due to be completed in 1990.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Maude: My Department does not provide residential accommodation for either Ministers or officials at public expense.

Petrol Prices

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if in the light of the current level of petrol prices *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* on the world market, he will ask the Director General of Fair Trading to report on anti competitive practices in the petrol market.

Mr. Maude: The Director General of Fair Trading is continuing to monitor certain aspects of the petrol market in the light of reports on the supply of petrol by the Monopolies Commission in 1965 and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1979. I understand that the director general presently sees no justification in developments in the petrol market for taking action under the competition legislation.

FIMBRA

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will cause to be published, after he has received it, the report by the Director General of Fair Trading on FIMBRA's application for recognition as a self-regulating organisation; and whether he will invite comments on it from the financial services industry.

Mr. Maude: Under section 122(8) of the Financial Services Act, it is for the director general to decide whether to publish any report which he makes under that section. However, I understand that in the case of FIMBRA's application, the director general expects to publish his report. In reaching a decision on whether to give leave to the Securities and Investment Board to recognise FIMBRA, my right hon. Friend will take account of any representations made to him.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will request the Director General of Fair Trading to report as to whether the sample of category 1 practitioners in Arthur Young management consultants' survey, commissioned by him of potential FIMBRA members who are sole practitioners, is proportionate numerically to the membership characteristics of the other categories of financial services practitioners contained in their report.

Mr. Maude: It is for the director general to consider what should be covered in the reports which he is obliged to make under section 122 of the Financial Services Act. If my hon. Friend has material which he believes would be helpful to the director general in compiling his report, I should be happy to pass it to the director general.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will invite the Director General of Fair Trading to report on any characteristics of membership category balance in the council of FIMBRA when that body applies for registration as a self-regulating organisation, in so far as any lack of balance is judged to affect competition within the financial services industry.

Mr. Maude: It is for the director general to consider what should be covered in the reports which he is obliged to make under section 122 of the Financial Services Act. Paragraph 5 of Schedule 2 to the Act, will require FIMBRA, before it can be recognised under the Act, to satisfy the Securities and Investments Board that it has arrangements to ensure that its governing body represents a proper balance between the interests of its different members as well as between its interest of those of its members and the interests of the public.

EMPLOYMENT

YTS (Hampshire)

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the working of YTS in Hampshire.

Mr. Cope: At 1 October 1987, there were some 9,600 people in YTS training in Hampshire, the highest figure ever for the programme. Of those young people leaving the scheme between April 1986 and April 1987, nearly 83 per cent. went into employment, further education or training.

It is encouraging that so many firms in Hampshire and throughout the country are now using YTS as their regular method of recruiting and training young employees. The Government hope that more and more companies will recognise the substantial benefits that YTS can offer to them and to the employees.

Tourism (Cornwall)

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to increase employment in the tourist industry in Cornwall.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board and West Country tourist board are currently negotiating the setting up of a tourism development action programme for Cornwall. The aim of this programme will be to boost investment and help realise the full tourism potential of the county.

Between April and October this year, the English tourist board has offered financial assistance under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969 to 18 tourism projects in Cornwall. The total value of assistance offered was over £249,000 to development with a total capital cost of £1·57 million.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of those unemployed had been unemployed for one year or over at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, 42·6 per cent. of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom had been unemployed for one year and over.

Trade Unions (Members' Rights)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a pamphlet giving advice to members of trade unions about the steps which they can take under employment legislation if they consider that rules on ballots and picketing are being broken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department already publishes pamphlets which describe the provisions of employment legislation on ballots and picketing, and the statutory duties and rights owed to members by their unions. These explain, where appropriate, the steps which members can take to enforce these rights and duties.

The Green Paper "Trades Unions and their Members" (Cm 95) suggested that a special effort be made to publicise and draw to the attention of union members trade unions' statutory duties, and to offer guidance and advice on how individuals can seek to remedy breaches of those duties. Any such initiative could be undertaken when the new rights set out in the Employment Bill have been enacted.

National Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the age distribution of dockers covered by the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: At the time of the last annual survey, carried out in July 1987 by the National Dock Labour Board, the age groups of registered dock workers were as follows:—

Age	*Numbers*
Under 25	33
25-29	166
30-34	527
35-39	1,213
40-44	1,987
45-49	2,283
50-54	2,303
55-59	1,517
60-64	305

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the cost of buying out dockers' entitlements under the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: I have made no such estimate.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now covered by the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: There were 9,983 registered dock workers on 10 November 1987.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: This information is not readily available and can only be supplied at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the activity rate among women in Wales compares with the figures nationally and in Scotland and the English regions; and what are the comparable breakdown figures for full and part-time employment.

Mr. Lee: The table gives estimates of the civilian activity rates for women aged 16 and over in Wales, Scotland and each of the regions of England in 1985:

Female civilian activity rate[1] *Mid-1985*

	per cent.
Wales	43·0
Scotland	47·6
Northern	45·4
Yorkshire and Humberside	47·5
East Midlands	49·2
East Anglia	48·1
South East	51·1
South West	47·6
West Midlands	48·8
North West	48·9
Great Britain	48·8

The available estimates of full and part-time employment are not fully comparable with the activity rates given.

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[1] The activity rate is calculated as the percentage of women aged 16 and over who were economically active, that is in employment or seeking work in a reference week.

Estimates of the number of women employees in employment in each region, separately identifying those working part-time, are published in Table 1.5 of *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are available in the Library.

Jobcentres

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total spending on the provision of jobcentres in Scotland, England and Wales for each of the years from 1979 to 1986; and if he will give the estimated expenditure for the years 1987, 1988 and 1990.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* Figures for 1979-80 to 1986-87 are taken from the MSC annual reports. Figures for 1987-88 to 1989-90 are taken from the 1986 public expenditure survey.

MSC net expenditure on jobcentres from 1 April 1979 to 31 March 1987

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Scotland	n/a	12·6	16·4	16·0	15·9	15·7	15·8	15·9
England	n/a	112·6	113·1	123·7	120·6	10·7	109·8	116·8
Wales	n/a	6·4	8·0	7·8	7·2	7·2	7·6	7·9
Great Britain Total	111·8	131·6	137·5	147·5	144·3	129·9	133·2	140·6

Estimated expenditure on jobcentres from 1 April 1987 to 31 March 1990

£ million

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Scotland	17·9	19·9	19·4
England	98·1	103·2	105·5
Wales	9·3	9·5	9·8
Great Britain Total	125·3	132·6	134·7

Unemployment Benefit Offices

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the total spending on the provision of unemployment benefit offices in Scotland, England and Wales for each of the years 1979 to 1986; and if he will give the estimated expenditure for the years 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990.

Mr. Lee: The information is as follows:

Expenditure on Unemployment Benefit Offices 1979-80 to 1986-87

£ million

	Great Britain Total
1979-80	85·1
1980-81	112·3
1981-82	162·7
1982-83	187·5
1983-84	245·1
1984-85	262·0
1985-86	272·1
1986-87	293·0

A breakdown of figures between Scotland, England and Wales is not available.

Estimated expenditure on Unemployment Benefit Office 1987-88 to 1989-90

£ million

	Great Britain Total
1987-88	319·0
1988-89	320·0
1989-90	331·4

TRANSPORT

Oadby and Wigston (Capital Projects)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list with the dates those significant capital projects his Department intends to commence in the next 10 years in the borough of Oadby and Wigston.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are no significant capital trunk road projects programmed to commence in the next 10 years in the borough of Oadby and Wigston.

Harborough (Capital Projects)

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list with the dates those significant capital projects his Department intends to commence in the next 10 years in the district of Harborough.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are three major trunk road improvement schemes currently planned for construction within the next 10 years in the district of Harborough—A6 Market Harborough bypass (April 1989 to March 1991) A6 Great Glen bypass (late 1992) M1-A1 link road (Part) (late summer 1988, subject to completion of statutory procedures).

British Rail (Investment)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much of British Rail's investment in renewing and improving the railway since 1983 has been spent *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in the United States of America.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail does not maintain separate detailed records of investment expenditure in this form. I understand that over 95 per cent. of BR's expenditure is placed with United Kingdom companies, and that no major capital expenditure has been placed in the United States of America.

Air Services

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what formal communications he has had recently with foreign airlines seeking extra services into United Kingdom airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Foreign airlines are in continual contact with the Department about extra services within the framework of the agreed bilateral arrangements. Where such services require the negotiation of new traffic rights, we would expect the Government of the country concerned to seek such rights in negotiation. They regularly do.

Planning Applications

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the criteria he uses to make decisions when a direction is given to planning authorities to refuse a planning application on grounds of existing volumes and future increased traffic.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Secretary of State is empowered to issue directions to local planning authorities in respect of accesses to trunk roads under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 as amended in 1985. The order does not specify the grounds or criteria on which he may give a direction of refusal. These are essentially related to his role of providing motorways and other trunk roads to further the safe and expeditious movement of long-distance traffic.

In the case of motorways, there is a strict policy against allowing direct access to the main carriageway or slip roads from any development other than service areas and related facilities. In the case of all-purpose trunk roads refusal of permission may be directed in circumstances where, notwithstanding any road improvements proposed by the developer, the development would generate interference with the safe and free flow of traffic either on that or another trunk road in the vicinity. Regard has to be had in this to the effects both on existing traffic flows and those expected in the future.

Traffic Flows (Statistics)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give traffic flow statistics for *(a)* the M25 motorway at and around the M1 intersection and *(b)* the M25 intersection with the A30 at junction 13.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Traffic flows recorded on the M25 motorway this September, next to the M1 and A30 intersections, were:

	16 hour 5 day average	*24 hour 7 day average*	*Highest 24 hour flow*	*Date of highest 24 hour flow*
(I) M1 Intersection				
J20-J21/21A (A41-M1/A405)	108,100	108,900	127,700	Friday 25 September
J21A-J22	89,200	89,800	106,600	Friday 4 September
(II) A30 Intersection				
J12-J13 (M3-A30)	128,000	132,000	150,400	[1]Friday 25 September
J13-J14 (A30-Airport Spur)	140,000	142,000	165,700	Friday 4 September

[1] Estimated from limited data.

I shall write to the hon. Member with diagrams of traffic movements and volumes at these intersections.

Wraysbury and Staines

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his direction to refuse planning permissions in connection with *(a)* the Wraysbury development and *(b)* the Staines development.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Reasons for directing refusal in both cases were the large volume of additional traffic which would be generated on the M25 and A30, and related interference with safe and free flows of traffic on those routes, which are primarily designed to facilitate the safe and expeditious flow of long distance through traffic. Other reasons were:

(1) in the case of the Wraysbury project, the junction improvement proposed by the developer was considered unacceptable as entailing a direct access to the slip road for northbound traffic joining the M25; the developer had not shown that the modified junction would satisfactorily accommodate the additional traffic; and it would subsequently be difficult for the Department to improve the junction further to allow for future traffic growth;

(2) n the case of the Staines project, the development would entail the construction of a new junction on the A30 trunk road between M25 junction 13 and the A308 Crooked Billet junction; it had not been shown that there was sufficient space between those junctions for the safe construction of a new one to the Department's design standards; the developer had not proposed any alterations to M25 junction 13 or the Crooked Billet junction to deal with the additional traffic.

Ferries

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects boarding passes to be introduced on ferries.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department has recently issued for statutory consultation a draft Order that would require ferry companies to have boarding card systems in place by 1 February 1988. The actual date required will depend upon the consultation process and the time needed to prepare any amendments in the light of the comments received.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None to my knowledge. Historic information is not readily available.

Waterdale

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on his refusal to direct the local planning authority to refuse planning permission for the Waterdale development;

(2) if he will make a statement on the financial implications for his Department of the Waterdale development;

(3) if he will give details of what steps his Department has taken to improve road transport to the Waterdale development site.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department intervenes to direct a refusal of planning permission where a proposed development is considered to have unacceptable traffic and safety implications for motorways and other trunk roads within its responsibility.

It was concluded that such implications did not arise in this particular case, provided that certain improvements were made to the layout of the M1/A405 junction and to the A405. We have accordingly given a direction that the development shall not proceed until orders have been made under the Highway Act 1980 for these improvements and that public access to the development shall not begin until these improvements are substantially complete. If these conditions are satisfied, there are no grounds to direct refusal. The improvements would be carried out at the developer's expense.

The Department of Transport owns part of the site on which the development is proposed. Jointly with the owner of the adjoining land, we are negotiating an option agreement for the sale of the land to the developers.

The Department is entirely neutral on whether planning permission should be granted. As part owner of the site we are bound to ensure that if planning permission were granted the taxpayer should reap a proper share in the benefit of the increased value of the land.

THE ARTS

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister for the Arts what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Luce: No residential accommodation chargeable to public funds is provided for me or for the staff of the Office of Arts and Libraries.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 10 November, if he will make it his policy that no Bank of England issue department funds will be used for the purposes of underwriting the share issue for the Channel tunnel project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: There is no question of using issue department funds to underwrite the share issue for the Channel tunnel project.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 10 November, what information he has as to whether any funds controlled, managed or owned by the banking department of the Bank of England will be used for the purchase or underwriting of shares in the Channel tunnel share issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Bank of England has told the Treasury that it has no intention of using banking department funds in connection with the Channel tunnel share issue.

Bank of England (Underwriting)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give a direction to the Bank of England under section 4(1) of the Bank of England Act 1946 to the effect that no funds which the bank *(a)* owns, and *(b)* manages or controls on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, nationalised industries and public sector bodies shall be used for any purpose in connection with the purchase or underwriting of shares in the current Eurotunnel equity share issue.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will issue a general directive to the Bank of England that it should not use funds managed or controlled by it to underwrite the Eurotunnel share issue; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give a general directive to the Bank of England that it should not risk the funds controlled or managed by it in Eurotunnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Such a directive would be inappropriate. Furthermore, it would be unnecessary because the Bank of England has told the Treasury that it has no intention of using such funds in connection with the current Eurotunnel equity share issue.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what discussions he has had with the Bank of England about the equity issue of Eurotunnel; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what discussions he has had with the Bank of England about the underwriting of the Eurotunnel issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has had no such discussions. But the Bank has told the Treasury that it has no intention of using its funds in connection with the Eurotunnel issue.

Privatisation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Exchequer, in each of the privatisation flotations undertaken by Her Majesty's Government since 1980, of the underwriting of each issue.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 29 October 1987]:* The total cost of primary and sub-underwriting in the United Kingdom of each Government share sale since 1980 is given in the table. The cost of United Kingdom underwriting for the recent BP share sale was about £42 million, of which about £33 million was borne by the Exchequer.

Company		*Cost of Underwriting in United Kingdom £ million*
British Aerospace	1981	2·42
Cable and Wireless	1981	3·92
Amersham	1982	0·36
Britoil	1982	8·49
Association British Ports	1983	0·13
British Petroleum	1983	6·95
Cable and Wireless	1983	3·61
British Petroleum	1984	0·81
Enterprise	1984	6·08
Jaguar	1984	4·83
British Telecom	1984	34·42
British Aerospace	1985	6·12
Britoil	1985	6·03
Cable and Wireless	1985	7·57
Gas	1986	52·32
British Airways	1987	6·79
Rolls Royce	1987	10·89
British Airports Authority	1987	12·91

WALES

Rating Reform

11. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to reach a decision as to when to introduce the poll tax in Wales and whether it should be phased.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has already announced his intention to replace domestic rates with the community charge in 1990.

Tree Planting

12. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he proposes to take to encourage tree planting in the Principality.

Mr. Grist: My hon. Friend will know that it was my right hon. Friend who launched the "Plant a Tree in '73" campaign which was the initiative of my hon. Friend, so he will know my right hon. Friend's support for tree planting. There are a range of measures we are taking in Wales; the valleys initiative, urban programme, forestry commission grant schemes, proposed farm woodland scheme and Coed Cymru—Save Welsh Wildwoods—all promote amenity or commercial tree planting and/or conservation of existing woodlands.

Health Services

13. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the Gwynedd health authority concerning his funding of health services in Gwynedd.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has recently been asked to meet representatives of the authority to discuss its current financial position, and a meeting will be held soon.

Coal Industry

15. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of British Coal about the future of the south Wales coal industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend met the deputy chairman of British Coal on 30 September to discuss a range of issues affecting the south Wales coal industry. Officials of the Department are in regular contact with British Coal at all levels to keep abreast of developments in the industry which bear upon my right hon. Friend's responsibilities.

A55-A548 (Road Link)

16. **Mr. Raffan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet a deputation from Delyn borough council to discuss a trunk road link between the A55 and the A548 to serve the Delyn enterprise zone and the Greenfield business park.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Trunk roads are intended for major long-distance routes. Links such as this must be matters for the local highway authority.

Farm Incomes

17. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average income of farmers in Wales in the financial year 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Based on the farm business survey, the average income of full-time dairy and livestock farms in Wales was £8,728 for the year ending mid-February 1987.

Hospital Waiting Lists

18. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest waiting list figures for hospital treatment in Wales.

Mr. Grist: At 31 March 1987, there were 77,964 people waiting for a first out-patient appointment and 41,396 people waiting for in-patient treatment.

Small Businesses

19. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken since June to assist small businesses in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Last month, I launched the Gateway network — a new initiative and a concept unique to Wales — which will help ensure that businessmen in Wales receive a uniformly high quality of service no matter which of the advisory agencies they turn to. I am delighted that all of the agencies providing support to small businesses — local authorities, enterprise agencies and others—have actively supported my initiative.

Labour Statistics

20. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current level of unemployment in Wales at the latest available date; and what it was 12 months previously.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in Wales was 148,000, 26,055 lower than the corresponding figure for 1986.

22. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the most recent published number of unemployed males and females in the Ogmore/Mid Glamorgan area and in Wales as a whole; and what was the number for the same areas in May 1979.

Mr. Grist: On 8 October 1987, 2,938 males and 903 females were unemployed in the Ogmore constituency. The corresponding figures for Mid Glamorgan were 21,309 and 7,109; and for Wales 105,413 and 42,637. Unadjusted figures for 1979 are not available on a basis that enables a valid comparison to be made.

Education

21. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Welsh local education authorities provide a generally satisfactory education service, but there is always room for improvement.

The Government have published consultation documents setting out proposals for education reform. An Education Bill embodying those proposals is to be introduced shortly.

24. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the outcome of the consultation in Wales on the proposed national curriculum and other related papers on education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend and I have received almost 400 written representations on our proposals for the national curriculum in Wales, and I expect to publish soon a statement of policy for the curriculum in Wales. In addition, there have been a series of meetings between my officials and the various educational interests in Wales, on this and our other proposed developments in schools—financial delegation, grant maintained schools, open enrolment and collective worship. Our intentions will be made public as soon as the Education Bill is published.

WDA Factories

23. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the precise location of the five Welsh Development Agency factories ready for occupation in the Denbigh area; and what assessment he has made of the contribution of the five factories to solving the long-term unemployment problems of the Vale of Clwyd.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Four factories ready for occupation are on the Corwen industrial estate and one on the Denbigh industrial estate. A further WDA unit has recently become available at Corwen. I am confident that tenants for these factories will soon be found.

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when his Department was first made aware that blood products contaminated with the AIDS virus had been given to haemophiliacs treated at the University Hospital of Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Department was first made aware in December 1984 that a batch of the blood product, factor VIII, which was thought to have been contaminated with the human immuno-deficiency virus had been used in the treatment of haemophilia patients at the University hospital of Wales.

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest information regarding the total number of cases of AIDS reported in Wales; and how this compares with the number 12 months previously.

Mr. Grist: The latest available figures show that at the end of October 1987, 17 cases of AIDS in Wales had been reported to the communicable diseases surveillance centre. This compares with nine cases at the end of October 1986.

Figures for the reported cases of AIDS in the United Kingdom are published monthly in a press notice issued by the Department of Health and Social Security and copies are placed in the Library.

Cardiac Disease

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information concerning the incidence of cardiac disease in Wales; and what were the approximate figures at the latest convenient date for each of the Welsh counties.

Mr. Grist: Information on the incidence of cardiac disease in the population is not available centrally. Heartbeat Wales has recently produced estimates of the number of people reporting symptoms of angina but not of all heart disease. The following table shows the numbers of deaths where heart disease was recorded as the underlying cause.

Deaths in 1986 from heart disease[1] ICD 390-429

Area of usual residence	*Number of registered deaths*
Clwyd	1,626
Dyfed	1,383
Gwent	1,799
Gwynedd	1,008
Mid Glamorgan	1,286
Powys	461
South Glamorgan	1,460
West Glamorgan	1,569
WALES	11,592

[1] ICD 390-429 includes ischaemic heart disease, hypertensive disease, diseases of the pulmonary circulation and other heart diseases, chronic rheumatic heart disease and acute rheumatic fever.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans his Department has for future hospital treatment for infant cardiac cases needing catheterisation and surgery; what is the number of such cases treated annually; and where that treatment is currently undertaken.

Mr. Grist: The Department has recently approved in principle the development of a paediatric cardiac unit at the University hospital of Wales to provide cardiology for children of all ages and cardiac surgery for those of one year and above.

On the advice of the Welsh Medical Committee, the very specialised cardiac surgery for new-born babies and infants up to one year of age will continue to be provided at specialist supra-regional centres, the nearest of which is Bristol.

At present, cardiac surgery and catheterisation for infants is provided at supra-regional centres including Bristol, Southampton, London and Liverpool and it is open to consultants to refer patients to the most appropriate centre. Information on the number of children receiving treatment at all such centres is not held by the Department.

Storm Damage

Sir Raymond Gower: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information concerning the damage caused by the recent storms floods to farms and to houses and other properties, respectively; and what assistance he may give for uninsurable losses sustained by the persons affected.

Mr. Peter Walker: My latest information is that about 600 residential and over 100 commercial and industrial properties were affected by the recent flooding in south-west and north Wales. However, reports from different sources are still be reconciled. Damage to farms has mostly been confined to hedges, banks, walls, culverts and farm access roads, whilst stock losses of 140 sheep, 60 cattle and 300 poultry were reported. Crop losses are minimal.

On the question of assistance, I refer my hon. Friend to the statement I made to the House on 21 October, at column 745, in which I indicated that I would be making available special financial assistance to local authorities whose eligible additional expenditure, excluding insurable losses, exceeded a defined threshold. There is no special Government assistance available to individuals suffering uninsurable losses.

Ports (Employment)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many people are employed in each of the ports of Wales.

Mr. Peter Walker: The census of employment listed 2,976 persons as employed in "sea transport" in Wales in September 1984. Details of individual ports are not available.

Company Closures

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many companies have notified him of closures in Wales in each of the years since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: Companies are not required to notify me of closures although some do so a s a matter of courtesy. Statistics on such notifications are not held.

Clwyd Health Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make extra funds available to enable the Clwyd health authority to resume operations for hip and knee joints; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I understand that the Clwyd health authority will be continuing hip replacement operations at Ysbyty Wrecsam Maelor at the same rate as they have been carried out so far this year. I am told that knee operations are customarily carried out at Gobowen for Clwyd residents. Whether or not Clwyd health authority carries out such operations in future is a matter for the authority to decide.

On the question of funding, I understand that the authority plans to submit a late bid under the 1987-88 waiting times initiative for funding the specialty of orthopaedics. Full consideration will be given to that bid when it is received.

Alyn and Deeside (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make an official visit to the constituency of Alyn and Deeside to observe developments at Deeside industrial park and aircraft production at Broughton, and to review outstanding road improvement plans.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am anxious to visit all parts of Wales and have already undertaken visits to Clwyd. I look forward to visits to Alyn and Deeside in the future.

Welsh Language

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures are being taken to ensure that the reconstituted National Council for Vocational Qualifications has the expertise and competence to validate bilingual (Welsh and English) and Welsh language medium vocational qualifications;

(2) what steps he is taking to ensure that employers from Wales who need to employ persons with bilingual skills in the Welsh and English languages will be represented on the current nine working groups established by the reconstituted National Council for Vocational Qualifications in order to present recommendations in various vocational areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The National Council for Vocational Qualifications was set up to establish a vocational qualification framework with currency in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but is not itself a validating or awarding body. The council operates by accrediting qualifications awarded by other bodies and assigning them to the vocational qualification framework. Where a possible accreditation involves competence in the Welsh language, the council will only proceed if it is satisfied that such competence has been taken into account in the development and delivery arrangements for the award. The council will draw on any necessary expertise to assist in its consideration of qualifications involving Welsh language skills.

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

Mr. Grist: The corporation has made very useful progress since its formation in April this year in laying the foundations for a comprehensive strategy for the regeneration of the designated area.

Wales Tourist Board

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to introduce legislation to provide the Wales tourist board with the same statutory framework as the Scottish tourist board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Affairs Committee's report on tourism in Wales expresses an interest in this area. I hope to reply to the Committee shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information branch within his Department.

Mr. Ridley: The personnel employed in DOE (including PSA) information branch on 1 November 1982 were as follows:

Grade	*Staff in post at 1 November 1987*
Grade 4—Director	1
Grade 5—Assistant Secretary	1
Grade 6—Chief Information Officer	1
Grade 7—Principal	3
Grade 7—Principal Information Officer	5
Senior Information Officer	9
Information Officer	11
HEO	3
EO	2
Senior Personal Secretary	1
AO	6
Personal Secretary	2
AA	2
Typist	1
Total	48

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of maintaining the information branch within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: The costs each year since 1984-85 of maintaining the information directorate of the Department of the Environment and, since 1985-86, of the information branch of the Property Services Agency have been (outturn prices):

Year	*Administration Costs £k*
1984-85	795
1985-86	1,043
1986-87	1,073

Before 1984-85 Department of the Environment information directorate provided some services in common with the Department of Transport. It is not therefore possible to give precise figures of costs before 1984-85.

Pollution

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has conducted further studies during the last six months into problems related to the scrutiny and control of river pollution derived from agricultural activities; if he is considering more far-reaching co-operation with other Departments with regard to this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The problems of river pollution derived from agricultural and other sources are kept under regular review and especially at the present time in the light of the Environment Committee's report on the pollution of rivers and estuaries. A number of initiatives are currently being considered to tackle the main sources of agricultural pollution and there is also ongoing research in this area.

My right hon. Friend expects to make a statement of the Government's policies in the near future.

United States Forces (Payment)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing *(a)* the amount due to the Property Services Agency from United States forces in respect of works expenditure at the end of each financial year, to date, since 1983, *(b)* the amount paid in each year and *(c)* the average delay in each year between the final submission of the account from the Property Services Agency and payment by United States forces;

(2) what has been *(a)* the total cost and *(b)* the annual cost since 1983 to public funds of pre-funding the Property Services Agency works expenditure for United States forces.

Mr. Chope: The table requested is as follows:

£ million

Financial Year	*Arrears Brought Forward*	*Claimable Expenditure in Year*	*Receipts Received in Year*
1983-84	21·0	95·2	93·7
1984-85	22·5	103·4	98·6
1985-86	27·3	117·2	115·2
1986-87	29·3	142·2	143·6
1987-88	27·9	[1]	[1]

[1] Not yet available.

The Property Services Agency does not keep information on delays or the annual cost to public funds of pre-funding works expenditure for United States forces in the form requested and this could not be obtained without disproportionate expense. However, checks undertaken earlier this year indicate that the USAF pays almost 70 per cent. of the bills raised within two weeks and about 95 per cent. within four weeks. Checks undertaken in previous years were on a different basis but confirm that a substantial improvement has taken place.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to include the United States army and navy within the scope of a revised and more effective rapid payment system for Property Services Agency works expenditure.

Mr. Chope: The rapid payment system is being refined for all of PSA's work for the USAF. Consideration is being given to extending the system initially to selected United States navy establishments in the light of experience with the USAF. The possible extension to other United States navy and United States army establishments will also be considered.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Property Services Agency staff are currently dealing with the rapid payment system in relation to works expenditure for the United States forces.

Mr. Chope: Twenty-four PSA accounts staff at Hastings deal with repayment claims for the United States forces: about 50 per cent. of their time is spent on the rapid payment system (RPS). Other PSA staff in the nine dedicated USAF district works offices and elsewhere in the agency deal with RPS together with a wide range of other duties, and the resource effort devoted to RPS cannot readily be identified separately.

Peak Park

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications in the last year were made to the Peak Park planning board; how many appeals from decisions of the board he has received; and how many have been successful.

Mr. Waldegrave: The latest available figures are as follows: 895 planning applications were made to the Peak Park planning board in 1986-87. Of 22 decisions in 1986 on appeal against refusal by the board, four were successful.

Water Authorities

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amount of money was spent in 1985-86 and 1986-87 by each of the water authorities on pre-privatisation proposals; and how this expenditure is broken down.

Mr. Moynihan: This is a matter for the individual water authorities.

Water Industry (Pensions)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps will be taken to ensure that the quality of the pension schemes currently enjoyed by water industry employees is maintained following privatisation.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have made clear that the existing accrued pension rights of current employees of the water authorities, and of pensioners, and deferred pensioners will not be affected by privatisation. We have also said that, following privatisation, existing employees will have the right to remain in a pension scheme with the same benefits, and requiring the same contributions, as the local government superannuation scheme, of which they are members. Any provisions necessary to secure this position will be included in the legislation to privatise the water authorities.

Housing White Paper

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will put copies of the responses to the consultation exercise on the housing White Paper in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall in due course place in the Library copies of responses to the individual documents recently issued on various aspects of housing policy where respondents have indicated that they are content for their views to be made public.

London Residuary Body

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the amount of money realised through asset sales by the London residuary body since its inception.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on Thursday 12 November 1987.

Rating Reform

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of poorer households, with an income of less than £75 per week, after taxes, referred to in the document "Paying for local Government — The Need for Change", how many of these households are single-adult households; how many of them occupy properties with above average rateable value; what is the average rateable value referred to in the document; how many of these households receive rate relief at present; what is the current contribution of the highest paid 10 per cent. to domestic rates relative to the lowest paid 10 per cent. of households; and what this figure is as a percentage of their respective incomes; and what has been the total cost so far of the production of general publicity material concerning the community charge.

Mr. Howard: Based on data from the family expenditure survey in 1985-86 prices, I estimate that 18 per cent. of households in England had an income after tax of less than £75 per week; 82 per cent. of these are single adult households and 22 per cent. occupy property with above average rateable value of the sample — £193. It is estimated that 82 per cent. would be entitled to rate rebates under the arrangements to come into effect from 1 April 1988.

In respect of the other matters referred to, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on Thursday 12 November 1987 and to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 29 October.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the types of hostel residents which will be made exempt from the community charge.

Mr. Howard: The exemption will apply to residents of hostels which provide accommodation and care to a professional standard, the cost of which is passed on to the residents as an addition to the rent.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to include parish and town councils in the distribution of resources to local government from the national uniform business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Proposals for the payment of grants and non-domestic rate were published on 23 September. Under those proposals grant and non-domestic rate income together with income from the community charge will be paid into a collection fund from which the funding requirements of all the local authorities in an area, including parish and town councils, will be met.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of his proposals for dealing with appeals against non-domestic rateable values and appeals arising from decisions in relation to the community charge following reform of the rating system.

Mr. Howard: I have published a booklet entitled "Appeals and Valuation and Community Charge Tribunals", which sets out the broad outline of our proposals for appeals. Copies of the booklet have been sent to interested parties and have been placed in the Library. The canvas for and compilation of the community charges register will give rise to certain rights of appeal. It is proposed that such appeals will be determined by local valuation courts, whose current remit to determine rating appeals will be extended. In recognition of their new role, the courts will be renamed valuation and community charge tribunals.

The booklet sets out the Government's proposals for the procedures for making and determining community charge appeals and for the constitution and procedures of the new tribunals.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Her Majesty's Government's proposals for a new business rate will apply to farm businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* Yes. Those parts of a farm business which are currently liable to pay non-domestic rates will continue to do so at the level of the national non-domestic rate from 1990.

Hamilton Sheriff Court

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total cost so far, and what is the projected expenditure to completion, of the work being done on Hamilton sheriff court.

Mr. Chope: The work being carried out at Hamilton sheriff court house has cost £2,565,000 so far. The projected final cost is £3,185,000.

Ozone Layer

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about damage to the ozone layer.

Mr. Moynihan: In the last three months my Department has received approximately 200 letters about the ozone layer, either directly from members of the public or forwarded by right hon. and hon. Members.

Football Violence

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the effect on the level of violence of Luton Town football club's ban on visiting supporters; and if he will enter into discussions with the Football Association and the Football League with a view to the extension of such a scheme throughout England.

Mr. Moynihan: I have seen the report of the chief constable of Bedfordshire showing the success of the first season's experience of the members only scheme at Luton Town FC. That success has continued so far this season; there have been no arrests, no ejections from or injuries sustained in the ground and no incidents of criminal damage attributable to football supporters in the town. As I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 4 November, at column *920*, I applaud Luton's approach and congratulate it on the example it has shown. Other clubs are pursuing membership schemes of their own, but there is compelling police evidence that the 100 per cent. scheme which Luton has adopted cannot be extended throughout England.

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he plans to advise the Football League and the Football Association that they should introduce a 100 per cent. members' only scheme to combat hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend on 4 November, at column *920*. I have no plans to advise the football authorities that they should introduce members only schemes. I acknowledge the success of the members only scheme at Luton Town FC, but compelling police evidence at many other grounds exists to show that such schemes would not be appropriate at all clubs.

World Cup, Calcutta

Mr. Snape: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost to public funds of his trip to the World Cup in Calcutta; what was the composition of his party; and what was *(a)* the purpose and *(b)* the outcome of his visit.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 12 November. It was important in the MCC's bicentenary year for me to be present to offer the England team congratulations on their magnificient achievement in reaching the World cup final.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Chope: No residential accommodation is provided for Ministers of this Department. The other information is not readily available and could be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 5 November, *Official Report*, column *858*, he will list as precisely as possible the areas from which sparrow-hawks, merlin and peregrine falcons were taken under licences granted in 1986; what are the eligibity criteria for the granting of licences to take birds out of the wild; and if he has any proposals to restrict or phase out the system of granting licences for taking birds out of the wild.

Mr. Moynihan: The number of sparrow-hawks and peregrines taken in 1986 by area were:

Peregrines: 1 Dumfries and Galloway; 1 Cumbria.

Sparrow-hawks: 1 Strathclyde; 2 South Wales; 4 West Wales; 1 Cheshire; 2 Derbyshire; 4 Hampshire; 2 Lancashire; 2 Nottinghamshire; 2 North Yorkshire; 2 Oxfordshire; 1 Somerset; 2 South Yorkshire; 2 Staffordshire; 3 Surrey; 1 Tyne and Wear; 3 Warwickshire; 1 West Midlands; 4 West Yorkshire.

No licences were granted to take merlins from the wild in 1986. Applicants must be 18 years old or over. The Nature Conservancy Council advises on general areas from which birds may be taken, which avoid edges of each species ranges or where there is a lower than average density.

The Department also takes into account the views of the Hawk Board (which represents the interests of falconers and hawk keepers) and the Nature Conservancy

Council has recommended that licences should not be granted for taking from the wild any diurnal birds of prey after next year, and the Government intend to accept that advice.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 28 October, *Official Report*, column 275, what are the exceptional circumstances in which the taking of wild peregrine falcons will be allowed to continue after 1988.

Mr. Moynihan: Applications will be considered on their merits after consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council. There may, for example, be an occasional need for gene replenishment, to avoid in-breeding problems.

Argentina

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding the exclusion of Argentina from the Rous cup in May 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I have received no representations about the exclusion of Argentina from the Rous cup next year. The Football Association consulted me in October about the possibility of inviting Argentina and I made it clear in my reply that there were no foreign policy or security reasons to deter an invitation and that the decision therefore was one for the Football Association to make. I also suggested that in making a decision the association would wish to have in mind the possibility of adverse public reaction and perhaps hooliganism which conceivably could occur if the invitation were to be accepted.

SCOTLAND

Local Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what would be the estimated charge, on the basis of current expenditure *(a)* per household and *(b)* per capita for each Scottish district if a system of local income tax were to be introduced.

Mr. Lang: Information on local income tax rates required to replace the income from domestic rates in 1987-88, and the resulting tax bills for a single person on Scottish average earnings, is shown in the table. Tax bills per household and per capita would depend on household and personal circumstances in each district on which detailed information is not available.

Authority	*Local Income Tax Rate pence in £*	*Tax bill single person £*
Borders	4·7	351
Berwickshire	4·7	348
Ettrick and Lauderdale	4·7	348
Roxburgh	4·8	358
Tweeddale	4·7	346
Central	5·4	401
Clackmannan	5·4	396
Falkirk	5·1	380
Stirling	6·0	444
Dumfries and Galloway	4·6	339
Annandale and Eskdale	4·6	342
Nithsdale	4·6	342
Stewartry	4·6	339
Wigtown	4·4	326
Fife	5·6	417
Dunfermline	5·4	401
Kirkcaldy	5·7	422
North East Fife	5·8	430
Grampian	4·6	337
Aberdeen City	4·8	357
Banff and Buchan	4·3	321
Gordon	4·5	335
Kincardine and Deeside	4·2	312
Moray	4·2	314
Highland	5·0	369
Badenoch and Strathspey	5·0	371
Caithness	4·9	365
Inverness	4·9	365
Lochaber	5·2	387
Nairn	5·0	371
Ross and Cromarty	5·1	378
Skye and Lochalsh	4·8	357
Sutherland	4·7	351
Lothian	6·9	508
East Lothian	7·0	515
Edinburgh City	7·0	515
Midlothian	6·8	501
West Lothian	6·6	485
Strathclyde	6·7	497
Argyll and Bute	6·5	481
Bearsden and Milngavie	7·0	515
Clydebank	6·5	478
Clydesdale	6·3	469
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	6·4	474
Cumnock and Doon Valley	6·2	456
Cunninghame	6·7	497
Dumbarton	6·8	501
East Kilbride	6·2	462
Eastwood	6·5	480
Glasgow City	7·1	524
Hamilton	6·6	490
Inverclyde	6·3	469
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	6·5	478
Kyle and Carrick	6·6	488
Monklands	6·4	474
Motherwell	6·3	467
Renfrew	6·8	504
Strathkelvin	6·6	488
Tayside	5·7	424
Angus	5·3	390
Dundee City	6·2	456
Perth and Kinross	5·4	403
Orkney Islands	2·4	180
Shetland Islands	2·5	182
Western Isles	2·8	209
ALL SCOTLAND	6·1	451

Notes:

(1) The income tax rate for Scotland has been estimated for 1987-88 by dividing the amount to be raised from domestic rates, net of rate rebates, by an estimate of the yield of 1p on the basic rate of income tax for Scotland.

(2) The income tax rates by district assume resource equalisation, that is, the yield of 1p in the £ is the same per adult in all districts.

(3) The estimate of average gross earnings has been taken from the 1987 new earnings survey, and is the average of the male and female full-time adult earnings not affected by absence at April 1987.

(4) In calculating the tax bill for a single adult, it is assumed that earnings are the only source of income and that only personal tax allowances apply.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of maintaining the public information division within the Forestry Commission in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The costs rounded to the nearest £ thousand were as follows:

	£
1979-80	89,000
1980-81	124,000
1981-82	137,000
1982-83	131,000
1983-84	142,000
1984-85	158,000
1985-86	175,000
1986-87	181,000

Under-age Drinking

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many criminal convictions were made on licensees for under-age drinking for each of the years since 1972.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Licensed persons with charge proved of selling drink to persons under 18

Year	*Number*
1972	89
1973	85
1974	72
1975	55
1976	54
1977	39
1978	76
1979	69
1980	88
1981	91
1982	65
1983	75
1984	114
1985	90
1986	106

Alcohol-related Offences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many breach of the peace convictions were related to alcohol consumption in each of the years from 1980; and if he will express the figures as a percentage of the total number of convictions for each of the years;

(2) if he will list the number of criminal convictions in which alcohol was a contributory factor, by region, in each of the years since 1972;

(3) how many breach of the peace convictions were made on persons aged under 18 years in which alcohol was a contributory factor in each of the years from 1980;

(4) how many criminal convictions were made on persons under 18 years of age in which alcohol was a contributory factor in each of the years from 1972.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many criminal convictions were made for drunkenness on persons under 18 years of age in each of the years from 1972.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Persons under 18 with charge proved of drunkenness

Year	*Number*
1972	506
1973	579
1974	577
1975	562
1976	469
1977	460
1978	467
1979	506
1980	483
1981	349
1982	295
1983	274
1984	217
1985	184
1986	203

The term 'drunkenness' is taken to mean offences of being drunk and incapable, drunk and disorderly, drunk in or attempting to enter a designated sports ground and similar offences.

Cirrhosis of the Liver (Death)

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of deaths caused by cirrhosis of the liver in each of the years from 1972; and if he will express the figures *(a)* as a percentage of all deaths per year, and *(b)* as a percentage increase or decrease on each preceding year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Deaths from all causes and from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis[1] Scotland, 1972-1986

	All causes	*Cirrhosis of the liver*		
		Number	*Per cent.of all deaths*	*Per cent. change on each preceding year*
1972	65,017	258	0·40	
1973	64,545	264	0·41	+2·3
1974	64,740	328	0·51	+24·2
1975	63,125	309	0·49	−5·8
1976	65,253	319	0·49	+3·2
1977	62,294	336	0·54	+5·3
1978	65,123	382	0·59	+13·7
1979	65,747	431	0·66	+12·8

	All causes	*Cirrhosis of the liver*		
		Number	*Per cent. of all deaths*	*Per cent. change on each preceding year*
1980	63,299	406	0·64	−5·8
1981	63,828	450	0·71	+10·8
1982	65,022	422	0·65	−6·2
1983	63,454	431	0·68	+2·1
1984	62,345	423	0·68	−1·9
1985	63,967	423	0·66	0
1986	63,467	380	0·60	−10·2

[1] International Classification of Diseases code 571.

Alcoholism

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of registered alcoholics in each of the years from 1972.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available as there is no requirement to register alcoholics.

AIDS

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of people have sero-converted to HIV in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of persons in Scotland who are HIV seropositive is not known. Of those who have chosen to be tested for HIV antibodies, by the end of September 1987 1,311 had been found to be HIV seropositive.

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what proportion of haemophiliacs in Scotland are known to be infected with the human immunodeficiency virus.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: At the end of September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 73 haemophiliacs in Scotland known to be carrying HIV antibodies. This figure represents approximately 15 per cent. of the total of about 500 haemophiliacs in Scotland.

Education Reform

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 9 November, what methods he will use to assess the weight of *(a)* opposition to and *(b)* support for the ceiling powers expressed by the respondents to the consultative document on school boards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have received many thoughtful and detailed responses, both from individuals and representative organisations. We will consider the points made on their merits.

Lay Observer

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to review the powers of redress available to the Lay Observer.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend is at present considering proposals from the Law Society of Scotland for legislation on solicitors' discipline, which include provision for the Lay Observer for Scotlad to report cases of apparent professional misconduct or inadequate professional services to the Scottish solicitors' discipline tribunal.

School Meals

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of children who take school meals who are entitled to free school meals in Scotland by reason of *(a)* their family being entitled to family income supplement and *(b)* the discretionary power of the local authority to extend free meal provision.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not held centrally.

Rating Reform

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has of the total annual running cost to local authorities in Scotland of administering the new community charge in 1987-88.

Mr. Lang: The community charge system will come into full operation in 1989-90. We estimate that, in that year, the additional administrative expenditure will be in the range £17 million to £22 million.

Psychiatric and Mentally Handicapped Patients

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the financial allocations to each of the Scottish health boards for psychiatric and mentally handicapped provision as a proportion of their overall budget for the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for health boards to decide the appropriate provision for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped from within their overall allocations, and there is no specific earmarking of resources for this purpose.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the Aberdeen Telford survey on nurse staffing levels in mentally handicapped and psychiatric hospitals carried out in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Aberdeen formula and the Telford consultative approach are two methods of assessing nursing staff requirements at the individual hospital and ward level. The Telford approach was recommended to health boards by the Scottish Home and Health Department in 1986 for use in mental handicap hospitals.

Mental Welfare Commission

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take in the light of the statement on the effect of staff shortages on patient care made by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the chairman of the Mental Welfare Commission to meet him today.

Rented Property

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate how many privately-owned dwellings suitable for letting are not available for letting.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The available information on unoccupied private sector dwellings was published in Scottish Development Department statistical bulletin HSIU No. 1 "Unoccupied Dwellings: A survey following the 1981 Census", which is available in the Library.

SHAPE (Implementation)

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of progress made by each health board in implementing each of the SHAPE priorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 23 October 1987]*: The SHAPE report categorised each client group programme according to whether it should receive an increase in revenue expenditure relative to programmes generally (category A eg care of the elderly, mentally ill or mentally handicapped), a real increase in revenue expenditure but at a lower rate than category A (category B eg maternity services), or no increase at all in real terms with any developments being met by offsetting savings within the programme (category C eg general and acute hospital services). The table shows, on the basis of returns made by health boards, the expenditure by each board on each of the three SHAPE categories in 1981-82 and in 1985-86, expressed at 1981-82 prices. The figures demonstrate the general progress being made by each board in implementing the SHAPE priorities and, while much remains to be done, these results are encouraging.

SHAPE

£ thousand

	Category A		*Category B*		*Category C*	
	1981-82	*1985-86 at 1981-82 prices*	*1981-82*	*1985-86 at 1981-82 prices*	*1981-82*	*1985-86 at 1981-82 prices*
Argyll and Clyde	33,961	34,212	5,413	4,915	27,247	27,532
Ayr and Arran	16,386	20,168	3,800	4,630	21,351	27,178
Borders	6,748	7,152	338	336	6,355	6,560
Dumfries and Galloway	13,219	14,833	1,592	1,319	9,084	8,875
Fife	19,990	25,407	3,900	3,713	20,682	19,143
Forth Valley	22,396	24,424	3,743	2,726	17,485	19,238
Grampian	33,870	38,416	5,935	6,113	41,728	42,484
Greater Glasgow	99,396	105,092	15,378	14,256	145,134	142,330
Highland	16,079	17,096	2,323	2,128	16,011	17,213
Lanarkshire	30,621	33,016	6,022	5,878	38,256	40,713
Lothian	61,305	62,077	8,234	8,764	88,935	84,298
Orkney	1,183	1,251	140	141	1,093	1,160
Shetland	1,382	1,618	151	154	1,481	1,512
Tayside	37,201	37,949	5,164	3,908	49,449	47,051
Western Isles	2,011	2,202	384	445	2,130	2,528
Scotland	395,748	424,912	62,517	59,427	486,421	487,813

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Salmon Bill 1986

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will produce the dealer licensing scheme promised under the provisions of the Salmon Bill 1986.

Mr. Gummer: My officials have been developing a scheme for salmon dealer licensing in England and Wales under the provisions of section 31 of the Salmon Act 1986, consulting the water authorities, who will be responsible for enforcing it, and working in close liaison with officials of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, which is developing a parallel scheme under section 20 of the 1986 Act. We expect to issue a consultation paper to the trade and other interested organisations shortly. When these consultations have been completed, an order to give effect to the scheme will be submitted for parliamentary approval.

Pollution

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department has made any progress in the last six months in tightening its scrutiny and control of river pollution derived from agricultural activities; if he is considering more far-reaching co-operation with other Departments with regard to this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My Department continues to strengthen its advice to farmers on how to reduce river pollution. I have also been considering with others, including my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, the need for further measures. Our conclusions will be contained in the Government's response to the House of Commons Environment Committee's third report.

Wheat

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the extent to which surplus bread wheat in past years has been mixed with feeding wheat in the intervention stores; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Wheat which has passed the Community's prescribed tests to establish its breadmaking quality has always been stored separately from other wheat in intervention in the United Kingdom. From the start of the 1986-87 season the regulations were changed to provide four qualities of wheat, "premium" and "common" wheat, both of which pass the breadmaking tests, "intermediate" wheat, which fails the tests but has a high protein content, and "other" wheat. Only wheat of the last quality has been offered to date.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My Department does not provide residential accommodation for Ministers. At certain laboratories and experimental centres, housing is available at the "fair" rent but key workers (whose duties require them to be on call outside normal hours) pay less. The costs of providing this accommodation since 1979 cannot be calculated without disproportionate effort.

Salmon

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied that adequate precautions are being taken to prevent the spread of the salmon disease gyrodactylus salaris into United Kingdom and Irish waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: We are aware that the parasite gyrodactylus salaris is associated with high mortalities among salmon in a number of Norwegian rivers and we have been keeping the position under review. The parasite is transmitted among live salmon in fresh water. Imports of live fish of the salmon family into Great Britain are prohibited under the Diseases of Fish Act 1937 and very strict fish health controls also operate in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence that it can be transmitted through salmon ova, but in any case imports of salmon ova are only permitted under stringent health certification requirements, involving disinfection. Our import controls therefore provide an adequate means of preventing the spread of the parasite to Great Britain.

Evidence so far available is not sufficient to enable us to conclude that mortalities would be caused by the presence of this parasite in British rivers to the same extent as appears to have happened in the conditions existing in Norwegian rivers. Nevertheless, my right hon. Friends and I have concluded that, as a precautionary measure, we should bring this parasite within the control provisions of the Diseases of Fish Act 1937.

EC (Grain Surplus)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will propose the use of EEC grain surplus to prevent rises in the cost of bread in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The wheat held in intervention in the United Kingdom is not of breadmaking quality. Millers in the United Kingdom have already made arrangements to obtain most of the grain they need for bread this season. If however, shortages of breadwheat do develop later in the season we will consider seeking the release of bread making wheat held in intervention elsewhere in the European Community.

Lambs (Safety Checks)

Mr. Curry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the results of his Department's further safety checks on lambs in the Skipton/Ilkley area.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 13 November 1987]*: A total of 686 sheep from 29 flocks have now been monitored as part of the current intensive exercise in west Yorkshire. Confirmatory analysis has revealed that meat samples from three ewes taken from a flock grazing the moorland near Grassington have yielded levels of radiocaesium of 1222, 1295 and 980 becquerels/kilogram respectively. These results showed that two of the ewes were thus about the action level of 1000 bq/kg for lambs which does carry with it a very large safety margin and is not itself a safety level.

This further close monitoring of live sheep in the area will continue to determine, as seems possible, whether these higher levels are confined to this flock or a very small area.

The present special monitoring exercise in Yorkshire is being carried out in response to public concern that heavy rainfall in the area when the Chernobyl plume might have been passing overhead caused deposition of radioactive material. The present exercise is thus in the nature of a double check on the comprehensive national monitoring that we did last year which did not indicate any particularly high levels in Yorkshire but it is being done in the light of new information on rainfall which has recently been brought to our attention.

The results of the present exercise so far do not lead us to any different conclusion from that we had taken earlier that there is no risk to food supplies. The sheep for which we have the above results are breeding ewes. Lambs or other sheep likely to be going to slaughter have all been found to have levels of radioactivity well below the action level. These lambs or sheep have all been in the lower pastures. I understand that it is normal husbandry practice in this part of Yorkshire to finish lambs or sheep that may have been on the moorland on the lower pastures. This does suggest therefore that there has not been an earlier problem with radiocaesium in lambs that have gone for slaughter that has gone undetected. Together with the low results on vegetation I am thus satisfied that the general public in the area have not been exposed to undue levels of radioactivity in their diet.

The flock from which the three sheep were taken is being closely checked and arrangements are being made to ensure that any movements out of the flock are properly controlled.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Lithotripsy

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make more funds available for further investment in lithotripsy with at least one machine in each region, so as to avoid excessive waiting time for patients.

Mr. Newton: We have no plans to provide central funds for the purchase of lithotripters. We have made it clear that this service should develop on a regional basis. In addition to the machine operated in conjunction with the private sector at St. Thomas' hospital in London, NHS lithotripers have recently gone, or are about to go, into operation in Manchester, Sheffield (where part of the capacity of the machine is being used to evaluate its effectiveness in treating gallstones) and St. Paul's hospital, London. This should reduce waiting time for patients. In addition, there are two private sector machines in London with which health authorities could have contractual arrangements if they thought this appropriate.

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time today for patients needing extra corporeal shock wave lithotripsy; and what was the comparable waiting time two years ago.

Mr. Newton: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. It is not available centrally.

Benefits

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the constituency of Fife, North-East are currently in receipt of the following benefits *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* housing benefit, *(d)* child benefit, and *(e)* mobility allowance; and how many supplementary benefit payments were made to Fife, North-East residents in the last financial year.

Mr. Portillo: *(a)* The Fife, North-East constituency is covered by the Department's local offices at Dundee, East, Perth and Leven, although their boundaries are not conterminous. The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit from those offices as at 28 July 1987, the latest date for which information is available:

	Number
Dundee East	12,626
Perth	8,821
Leven	5,465
Total	26,912

(Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action)

(b) Similarly, the constituency is covered by the Department of Employment's unemployment benefit offices at Leven and Glenrothes, and again the boundaries are not conterminous. The table shows the number of people receiving unemployment benefit from those offices as at 14 May 1987, the latest date for which information is available:

	Number
Leven	1,446
Glenrothes	1,474
Total	2,920

(Source: 100 per cent. count of cases where UB is in payment)

(c) The provisional number of rate rebate recipients for Fife North-East district council in the current financial year is 7,565. This is the nearest available equivalent to the information requested.

(d-e) Child benefit and mobility allowance are administered centrally and I regret that there is no information specific to Fife.

The number of supplementary benefit single payments made through the local offices of the Department covering the constituency for the 1986-87 financial year were:

Dundee, East	*Perth*	*Leven*
17,028	6,059	6,118

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why Mrs Ellis and her 15-year-old son of 21 Valentine crescent, Sheffield 5, have been refused an urgent needs payment.

Mr. Portillo: The question of Mrs. Ellis' entitlement to an urgent need payment is for the independent adjudication authority to decide. If Mrs. Ellis is dissatisfied with the decision, she has the right of appeal to the social security appeal tribunal.

Westcliffe Hospital

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what capital and revenue costs have been incurred by North Staffordshire district health authority in each of the last eight years on maintaining and improving Westcliffe hospital; and if he will also detail all improvements and modernisations to the hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Annual costing and other returns for Westcliffe hospital submitted to the Department by the North Staffordshire health authority show the following:

	Revenue Expenditure on Building and Engineering Maintenance/ Maintenance of Grounds and Gardens £	*Capital Expenditure on Building and Engineering Works* £
1982-83	147,508	11,798
1983-84	161,650	36,219
1984-85	84,970	—
1985-86	125,055	15,472
1986-87	103,130	11,810

For earlier years and details of all improvements and modernisations to the hospital the hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the North Staffordshire health authority who may be able to assist with the information she seeks.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information division within his Department;

(2) what was the cost of maintaining the information division within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The number of staff employed in the headquarters information division at 1 October 1987 (the latest date for which figures are available) was:

Grade	Staff in Post
Professionals	
Director of Information (Grade 4)	1
Deputy Director of Information (Grade 6)	2
Principal Information Officer (Grade 7)	4
Senior Information Officer	8
Information Officer	12
Assistant Information Officer	1
Administrative	
Principal (Grade 7)	1
Senior Executive Officer	2
Higher Executive Officer	1
Executive Officer	5
Administrative Officer	14
Administrative Assistant	7
Personal Secretary	2
Storekeeper	1
Storeman	6
Paperkeeper	3
Total	70

The cost of maintaining the headquarters information division for each year since 1979 has been:

Financial Year April-March	Cost[1] £ million
1979-80	0·68
1980-81	0·85
1981-82	0·98
1982-83	0·93
1983-84	0·96
1984-85	0·98
1985-86	1·10
1986-87	1·20

[1] Figures include costs of salaries, accommodation, common services and other non manpower items.

St. Nicholas' Hospital, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 4 November, if, in the light of the assumptions about receipts from land sales supporting the capital programmes of the National Health Service in the autumn statement, he will allow in his capital allocation to the Northern regional health authority for the refusal on appeal of a superstore at St. Nicholas' hospital, Newcastle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The allocation of funds between regional health authorities is concerned with net Exchequer resources and takes no account of receipts from land sales by health authorities which they may retain. Hence, changes in such receipts, or anticipated receipts, will have no influence on these allocations.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give an estimate of the proportion of haemophiliacs infected with the AIDS virus that will proceed to develop full-blown AIDS;

(2) what is his latest information on the number of severe haemophiliacs who have been infected with the AIDS virus as a result of the administration of contaminated blood products.

Mr. Newton: The most recent figures available show that 1,061 people with haemophilia have been reported HIV antibody positive in the United Kingdom. In addition there are likely to be other cases and we accept the estimate made by the Haemophilia Society that there may be around 1,200 in total. It is not possible to estimate the proportion of these people who will develop full-blown AIDS, but so far 66 have been reported to have developed AIDS and 49 have died.

Abortions

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give *(a)* the total number of abortions performed in 1986 between the 18th and 28th weeks of pregnancy and *(b)* the total number of abortions performed in 1986 between the 18th and 28th weeks of pregnancy which were preceded by amniocentesis.

Mr. Newton: The total number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 in England and Wales in 1986 at gestation 18 completed weeks and over is 8,276.

Information on amniocentesis is not required to be recorded on the abortion notification form.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many abortions were carried out in 1986 in private clinics licensed by his Department on residents and non-residents at *(a)* under nine weeks, *(b)* nine to 12 weeks, *(c)* 13 to 17 weeks and *(d)* 18 weeks and over.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 in non-NHS premises by gestation in completed weeks residents and non-residents. England and Wales 1986

Gestation (completed weeks)	Total	Residents	Non-residents
Total	104,757	80,168	24,589
Under 9 weeks	41,778	35,291	6,487
9-12 weeks	43,497	33,851	9,646
13-17 weeks	12,381	7,610	4,771
18 weeks and over	7,097	3,412	3,685
Unknown	4	4	—

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) at what week of pregnancy each of the 26 abortions carried out after 24 weeks on resident women was conducted;

(2) of the three abortions carried out after 24 weeks on non-resident women, at what week of the pregnancy each was carried out.

Mr. Newton: The information is given in the table.

Number of notifications of abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967 by week of gestation after 24 weeks England and Wales 1986

Residents and non-residents	Gestation (completed weeks) 25	26	27 and over
Residents of England and Wales	11	11	4
Non-residents of England and Wales	—	3	—

Handicapped Children (Mobility)

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children aged between two years and five years are known to his Department to be so severely disabled as to be considered incapable of independent locomotion.

Mr. Scott: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many appeals against refusal of mobility allowance to children aged under five years were heard in the last year for which records are conveniently available.

Mr. Scott: The number of appeals against refusal of mobility allowance for children under age five which have been heard cannot be readily identified but Department records show that, during the last 12 months, 14 such appeals were made.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the estimated net annual cost of providing mobility allowance for children aged two years to five years who are otherwise eligible but are at present excluded by reason of their age.

Mr. Scott: The cost of lowering the age limit for mobility allowance to age two is estimated to be about £5·75 million a year.

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what alternative provisions are made by his Department which meet the same needs as mobility allowance for children aged between two years and five years who are not eligible for that benefit.

Mr. Scott: Attendance allowance, although not intended to meet the same needs as mobility allowance, is available for a child between the ages of two and five who needs substantially more attention or supervision than a child of the same age and sex normally requires. Health authorities and local authority social services departments are also responsible for providing a range of services aimed at identifying, assessing and meeting particular needs of disabled children; and helping them to overcome the effects of their disabilities.

Locum Doctors

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will take steps to encourage all health authorities in England and Wales to reduce the costs incurred in employing locum doctors through agencies;

(2) if he will list the health authorities in England and Wales which are taking or considering taking steps to reduce the cost of employing locum doctors through agencies.

Mr. Newton: We are aware that discussions aimed at reducing expenditure on medical agency staff are taking place within Trent, Yorkshire, Northern, Mersey, West Midlands and the four Thames regional health authorities. Officials are planning to meet representatives of the profession and senior National Health Service management to consider the issues involved.

Income Support

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will describe the salient characteristics of that group of severely disabled people which he considers do not fit naturally into the new income support scheme; and what action he will take to protect their benefit levels.

Mr. Scott: Under the income support proposals, disabled claimants will receive a disability premium or higher pensioner premium of £13·05 for a single person or £18·60 for a couple. In addition, if the disabled person is getting attendance allowance, is living independently and no one is getting invalid care allowance for caring for them, they will be entitled to a severe disability premium of £24·75. The small number of disabled people whose income support entitlement is less than their supplementary benefit entitlement at the point of change will have their benefit level maintained. Furthermore, those in receipt of a domestic assistance addition of £10 or more will have that addition maintained in real terms unless it is more than covered by their entitlement to the severe disability premium. The very small group of severely disabled people with whom we are concerned are those new claimants who claim after April 1988 and who may need extensive help to maintain themselves in the community.

Disabled People

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled people are at present receiving weekly domestic assistance additional requirements payments of (*a*) less than £10 per week and (*b*) £10 and more a week.

Mr. Scott: The supplementary benefit domestic assistance addition can be awarded on the grounds of old age, ill-health, disability or heavy family responsibilities. Available information on the number of claimants receiving the addition does not distinguish between the four groups. The available data indicate that, in totals approximately 4,000 claimants are receiving domestic assistance additions of less than £10 a week and less than 1,000 are receiving additions of £10 or more. However, because of the small sample size, this information should be treated with caution.

Source: Annual statistical inquiry—February 1986.

Health Authorities

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to monitor the distribution of regional health authorities' funds to district authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Department monitors regions' distribution of resources to district health authorities through regions' long-term strategic plans and annual short-term programmes. As one of the central issues in these plans and programmes, resource distribution may also be discussed in regions' annual accountability reviews with Ministers and the National Health Service management board.

National Assistance Act 1948

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations from the East Sussex county council seeking amendment of part III, section 21 1(*a*) and (*b*), of the National Assistance Act 1948 which places an obligation on local authorities to provide sheltered accommodation for the elderly within their administrative boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. Under section 21(1)*(a)* of the National Assistance Act 1948 local social services authorities have a general duty to make arrangements for providing residential accommodation for persons who by reason of age, infirmity or other circumstances are in need of care and attention which is not otherwise available to them. These arrangements may include the provision of residential care homes by local authorities. Under section 26 of the 1948 Act authorities may also sponsor residents in voluntary and private homes. Residents do not have to be located within the authority's borders.

RAWP Formula

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the current review of the resource allocation working party formula will be completed; and if the report will be published.

Mr. Newton: The programme of analysis and research recommended in the National Health Service management board's initial report on the review, published in December 1986, is due to be completed by around the end of the year. A report will follow.

Primary Health Care

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the Government intend to reply to the First Report from the Social Services Committee in Session 1986-87, HC 37, on primary health care.

Mr. Newton: The Government's response to the Select Committee's report will be contained in the White Paper on primary health care due to be published shortly.

Haemophiliacs (AIDS)

Sir David Price: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many and what proportion of haemophiliacs in England and Wales are known to be infected with the human immuno-deficiency virus.

Mr. Newton: We do not hold this information in the form requested. The returns submitted to the National Haemophilia Centre Directors register at 31 December 1985 showed that there was a total of 7,808 people with haemophilia A, haemophilia B and von Willebrand's disease in the United Kingdom. Only some of those patients registered require regular treatment with blood products.

The most recent figures available show that 1,061 have been reported HIV antibody positive. In addition, there are likely to be other cases and we accept the estimate made by the Haemophilia Society that there may be around 1,200 in total.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce a compensation scheme for haemophiliacs suffering from AIDS as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.

Mr. Michael Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration is being given for compensation to individuals who are HIV positive through the use of infected imported blood products.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friends to my statement to the House today.

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give a breakdown of the total numbers of maternal deaths recorded in each year since 1957, where necessary using information from the confidential inquiry into maternal mortality by *(a)* illegal abortions, *(b)* legal abortions under the Abortion Act 1967 and *(c)* spontaneous abortions.

Mr. Newton: The available figures are shown in the table.

England and Wales

		Maternal deaths following		
	Maternal deaths	*Illegal abortions*	*Legal abortions*	[1]*Spontaneous abortion*
1955, 1956, 1957	861	91	Nil	50
1958, 1959, 1960	742	82	1	52
1961, 1962, 1963	692	77	5	57
1964, 1965, 1966	579	98	10	25
1967, 1968, 1969	455	74	18	25
1970[2], 1971, 1972	340	37	28	6
1973, 1974, 1975	227	10	9	5
1976, 1977, 1978	217	4	[3]8	[3]2
1979, 1980, 1981	176	1	[4]5	6
1982	42	n/a	3	n/a
1983	54	n/a	1	n/a
1984	52	n/a	3	n/a
1985	46	n/a	2	n/a
1986	45	n/a	Nil	n/a

Notes:

1. Figures for 1955 to 1981 are taken from the triennial Reports on Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in England and Wales 1976-1978 and 1979-1981.

2. Figures for Maternal Deaths from 1982 to 1986 are taken from OPCS analyses of cause of death and show those deaths relating to Complications of Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Puerperium. These may include deaths later than 42 days after pregnancy or delivery and deaths which after detailed examination are not found to be true maternal deaths.

3. Figures for legal abortions under the 1967 Abortion Act from 1982 to 1986 are taken from OPCS analysis of the abortion notification forms submitted to the Chief Medical Officers of Health for England and Wales. These may include deaths later than 42 days after pregnancy

or abortion and deaths which after detailed examination are found not to be true maternal deaths.

[1] Includes spontaneous missed abortions.

[2] From 1970, only deaths up to 42 days after pregnancy or delivery are included in line with the international definition of maternal deaths.

[3] Does not include five anaesthetic deaths, four associated with legal and one with spontaneous abortion.

[4] Does not include one anaesthetic death.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Scott: There is no residential accommodation provided for Department of Health and Social Security Ministers or civil servants charged to public funds.

Child Benefit

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy that in any review of child benefit he will preserve the facility for the mother to be in direct receipt of the benefit.

Mr. Scott: There are no plans to change the mother's priority entitlement to child benefit.

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people receive child benefit; and how many of these are currently paying income tax.

Mr. Scott: Around 6·8 million families receive child benefit and around 5·5 million families with children pay income tax.

NHS Property

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now give the latest overall estimates of all National Health Service property as valued by the district valuers prior to 31 October.

Mrs. Currie: The district valuers are currently revaluing the National Health Service estate. The results of the exercise have yet to be analysed. The best estimate of the National Health Service estate, based on a previous valuation in 1985, is £12·7 billion.

Grants and Loans

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 to individual loan offices as a percentage of each offices's expenditure on single payments and urgent need payments for 1985-86.

Mr. Scott: Information on the allocations for 1988-89 was contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November at columns *774-81*. I will arrange for the information requested on expenditure in 1985-86 to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 for the Coventry, East and West offices of his Department are to be evenly divided for each month of the period;

(2) if he will give a monthly breakdown of grants distributed for each month of the last five years for each Coventry office of his Department.

Mr. Scott: A model profile of expected expenditure on a month by month basis will be drawn up at national level. Local office managers may adjust the national profile to reflect particular local factors. The monthly profile of expenditure on the Coventry, East and West offices will be for the managers of those offices to decide. I will make the monthly brtakdown of single payments expenditure for each month of the last five years for the Coventry offices available in the Library.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what discretion adjudication officers have in deciding on the period for which a person who has been ruled to have left or refused employment without good cause should be disqualified for unemployment benefit.

Mr. Portillo: a decision of a tribunal of social security commissioners (decision R(U) 8/74) held that, in considering the period of disqualification for unemployment benefit, adjudicktion officers must considerach case on its merits and exercise

> "sensible discretion", and that that discretion "must be exercised judicially taking into account all the circumstances relevant to the question whether the claimant should be disqualified at all and excluding extraneous factors".

In a more recent commissioners decision (R(U) 4/87), shortly to be reported, a commissioner affirmed that an adjudication authority, in the case in question a social security appeal tribunal, must consciously exercise a discretion in each case in imposing disqualification and must state the facts taken into account in exercising that discretion.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Wales were receiving supplementary benefit in excess of the standard rate in order to help meet residential home or nursing home fees at the latest available date; and if he will estimate the total amount of supplementary benefit this represents.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Family Credit

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people will be entitled to both family credit and housing benefit after the Social Security Act 1986 is implemented in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: It is estimated that about 100,000 (just over 20 per cent.) of the families receiving family credit will also receive housing benefit. Of these about 25,000 will be receiving only rent rebate or rent allowance and 57,000 a rate rebate only. Fewer than 18,000 will receive both rent rebate/allowance and rate rebate.

Emphysema

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the Industrial Injuries Advisory

Council to report on its investigation into the cause of emphysema among coal miners; if he intends to publish it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I understand that the council has completed its investigation into bronchitis and emphysema and that its report will be submitted to my right hon. Friend by the end of the year. A decision on publication will be made at that time. It is, however, normal practice to publish council reports.

Birmingham Health Authorities

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reproduce his answer of 4 November, *Official Report*, columns 785-86, regarding Birmingham health authorities using the hospital pay and prices deflator.

Mrs. Currie: No. It is inappropriate to revalue district health authorities' expenditure by reference to centrally assessed movements in National Health Service pay and prices because the composition of that expenditure can differ substantially from the national average.

Departmental Staff (Dundee)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many staff are employed in his Department's Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices on the latest available figures; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The total number of staff in post on 1 November for each year 1979 to 1987 in Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices is as follows:

Year	*Dundee (East) ILO*	*Dundee (West) ILO*
1979	168·0	135
1980	168·0	144
1981	173·0	140
1982	168·0	141
1983	185·0	144
1984	194·0	137
1985	188·0	142
1986	197·0	148
1987	199·5	155

Abbreviation: ILO-integrated local office.

Social Fund

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the reply of 4 November, *Official Report*, columns 774-81, he will explain the basis on which the budget for each social security office's social fund has been calculated.

Mr. Scott: The allocations are based largely on single payment expenditure for the latter part of 1986-87, but also reflect estimates of the need for social fund grants and loans, based on the number and type of benefit recipients in each office.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are on his waiting lists and how long is the average length of time spent waiting for a routine non-urgent operation, in each of the teaching hospitals in London and in Leicester.

Mr. Newton: I regret that I cannot give the hon. and learned Member the information he seeks in precisely the form requested. The numbers of non-urgent surgical waiting-list cases and waiting time for individual hospitals are not available centrally. The latest information available centrally at district health authority level is, however, included in the booklet "Hospital In-Patient Waiting List—England at 31 March 1987", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Family Income Supplement

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many families employed in farming currently receive family income supplement; and if he will break this figure down between families of farm workers and those who own or rent their own farms.

Mr. Scott: At April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, there were 11,000 families, employed in farming or related occupations who were in receipt of family income supplement. Of these families, 4,000 were self-employed and 7,000 were employees. I regret that the further information requested is not available. "Related occupations" include such groups as crofters, fishermen, gardeners, foresters, keepers and groundsmen.

Paediatric Care

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for patients-staff ratios for paediatric care in National Health Service hospitals in the years 1976 and 1986.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 9 November 1987]*: Manpower statistics cover staff in post working in hospitals and are collected at a particular point in time; but they do not differentiate between types of activities within the hospital.

The information presented in the tables is in terms of staff employed and patients treated; ratios have not been calculated as comparable figures for the earlier year are not available.

Table 1

NHS Paediatric Staff[1] Whole Time Equivalent[2] (30/9/86)—England

Staff	*1976*	*1981*	*1986*
Medical and Dental[3,4]	1,410	1,840	2,080
Nursing	–[5]	7,820	9,260

Table 2

Cases Treated in NHS Consultant Paediatric Departments

Cases	*1976*	*1981*	*1986*
In-patients	246,040	304,560	379,790
Day patients	14,550	19,040	29,790
New Out-patients	173,710	191,740	238,720
Total Out-patients	1,020,400	1,127,330	1,303,620

[1] Defined by speciality/occupation code on payroll records.

[2] Figures are independently rounded to nearest 10 whole time equivalent.

[3] Permanent paid and honorary staff.

[4] Includes Paediatric—surgery, neurology, dentistry.

[5] Unavailable centrally for 1976, 1981 is the earliest year for which figures of this detail are available.

Single Payments Regulations

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will amend regulations 10 and 10A of the single payments regulations to enable payments to be made where the claimant has become the tenant or owner of an unfurnished home on the date of claim, as well as within the 28 days preceding that date; whether, in certain cases, payments are already made in these circumstances; and what guidance the office of the chief adjudication officer has given on this aspect of the interpretation of the 28 days rule.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* The regulations referred to allow a single payment to be made where the claimant has become the tenant or owner of unfurnished accommodation

"within the 28 days immediately preceding the date of claim".

I understand that, in response to inquiries, the office of the chief adjudication officer has advised that a claim should not be disallowed simply because the claimant made that claim on the same date that he obtained a tenancy or ownership of unfurnished accommodation. A commissioner's decision covering this point is currently awaited. I should wish to await that decision before considering whether any further action is necessary.

Invalid Care Allowance

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether all claims for invalid care allowance which resulted from the decision of the European Court to extend the benefit to married and cohabiting women and received before 31 August have now been granted and paid.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* At 6 November, the latest date for which information is available, decisions had been given on some 116,000 of the 126,000 invalid care allowance claims received from married and cohabiting women by 31 August 1987. The remaining claims will be decided as soon as possible.

Fielden Hospital

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take on behalf of the residents of the Fielden hospital for the mentally handicapped who are to be placed in unsuitable accommodation because their present hospital is to close; and if he will allocate Calderdale health authority additional money in order to avoid hardship to these residents.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* Provision of local health services is for Calderdale health authority to determine. It is accountable to Yorkshire regional health authority for service delivery. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of Calderdale health authority for the assurances she is clearly seeking.

I understand that the proposals referred to by the hon. Member involve the bringing forward of plans to close Fielden hospital and the transfer of approximately 30 patients affected to Standfield view hospital, the second mental handicap hospital in the district, where suitable accommodation will be provided. Calderdale health authority is upgrading one of the wards at Standfield view to enable the transfer to take place.

Agency Medical Locums

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he proposes to take about the practice employed by Calderdale district health authority of buying in agency medical locums costing two and a half times as much as junior doctors; what information he has about the effect of this on the district health authority budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* I understand that several regional health authorities, including Yorkshire, are considering steps to contain the cost of employing medical staff from agencies and we shall be monitoring progress.

The allocation of available resources within Calderdale district is a matter for the health authority and the hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman about this.

DEFENCE

Departmental Civilian Personnel

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in duties connected with public relations in his Department.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The most recently available figures for staff employed by the defence public relations staffs of the Ministry of Defence are as follows:

	Numbers
Civilian	
Grade 4/Executive Director	1
Grade 5/Assistant Secretary	1
Grade 6/Chief Information Officer	4
Grade 7/Principal Information Officer	9
Senior Information Officer	32
Information Officer	39
Assistant Information Officer	2
Senior Executive Officer	1
Higher Executive Officer	2
Executive Officer	5
Administrative Officer	25
Administrative Assistant	11
Typist	10
Senior Personal Secretary	1
Personal Secretary	4
Principal Photographic Officer	1
Senior Photographic Officer	1
Graphics Officer II	1
Assistant Librarian	1
	151
Military	
Captain RN	1
Commander	2
Lieutenant Commander	7
First Officer WRNS	1
Second Officer WRNS	3
Third Officer WRNS	1
Chief Petty Officer	1
Chief Wren	1
Captain RM	2
Sergeant RM	3
Leading Wren	2
Brigadier	1
Colonel	2
Lieutenant Colonel	6
Major	16
Captain	3
Captain WRAC	1
Warrant Officer 1	1

	Numbers
Sergeant	1
Air Commodore	1
Group Captain	1
Wing Commander	2
Squadron Leader	2
Flight Lieutenant	1
Flight Lieutenant WRAF	1
Sergeant	1
	64
Total = 215	

Departmental Public Relations Service

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of maintaining a public relations service within his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The cost of maintaining the defence public relations service in 1986-87 was £7·3 million. This figure includes staff costs together with expenditure on films, publications, equipment, etc. With regard to costs for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86 I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 19 November 1986 at col. *226*.

Service Personnel (Scotland)

Mr. Andrew Welsh asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of auxiliary personnel domiciled in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the numbers of auxiliary forces personnel domiciled in Scotland are not available. Numbers on the strength of units based in Scotland at 1 April 1987 were:

	Number
Home Service Force	575
Royal Auxiliary Air Force	192

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of regular reserve personnel domiciled in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: Full details of the number of regular reserve personnel domiciled in Scotland could not be determined except at disproportionate cost. Those details which are available are as follows:

	Number
Royal Navy Retired and Emergency Lists of Officers	[1]250
Royal Navy pensioners	[2]1,236
Royal Marines pensioners	[2]46
Royal Army Reserve of Officers	[3]240
Army Regular Reserve	[4]3,440
Army Long Term Reserve	[4]4,259
Army pensioners	[4]1,246

[1] approximate at 1 April 1987

[2] at 1 April 1987

[3] at 17 August 1987 excludes officers not allocated to a post on mobilisation

[4] at 17 August 1987

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of service personnel from *(a)* the United States navy, *(b)* the United States air force, *(c)* the Federal German armed forces and *(d)* the Dutch armed forces currently stationed in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the number of United States, Federal German and Netherlands service personnel stationed in Scotland are as follows:

	Number
United States Navy	[1]2,079
United States Army	[2]11
United States Air Force	[2]43
Federal German Armed Forces	[3]—
Netherlands Armed Forces	[3]—

[1] At 30 September 1987.

[2] At 30 June 1987.

[3] No personnel permanently stationed in Scotland.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the total numbers of (1) Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve, (2) Royal Naval Reserve and (3) Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve personnel domiciled in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: Details of the numbers of volunteer reserve forces personnel domiciled in Scotland are not readily available as some units do not draw their numbers on a local territorial basis. Numbers on the strength of units stationed in Scotland at 1 April 1987 were as follows:

	Number
Royal Naval Reserve	1,074
Royal Marines Reserve	280
Territorial Army	9,737
Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve	422

All RNR/RMR personnel must live within 40 miles of their unit location and consequently the above strength numbers are also the numbers domiciled in Scotland. RAFVR numbers include officers and adult warrant officers engaged in air training corps and combined cadet force training.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of (1) Army, (2) Royal Navy, (3) Royal Marines and (4) Royal Air Force service personnel stationed in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: The total number of United Kingdom service personnel stationed in Scotland at 1 July 1987 was as follows:

	Number
All Services	19,627
Royal Navy	8,004
Royal Marines	1,213
Army	[1]2,676
Royal Air Force	7,734

[1] Excludes 679 personnel on Emergency Tour.

Royal Navy and Royal Marines numbers include personnel on sea service in home waters with ships whose home port is in Scotland.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of total recruiting to (1) the Army, (2) the Royal Navy (including Royal Marines) and (3) the Royal Air Force in each year since 1979 have been accounted for by recruits domiciled in Scotland or recruited through recruiting offices in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: The total number of recruits and percentage of total United Kingdom recruitment entered through recruiting offices in Scotland was as follows:

	All services		*Royal Navy/ Royal Marines*		*Royal Navy*		*Royal Marines*		*Army*		*Royal Air Force*	
	Number	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*
1979-80	5,063	10·7	727	7·8	599	7·8	128	7·7	3,170	11·4	1,166	11·2
1980-81	4,969	11·0	787	7·9	646	7·7	141	8·7	3,017	12·0	1,165	11·9
1981-82	2,167	11·0	314	7·9	266	8·0	48	7·3	1,548	12·3	305	9·8
1982-83	2,374	12·5	328	9·2	286	9·1	42	9·9	1,649	14·4	397	10·2
1983-84	4,191	12·4	408	8·6	383	8·9	25	6·0	2,932	14·3	851	10·0
1984-85	3,324	10·8	436	9·0	381	9·7	55	6·1	2,324	11·7	564	9·4
1985-86	3,327	11·6	389	8·4	317	8·7	72	7·1	2,418	13·2	520	9·0
1986-87	3,131	10·6	510	8·7	421	9·0	89	7·6	2,011	11·3	610	10·1

The numbers and rates exclude the following groups who are recruiting centrally; officer entrants to all of the services, service women entrants to the Queen Alexandra's royal naval nursing service prior to 1986-87 and Army-rejoined reservists.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the current total manpower strength of the British armed forces is made up of personnel recruited in Scotland or normally domiciled in Scotland.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Aircraft (Accidents)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list, for each year since 1971, the rate of major accidents per 10,000 flying hours for Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft flying at low level.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available. Since 1980, the "Statement on Defence Estimates" has included the major accident rate for Royal Air Force aircraft flying at all levels. Since 1 January 1971, this has been as follows:

Royal Air Force Major Accidents: Rates per 10,000 hours flown

	Rate per thousand
1971	0·66
1972	0·46
1973	0·51
1974	0·32
1975	0·45
1976	0·58
1977	0·34
1978	0·49
1979	0·52
1980	0·48
1981	0·50
1982	0·49
1983	0·46
1984	0·38
1985	0·33
1986	0·31

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the definition of serious damage used in tables 5.7 and 5.8 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987", Vol. 2.

Mr. Freeman: An aircraft is said to be seriously damaged when it has been damaged beyond repair or cannot be repaired on site and must be removed to an established repair depot or civilian repair organisation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the frequency and circumstances of accidents in the United Kingdom to foreign military low-flying aircraft are taken into account in his continuous assessments of the safety and control procedures in the United Kingdom military low-flying system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Yes, such accidents are taken into account.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many military aircraft accident summaries were published in each year from 1980 to date.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1 January 1980, military aircraft accident summaries have been published as follows:

Year	*Number Published*
1980	23
1981	24
1982	23
1983	23
1984	20
1985	16
1986	16
1987 (to 13 November)	15

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for which of the military aircraft accidents listed in the annexes of the "Statement on Defence Estimates" in each year since 1980 there has been no military aircraft accident summary published; and what was the reason for non-publication in each case.

Mr. Freeman: Of the accidents to Royal Air Force aircraft listed in the "Statement on Defence Estimates" since 1980, military aircraft accident summaries have been published, or will be published, for them all with the following exceptions:

Date	*Aircraft*	*Reason for non-publication*
19 August 1980	Hawk	Aircraft damage recategorised.
17 May 1982	Tornado	Aircraft belonged to Tri-national Training School, RAF Cottesmore.
25 October 1985	Wessex	Aircraft lost during security operations in Northern Ireland
19 November 1985	Harrier	Aircraft damage recategorised

The Royal Navy began producing summaries in 1985. Since then, summaries for all accidents listed in the SDE have either been published or will be published in due course. It has not been the practice to publish summaries in the case of Army aircraft accidents.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 28 October, *Official Report*, column 393, that the number of aircraft training accidents in 1987 is the same as for 1986, if he will list the dates, aircraft type and locations of all accidents to British military aircraft flying at low level *(a)* between 1 January and 31 December 1986, *(b)* between 1 January and 28 October 1986 and *(c)* between 1 January and 28 October 1987.

Mr. Freeman: Major accidents to British military aircraft during low flying operations in 1986 and until 28 October 1987 are as follows:

Date	*Aircraft Type*	*Service*	*Location*
1986			
7 January	Phantom	RAF	Aysgarth, Yorkshire
20 March	Lynx	Army	Einbeck, West Germany
29 April	Gazelle	Army	Topcliffe
13 May	Chinook	RAF	West Falkland
12 July	Gazelle	Army	Sollau, West Germany
15 July	Lightning	RAF	North Sea off Teeside
7 October	Gazelle	Army	Hildesheim West Germany
20 October	Sea King	RN	In sea off Portugal
5 November	Wessex	RAF	Akrotiri Bay Cyprus
27 November	Jaguar	RAF	Eskdalemuir Forest
1987			
1 February	Wessex	RAF	Ben More
24 February	Sea King	RN	Falmouth Bay
27 February	Chinook	RAF	Falkland Island
30 March	Tornado	RAF	Wesel, West Germany
22 April	Buccaneer	RAF	In sea off Wick
3 June	Tornado	RAF	Manby, Lincs
17 June	Tornado Jaguar	RAF	Near Keswick
24 June	Jaguar	RAF	Nr. Builth Wells
16 July	Gazelle	Army	BATUS, Suffield, Canada
27 July	Tornado	RAF	Fadmoor, Yorkshire
26 August	Phantom	RAF	Near Aberystwyth
23 September	Sea King	RN	Culdrose
16 October	Wessex	RN	Off Lizard

Aircraft (Strobe Lights)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date high intensity strobe lights were first fitted to Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft; what proportion of the Royal Air Force's fast jet fleet is now so equipped; and what plans exist to fit high intensity strobe lights to other United Kingdom military aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: High-intensity strobe lights (HISL) began to be fitted to certain RAF aircraft types in 1983. Of these, the following proportion now have HISL:

	Per cent.
Harrier T4	73
Harrier GR3	15
Harrier GR5	100
Hawk	100
Jaguar	96
Buccaneer Mk 2b	54

Consideration is being given to fitting HISL to certain other RAF aircraft in due course. In addition, all RAF Tornado aircraft are fitted with a low-intensity strobe light system. HISLs have been fitted to all Royal Navy Harriers, and a programme is underway to fit HISLs to Army Gazelle and Lynx helicopters.

Minesweepers

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many minesweepers are *(a)* being commissioned and *(b)* in the process of being built.

Mr. Sainsbury: There are currently two MCMVs and five SRMHs on order from the shipbuilder. Of these, one MCMV (HMS Berkeley) is due to be accepted later this month and will join the fleet as an operational unit on completion of trials. HMS Atherstone was accepted from the shipbuilder in 1986 and will join the fleet soon.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy minesweepers are equipped with chaff launchers and missile detection radar.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Royal Navy mine counter-measures vessels are provided with self-defence equipment relevant to the range of threats they face in carrying out their operational tasks. It would not be in the interests of the safety of our ships to define the specific capabilities of individual ships.

Flying Guidance (Nuclear Power Stations)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidance is given to Royal Air Force pilots regarding flying in the vicinity of nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Standing instructions prohibit all military aircraft from flying in the vicinity of nuclear installations in the United Kingdom.

Low Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any part of the tactical route for low flying by larger and less manoeuvrable military aircraft has been reinstated since its closure in 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current maximum capacity of the United Kingdom low-flying system in terms of numbers of military low-level training sorties flown per year;

(2) if planning for the future use of the United Kingdom military low-flying system includes the setting of target or maximum figures for the total number of sorties to be flown in any given period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: There is no restriction on the total number of military low level training sorties flown in the United Kingdom each year; nor is any planned.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes are planned for the United Kingdom low-flying system in respect of *(a)* air traffic control procedures *(b)* flight safety procedures *(c)* aircraft routing patterns and *(d)* the vertical and horizontal boundaries of existing low-flying areas.

Mr. Freeman: All these aspects of the managements of low flying in the United Kingdom are kept under continuous review.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of reducing the size of the Manston/Lydd low-flying avoidance area in 1984-85.

Mr. Freeman: The Manston-Lydd low-flying avoidance area was reduced in size, in February 1985, to alleviate local air space congestion, spread activity more widely and evenly, and dilute the noise disturbance for those living in surrounding areas.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of deleting the low-flying avoidance areas over Northern Ireland, the Isle of Wight, the Isles of Scilly, Orkney and Shetland in 1986.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1979 when the new United Kingdom low-flying system was introduced, of the areas specified in the question, only the Isle of Wight has been an avoidance area. Low-flying aircraft did not however generally fly over the Isles of Orkney and Shetland or the Isles of Scilly before these areas were surveyed by the MOD (in 1986 and 1987 respectively) to identify potential flight safety hazards and more sensitive locations. Fixed-wing low-flying training is not currently carried out in Northern Ireland because of the high level of operational flying there.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations took place between his Department and officials of the local authorities concerned prior to the deletion of the low-flying avoidance areas over Northern Ireland, the Isle of Wight, the Isles of Scilly, Orkney and Shetland in 1986.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if there are any plans to eliminate or reduce the size of any existing low-flying avoidance areas in the United Kingdom military low-flying system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: As part of the continuous monitoring of the UKLFS, a programme of reviews of avoidance areas is carried out and changes made when necessary, reflecting changes on the ground, and aimed at spreading low flying more evenly and enhancing flight safety, while at the same time reducing, where possible, the disturbance to those on the ground.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on what date the normal maximum speed for military flying at less than 500 ft over the United Kingdom was increased from 420 knots to 450 knots; when this change was announced; and what consultations took place with local authorities, farming interests and environmental bodies prior to implementation of the increased speed limit;

(2) in which areas of the United Kingdom, and under what circumstances, low-flying military aircraft are permitted to fly at speeds up to 540 knots;

(3) in which areas of the United Kingdom, and under what circumstances, low-flying military aircraft are permitted to fly at speeds up to 480 knots.

Mr. Freeman: The normal maximum cruising speed in the United Kingdom low-flying system for all military aircraft is 450 knots, except for F-111s which are allowed, for aircraft handling reasons, to fly at speeds of up to 480 knots. Aircraft may however increase their speed above these levels to a maximum of 550 knots (overland) in special circumstances such as simulated attack or interception manoeuvres. Prior to the introduction of the revised United Kingdom low-flying system in 1979 the usual aircraft speeds were between 240 and 420 knots, with some aircraft being allowed to fly up to 550 knots. During the introduction of the revised system, changes in height and speed limits were implemented gradually, and the current speed restrictions came into force on 1 March 1980. There were no consultations with local authorities, farming interests and environmental bodies on this matter, nor was such consultation considered necessary.

Harrier

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart concerning the Harrier GRS/AV 8 B.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 10 November at column *148*.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the order will be placed for the second batch of Harrier GR5s.

Mr. Sainsbury: Initial orders for long-dated materials and component manufacture, have already been placed. The balance of the order will be placed early next year.

Tucano

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the Short Tucano has received its release for service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many Tucano aircraft are currently undergoing evaluation tests at RAE Boscombe Down.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Short's Tucano has not yet received its release for service. One aircraft has been accepted by MOD and will start its release to service trials at A and AEE Boscombe Down shortly; a second aircraft is expected today.

Mr. Rogers To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many Short Tucano aircraft have been delivered to the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Short Tucano aircraft are presently in Royal Air Force service training pilots.

Mr. Sainsbury: None.

Air-sea Rescue

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to cut the air sea rescue flight at Royal Air Force Brawdy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The provision of military helicopters for search and rescue is currently under consideration by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Transport. No fnal decisions have been made. Any significant change to the current arrangements will be announced in the House at the appropriate time.

Ejector Seat

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Royal Air Force aircraft will be fitted with the mark 12 ejector seat.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Harrier GR5.

Identification Friend or Foe System

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which NATO nations have signed the NATO memorandum of understanding on an identification friend or foe system.

Mr. Sainsbury: Ten nations (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States) have signed an MOU providing for the exchange of information, and the identification of opportunities for co-operation, on a new NATO identification system; Greece has applied to subscribe to this MOU also.

A second MOU is aimed specifically at promoting co-operation in the development and production of such a system. This has been signed by Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, and we hope that France will also sign shortly.

Lynx (Radar)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place orders for the new all-round radar for the Royal Naval Lynx helicopter as part of the improvement programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Subject to the availability of resources, I hope to be able to make a decision on an improved radar for the Royal Naval Lynx Mk 8 helicopter early in the new year.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what residential accommodation is provided for departmental Ministers and civil servants and charged to public funds; and what has been the total cost in each financial year since 1979.

Mr. Sainsbury: This information is not readily available and can be supplied only at disproportionate cost.

Live Ammunition

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of civilians and service men injured or killed by live ammunition in the Dartmoor national park in the last 30 years.

Mr. Freeman: One boy was killed and two members of the public have been injured by live ammunition on service ranges in the national park over the last 30 years. We do not hold centrally records for any service men in the same categories.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of civilian deaths and injuries resulting from the use of live ammunition in military exercises or service ranges in the last 30 years.

Mr. Freeman: This historical information is not held centrally. From 1 January 1988 such information will be collected centrally.

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any live ammunition or other military ordnance has been recovered by civilians from the Okehampton range.

Mr. Freeman: The recovery of military objects from live-firing ranges is strictly against the byelaws, and signs warn the public accordingly. A recent accident at the Okehampton range was an instance where the byelaws had been contravened, but we have no means of knowing whether on other occasions military ordnance might have been salvaged in similar circumstances.

Submarines

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of submariners are volunteers.

Mr. Freeman: Currently around half the ratings entering the submarine service are volunteers, and 80 per cent. of all those serving are volunteers for further service. Virtually all officers are volunteers.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present manpower strength of the submarine service.

Mr. Freeman: The manpower strength of the submarine service at 30 September 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, was 8,341.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the W class SSN will have a vertical launch Harpoon capability.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are as yet in a very early stage of defining the staff requirement for the follow-on class SSN, and it is too early to say what capabilities the class will have.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the first four Upholder class submarines will enter Royal Navy service.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not the practice to reveal acceptance dates in advance.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of updating the sonar on Oberon class submarines.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not the practice to publicise project costs which are commercially confidential between the Ministry of Defence and individual contractors.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent discussions he has had with his Canadian counterpart concerning the sale of nuclear submarines;

(2) what recent discussions he has had with his United States counterpart concerning the sale of nuclear submarines to Canada.

Mr. Sainsbury: My right hon. Friend last met his United States counterpart earlier this month, when a wide range of issues, including the proposed Canadian procurement of nuclear-powered submarines was discussed.

Exercise Purple Warrior

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of fuel for Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr.

Wilson) on 6 November, at column *934*. Financial provision for fuel for exercises such as Purple Warrior is included in overall allocations and is not separately identified.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether civilians taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior are entitled to compensation in the event of injury or death;

(2) how many Warsaw pact representatives have been officially observing Exercise Purple Warrior;

(3) how many civilian ships are taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior; and what types of vessel they are;

(4) how many civilians are being used as refugees in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(5) whether the armaments on all the Royal Navy vessels taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior were fully operational at the start of the exercise;

(6) whether the computer-assisted communication equipment on all the Royal Navy vessels taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior was fully operational at the start of the exercise;

(7) whether the computer-assisted command control and warning system on board all the Royal Navy vessels taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior was operational at the start of the exercise;

(8) which type 42 destroyers are taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(9) which batch III type frigates are taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(10) if he will list the numbers and types of Army vehicles taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(11) if he will list the Army and Royal Marine units taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(12) if he will list the numbers and types of Royal Air Force aircraft taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(13) if he will list the numbers and types of Royal Navy aircraft taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(14) which Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels are taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior;

(15) what is the cost of chartering West German and Danish vessels for Exercise Purple Warrior;

(16) if he will make a statement on the outcome of Exercise Purple Warrior.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Exercise Purple Warrior is still in progress and it would be premature at this stage to make a statement on its outcome, although the initial indications are that it will prove to have been most successful. Nevertheless I can say now that the exercise was host for the first time on UK territory to observers under the terms of the Stockholm document. A total of 34 observers from 20 countries attended, 12 of whom were from Warsaw Pact countries. We welcomed this opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the agreement and its role in lessening suspicion and mistrust, and hence improving security, in Europe.

The following Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels are taking part in the exercise:

HMS Ark Royal
HMS Illustrious
HMS Intrepid
HMS Nottingham
HMS Manchester
HMS Active
HMS Minerva
HMS Ariadne
HMS Juno
HMS Danae
HMS Otus
HMS Onyx
HMS Odin
HMS Leeds Castle
HMS Smiter
HMS Attacker
HMS Kellington
HMS Bronington
RFA Olwen
RFA Fort Austin
RFA Resource
RFA Olmeda
RFA Sir Tristram
RFA Sir Percivale
RFA Sir Bedivere
RFA Sir Geraint
RFA Sir Lancelot

Of these, HMS Manchester and HMS Nottingham are type 42 destroyers. No batch III type 22 frigates are yet in service with the Royal Navy. It is not our practice to comment upon the operational status of Royal Navy vessels.

Eleven civilian ships are taking part in the exercise, of which five are passenger ro-ros, four are vehicle ro-ros and two are semi-submersible ships. The West German and Danish vessels among this number were hired as part of a charter package. The cost of chartering these particular vessels is therefore not separately identified.

The following Royal Navy aircraft are taking part in the exercise:

12 Sea Harrier
29 Sea King
6 Lynx
8 Gazelle

The following RAF aircraft are taking part in the exercise:

4 Phantom
2 Nimrod
6 Harrier
6 Jaguar
6 Buccaneer
2 Canberra
Up to 15 C130 (Hercules)
4 Chinook
2 VC10
3 Puma

The majority of Royal Marine and Army units taking part in the exercise form 3 Commando brigade and 5 Airborne brigade. Other forces involved, participating mainly in a support role, include elements of the following:

Royal Horse Artillery
Corps of Royal Engineers
Royal Corps of Signals
1 Infantry Brigade
Army Air Corps
Royal Corps of Transport
Royal Army Medical Corps
Royal Army Ordnance Corps
Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
Corps of Royal Military Police
Royal Pioneer Corps

Approximately 1,890 Army vehicles are taking part in the exercise. Vehicles involved include 8 and 4-ton lorries, Land Rovers, Scorpion reconnaissance vehicles and engineer plant.

Ninety-six civilians volunteered and took part in evacuation operations earlier in the exercise. There are no plans for any other civilians to take part during the remainder of the exercise. I am not aware that any of these civilians have suffered injury or death as a result of their participation, but any claims arising from the exercise would be dealt with by my Department on the basis of any legal liability on the part of my Department.

Sea Dart

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Sea Dart missiles have failed in test firings since 1982.

Mr. Sainsbury: For reasons of security, it is not our practice to disclose details of firing results. However, there is no cause for concern about Sea Dart missile performance during practice firings as this is meeting the naval staff requirement.

Amphibious Vessels

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to publish the results of his feasibility studies on amphibious vessels.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 November to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth).

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy officers are trained to repair the computer-assisted communications system for amphibious transport docks and aircraft carriers.

Mr. Ian Stewart: There are several different types of equipment in our amphibious ships and aircraft carriers which could be said to fall within the terms of the hon. Gentleman's question, and the training requirements to ensure their maintenance support therefore vary. The hon. Gentleman may, however, have in mind a particular United States computer system installed in HMS Ark Royal and HMS Intrepid for trials and for which, therefore, normal maintenance support arrangements are not appropriate.

Illustrious

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Illustrious will next undergo refit; and when that refit will be complete.

Mr. Sainsbury: HMS Illustrious' next refit is scheduled to start as part of the core programme at Devonport dockyard in 1991 and to finish in 1993. The plans for refitting Royal Naval vessels are, however, subject to continuous review.

Aircraft Carriers

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which aircraft carriers are currently on operational deployment.

Mr. Ian Stewart: HMS Ark Royal and HMS Illustrious are currently taking part in Exercise Purple Warrior.

NFR 90

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) why he has not ratified the memorandum of understanding on the NFR 90 warship;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effects on the British warship electronics industry of the non-ratification of the memorandum of understanding on NFR 90;

(3) whether his Department intends to ratify the memorandum of understanding on NFR 90 at a later stage.

Mr. Sainsbury: The question of British Government participation in the project definition phase of the NFR 90 project is being considered by my right hon. Friend, whose eventual decision will take full account of the implications for British industry together with all other relevant factors, including the need to harmonise the procurement of the vessel with that of her principal anti-air warfare armament.

MOD Police

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether agreement has been reached between the Ministry of Defence police and 1964 Act police forces, on on-base and off-base contingency plans in terms of the guidelines established under the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: Arrangements for contingency planning are not as such affected by either the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987 or the guidelines recently issued and to which I referred in my recent answer to the hon. Member on 29 October 1987 at columns *407-8*. No new agreement is therefore required.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what regulations he has made regarding the membership and procedures of the Ministry of Defence police committee;

(2) if he will list the membership of the Ministry of Defence police committee to whom the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence police is accountable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD police committee, whose terms of reference are to determine policy for the roles, management and administration of the Ministry of Defence police, including the identification of the overall money, manpower and equipment resources necessary to achieve that policy efficiently; and to advise the Secretary of State on these and such other matters as he may from time to time require, will be regulated by a statutory instrument which my right hon. Friend will place before the House shortly. The membership of the committee is as follows:

The Second Permanent Under Secretary of State—Chairman
The Vice Chief of the Defence Staff—Vice Chairman
The Deputy Under Secretary of State (Civilian Management)
The Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff
The Assistant Chief of the General Staff
The Commandant General RAF Regiment and Director General of Security (RAF)
The Assistant Under Secretary of State R & D Establishments and Research Administration
The Assistant Under Secretary of State (Security and Common Services)
Sir Lawrence Byford—outside member nominated by Home Office
Mr. R. S. Sim—outside member nominated by Scottish Office

In addition the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable of the MOD Police, the Head of the MOD Police Secretariat and the Secretary to the Committee sit in attendance.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has completed his review of the case for a special constables scheme in the Ministry of Defence police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department's review of the requirement for an MOD police special constable scheme has been completed and it has been concluded that it would not be appropriate to proceed further at present.

Tanks (West Germany)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to resolve disturbance caused to those living near the Detmold tank depot near Paderborn in West Germany by groups of tanks driving to a practice field; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British and German tanks share the Detmold depot. We make every effort to minimise the nearest disturbances when our tanks are moved, and we have recently stopped tank movements late at night or early in the morning. We inform the local village when tank movement is to take place; the local police and stadt authorities have agreed that there is no alternative route.

Departmental Manpower

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce his Department's response to the report of the National Audit Office on the use of manpower in his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The NAO is conducting an equiry into the use of manpower by MOD; but its report has not yet been published. It is the normal practice for NAO reports to be considered by the Public Accounts Committee which takes evidence from the Department concerned.

Projects (Scotland)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total amount spent on defence construction, land and works services projects in Scotland in each financial year since 1978-79.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The information can be provided only from 1984-85. Expenditure by the Property Services Agency on MOD's behalf, on new works, modernisation and maintenance, is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	109·45
1985-86	111·92
1986-87	201·73
1987-88	[1]199·12

[1] Forecast

The Ministry of Defence also incur some works expenditure direct but it is not more than about £2 million per annum. Expenditure by MOD direct on the purchase and rental of lands and buildings is as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1984-85	2·67
1985-86	3·07
1986-87	3·87
1987-88	—[1]

[1] No figures available.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the total amount spent on defence construction, land and works services projects in Scotland in each financial year since 1978-79 was accounted for by contract awards to companies based or registered in Scotland.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Contracts (Scotland)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of contract awards to Scottish-based companies for military construction work in each financial year since 1978–79.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that this information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 17 November 1987

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities (Contract Funding)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect contract funding of universities will have on the quality of education for students.

Mr. Jackson: The implementation of contract-based funding arrangments is only one of the range of policies described in the White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge" (Cm. 114) for improving cost effectiveness and quality in higher education.

Durham University

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the reduction in real terms of the grant to Durham university since 1979.

Mr. Jackson: Between the academic years 1979-80 and 1986-87, the total recurrent grant paid to Durham university on the advice of the University Grants Committee increased by 20·6 per cent. in real terms as measured by the GDP deflator.

Higher Education

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the percentage increase since 1979 in real terms, in expenditure on higher education, not including student support, and if he will make it his policy to restore expenditure to 1981 levels.

Mr. Jackson: Planned provision for public expenditure on higher education, excluding provision for student maintenance, in the United Kingdom is 3 per cent. higher in real terms in 1987-88 than the corresponding outturn in 1979-80. Estimated outturn figures for 1987-88 are not yet available. As a result of the increases in funding announced by my right hon. Friend on 3 November, recurrent grant to the universities in the financial year 1988-89 is planned to be 8 per cent. higher in cash terms than in 1987-88 and provision for the polytechnics and colleges under local authority control is planned to be 9 per cent. higher than in 1987-88.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give, expressed in constant prices with 1983 as the base, the value of the unit of resource for each student place in higher education for 1983 and each succeeding year.

Mr. Jackson: The information requested is set out in the table for the years 1983-84 to 1986-87 on the basis of UGC grant plus total fee income per full-time equivalent (fte) student in universities in Great Britain and the institutional expenditure per full-time equivalent student in establishments providing higher education maintained by local education authorities in England. The figures have been repriced to 1983-84 real terms using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflator.

Financial year	*Great Britain Universities £ (1983-84 prices)*	*Local authorities higher education England £ (1983-84 prices)*
1983-84	4,845	2,985
1984-85	4,825	2,885
1985-86	4,675	2,805
1986-87	4,620	2,825

Teaching Standards and Efficiency

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will define the performance indicators which it is proposed will be used to gauge teaching standards and efficiency.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is too early to say what the outcome of the pilot work on teacher appraisal will be. This pilot work is being undertaken in six local education authorities under the direction of the National Steering Group. The intended outcome of the pilot work is a tested set of documents and procedures which all education authorities would be able to adopt.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Trafford)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the current pupil-to-teacher ratio for primary and secondary schools in Trafford; and what was the ratio for the four previous years.

Mr. Dunn: The pupil-teacher ratios in maintained primary and secondary schools in Trafford in January 1987 and the four previous years are:

January each year	*Primary*	*Secondary*
1983	23·0	16·5
1984	22·7	16·6
1985	22·9	16·4
1986	22·9	16·3
1987	22·4	15·5

Assisted Places Scheme

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to review the assisted places scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The Government plan to expand the assisted places scheme to 35,000 places. The basic principles underlying the scheme will remain unchanged.

Technological Education

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average number of microcomputers in secondary schools; and if he is satisfied with the current standard of technological education at secondary level.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average number of microcomputers in maintained secondary schools in England is 14. The quality and breadth of technological education has improved considerably in recent years. The Government have proposed that technology should be one of the foundation subjects in the national curriculum. Subject to acceptance of these proposals, we expect to see further improvements in the standard of technological education at secondary level.

GCSE (Trafford)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocation has been made to Trafford for the implementation of the general certificate of secondary education in the previous and in the current academic year.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government have provided earmarked support for the following GCSE related expenditure by the Trafford education authority. These allocations are made on a financial year basis.

	Financial year	
	1986-87 £	*1987-88* £
Education Support Grant for GCSE books and equipment	67,700	48,000
Specific grant support for GCSE-related in-service training	35,080	73,000
Manpower Services Commission support for scientific and technological equipment	25,100	—

In addition to earmarked support, the Government's expenditure plans for the financial year 1987-88 allow for some £90 million expenditure by local authorities overall on GCSE non-teaching costs, supported through rate support grant which is not earmarked for individual services. It is for the Trafford education authority to target the available resources as it sees fit.

GCSE

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he remains satisfied with the progress made in implementing the general certificate of secondary education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Evidence from Her Majesty's inspectorate and elsewhere shows that the GCSE is already leading to significant improvements in teaching and learning. However, the Government do not underestimate the continuing commitment required on the part of teachers and others in the education service to realise the full benefits of the GCSE. My right hon. Friend demonstrated the Government's own continuing commitment in the Government's expenditure plans for 1988-89, which allow for some £87 million of local authority expenditure on GCSE non-teaching costs. As in 1987-88, the Government are providing as much as the local authorities say they need. It is for local authorities to ensure that the available resources are targeted on priority needs.

Student Grants

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual cost of student grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: In the 1985-86 academic year, the latest year for which information is available, total expenditure on mandatory awards by local education authorities in England and Wales was £700 million. This figure includes £458 million for maintenance and £242 million for fees.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mrs. Rumbold: Advertising expenditure by the Department of Education and Science through the Central Office of Information in 1985-86 was as follows:

Agency and campaign	*Cost £*
Dorland Advertising Ltd.	
Prestel directory and magazine	204
Dorland Advertising Ltd.	
Recruitment of craft and technology teachers	8,140
Dorland Advertising Ltd.	
Education and science programmes for employers	3,120
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
Teacher recruitment	3,260

WALES

Hotels

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what results there are to date following the introduction of the crown hotel classification scheme in each category; how many hotels have failed to meet the specifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: According to the Wales tourist board, the information as at 1 November 1987 is as follows:

Category	*Number*
Listed	121
1 Crown	40
2 Crowns	306
3 Crowns	273
4 Crowns	167
5 Crowns	28
Awaiting visit	29
	964

An additional 54 hotels have failed to meet the criteria for registration.

The Wales tourist board, in conjunction with the English tourist board, proposes consulting the industry about improvements to the scheme, including an element of qualitative assessment. A consultation document outlining a range of options for the future development of the scheme is being prepared for discussion. It is planned that decisions will be taken next spring.

DEFENCE

Regional Policy

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates have been made by his

Department of the economic impact of the location of its establishments on United Kingdom regional policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Whilst we aim to secure a more even spread of defence employment across the regions, decisions on all proposals affecting the future of defence establishments must be made on their own economic and operational merits.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of defence establishments together with the number of staff, including regular service men, employed in each English and Welsh county.

Mr. Sainsbury: Details on the number of defence establishments located in each county are not available centrally and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost and effort. The table shows the number of staff, both civilian (full-time equivalent) and service, employed or deployed in each county at 1 July 1987.

Civilian and Service Numbers at 1 July 1987

	Total	*Service personnel*	*Civilian personnel*
England	311,333	190,906	120,427
North Region	5,287	2,124	3,163
Tyne and Wear	604	246	358
Cleveland	723	41	628
Cumbria	2,354	491	1,863
Durham	117	40	77
Northumberland	1,489	1,306	183
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	20,485	14,448	6,037
South Yorkshire	2,375	2,080	295
West Yorkshire	371	115	256
Humberside	1,832	1,136	696
North Yorkshire	15,907	11,117	4,790
East Midlands	17,145	13,082	4,063
Derbyshire	294	20	274
Leicestershire	4,573	3,316	1,257
Lincolnshire	9,772	8,578	1,194
Northamptonshire	207	135	72
Nottinghamshire	2,299	1,033	1,266
East Anglia Region	18,641	16,020	2,621
Cambridgeshire	8,621	7,285	1,336
Norfolk	6,439	5,581	858
Suffolk	3,581	3,154	427
South east region	149,319	86,717	62,602
Greater London	32,817	12,922	19,895
Bedfordshire	3,503	1,325	2,178
Berkshire	13,863	4,271	9,592
Buckinghamshire	5,145	4,133	1,012
East Sussex	123	39	84
Essex	5,912	4,411	1,501
Hampshire	60,818	38,543	22,275
Hertfordshire	1,634	1,548	86
Kent	8,092	6,189	1,903
Oxfordshire	10,896	7,508	3,388
Surrey	5,423	4,910	513
West Sussex	1,093	918	175
South west region	78,538	48,504	30,034
Avon	7,222	1,663	5,559
Cornwall	7,185	6,391	794
Devon	20,508	14,799	5,709
Dorset	9,821	5,681	4,140
Gloucestershire	6,427	1,993	4,434
Somerset	5,074	3,428	1,646
Wiltshire	22,301	14,549	7,752
West Midlands region	17,463	8,481	8,982
West Midlands	685	333	352
Hereford and Worcester	4,008	1,481	2,527
Shropshire	7,081	3,430	3,651
Staffordshire	2,993	1,685	1,308
Warwickshire	2,696	1,552	1,144
North west region	4,455	1,530	2,925
Greater Manchester	920	136	784
Merseyside	1,459	218	1,241
Cheshire	660	236	424
Lancashire	1,416	940	476
Wales	12,040	6,076	5,964
Clwyd	2,140	909	1,231
Dyfed	3,040	831	2,209
Gwent	253	38	215
Gwynedd	1,364	1,120	244
Mid Glamorgan	63	8	55
Powys	533	190	343
South Glamorgan	4,605	2,956	1,649
West Glamorgan	42	24	18

Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel on sea service in home waters are included in the county containing the home port of their ship.

Low Flying

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties of below 250 ft have been conducted by Royal Air Force personnel in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Freeman: Low-flying sorties have only been recorded directly since 1985. Before then, sorties were calculated from records of aircraft movements. The number of movements is given below. A sortie is approximately 2·5 movements.

Number of movements authorised for flying below 250ft in Northern Scotland

	Number
1979	664
1980	626
1981	601
1982	236
1983	1,616
1984	667
1985	259
1986	539
1987	[1] 304

[1] Up to 30 September 1987.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans any future increase in the number of Royal Air Force low-flying sorties in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No. It is our policy to spread low flying training as widely and evenly as possible throughout the United Kingdom low-flying system.

Research Contracts

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education have now received research contracts under the United States of America strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Sainsbury: Seventeen.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many contracts and agreements for research his Department has made with *(a)* the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, *(b)* the University College of North Wales, Bangor, *(c)* University College, Cardiff, *(d)* the University of Wales College of Medicine, *(e)* the University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology, *(f)* St. David's University College, Lampeter, *(g)* University College, Swansea and *(h)* the Polytechnic of Wales, and in each case which subjects the agreements involve.

Mr. Sainsbury: Currently some 33 research agreements and four contracts on a wide range of subjects are placed with Welsh universities and colleges by the Ministry of Defence. It is for the institutions concerned to confirm their individual involvement.

PRIME MINISTER

Visits

Q9. **Mr. Steen**: To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to the Dartmoor national park.

Q22. **Mr. Pawsey**: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Ryton in the Rugby and Kenilworth constituency.

Q60. **Mr. Bidwell**: To ask the Prime Minister if he will pay an official visit to Southall.

Q74. **Miss Widdecombe**: To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to pay an official visit to Maidstone.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Lobbying

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to ensure that all official meetings between Government Ministers and representatives of commercial lobbying organisations are recorded and published at regular intervals; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government has any proposals to equalise non-domestic rate bills in England, Wales and Scotland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Rateable values are presently assessed by the Inland Revenue in England and Wales and by local assessors in Scotland. Despite a similar legislative framework, over the years valuation practice has diverged to some extent. A start has been made on the harmonisation of valuation practice so that business premises will be assessed on a comparable basis throughout Great Britain. It is unlikely, however, that this process will be completed in the 1990 revaluation. Only when the process of harmonisation is subsequently complete will it be appropriate to turn to the question of a uniform non-domestic rate poundage throughout Great Britain.

Engagements

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 17 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Barbados.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Bureaux de change

95. **Mr. Butterfill**: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he proposes to introduce legislation to oblige bureaux de change to conform to a code of conduct and to control commission charges.

Mr. Maude: I propose to introduce regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 which will require banks and bureaux de change to display their exchange rates and any commission charges clearly and prominently. My Department will be consulting interested parties about the details in due course.

Information

Mr. Sheerby: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Maude: Information is not readily available for advertising other than that placed through the Central Office of Information or centrally by my Department.

The figures readily available are:

1985-86

Agency and Subject	*Cost £*
Doyle, Dane, Bernbach Ltd. National Engineering Laboratory	17,245
Doyle, Dane, Bernbach Ltd. National Physical Laboratory	7,600
Doyle, Dane, Bernbach Ltd. Queen's Award to Industry	49,116
Ayer Barker Ltd. Companies Act 1985	10,000
Ayer Barker Ltd. Patent Office	35,000
Ayer Barker Ltd. Advanced Manufacturing Technology	1,200
J. Walter Thompson Group Ltd. British Overseas Trade Board	9,600
Dorland Advertising British Overseas Trade Board	11,000
J. Walter Thompson Group Ltd. British Overseas Trade Board	42,600
Leo Burnett Ltd. British Overseas Trade Board	1,030
Industrial Publicity Services Ltd. National Engineering Laboratory	6,010
Industrial Publicity Services Ltd. Small Firms Centre	84,539
Valin Pollen Invest in Britain Bureau	200,376
David Tolson Invest in Britain Bureau	978, 463
Charles Barker Recruitment	41,057
Charles Barker Statutory Notices	64,937

The figures provided are in full cost terms, including VAT where applicable.

British Telecom

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, when he next meets the Director General of OFTEL, if he will raise with him the case for British Telecom to make available to all subscribers a 24 hour a day, seven days a week, cover for faults which incapacitate any subscriber's telephone.

Mr. Maude: I understand from the director general that a premium fault repair and maintenance service of this kind is already on offer.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to change the criteria for selection of members of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he has any plans to change the composition of the membership of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Maude: No, but vacancies for new members arise regularly and are filled by reference primarily to the particular expertise and experience which the commission currently requires.

Space Development

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what role he now envisages for United Kingdom industry in the development of space.

Mr. Maude: Although we have decided not to go into expensive new European Space Agency programmes, this does not imply any reduction in our existing effort in space or in our existing contribution to ESA.

We are about to start discussions with industry, aimed at greater private sector involvement in the funding and planning of those aspects of space work with commercial potential. If from those discussions some well-judged projects emerge which are justified, and offer value for money against all the criteria we have to apply to space projects, we will consider backing them.

Capital Radio

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action he is taking to stop the interference by a Greek pirate radio station affecting Capital Radio's signal to large areas of London.

Mr. Maude: My Department's radio investigation service has already seized an unmanned radio transmitter operating on a frequency of 95·5MHz and broadcasting in the Greek language. As the station appears to have returned to the air, investigations are continuing.

Regional Aid

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will express the total payments made in each regional area as a percentage of the total payments nationally under the following provisions *(a)* parts I, II, III of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and parts I(2) and II of the Industry Act 1972, *(b)* regional development grants (old scheme), *(c)* regional development grants (new scheme), *(d)* selective financial assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, *(e)* assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, *(f)* the small firms loan guarantee scheme, *(g)* support for advanced manufacturing project planning and implementation, *(h)* investment support for microelectronics 1, *(i)* investment support for fibre optics and opto-electronics, *(j)* support for implementing quality assistance schemes, *(k)* coal fining scheme, *(l)* selective investment scheme, *(m)* innovation-linked investment scheme, *(n)* investment support for micro-electronics 2 and *(o)* assistance to local enterprise agencies.

Mr. Maude: The following table shows the percentages requested based on payments figures as shown in the relevant appendices to the annual report of the Industrial Development Act 1982 for the year ended 31 March 1987. An asterisk denotes that the item in question is no longer the responsibility of the Department of Trade and Industry.

Total payments made in each regional area expressed as a percentage of total payments made nationally

	Scotland	*Wales*	*North East*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*
Parts I, II, III of the Industrial Development Act 1982 and parts I(2) and II of the Industrial Act 1972	26·8	17·0	22·6	7·1	2·1	2·3	2·4	1·5	18·2
Regional development grants (old scheme)	*28·8	*18·1	26·3	6·1	0·9	—	1·8	0·5	17·5
Regional development grants (new scheme)	*32·1	*16·0	19·5	9·2	4·0	—	2·8	—	16·4
Selective financial assistance under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982	*27·1	*19·2	15·2	8·8	3·0	—	2·5	1·4	22·8
Assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982	7·9	4·5	3·4	12·5	9·9	25·2	7·1	13·8	15·7
The small firms loan guarantee scheme*	6·8	4·1	4·1	6·8	6·7	42·3	8·8	8·3	12·1

	Scotland	*Wales*	*North East*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*
Support for advanced manufacturing project planning and implementation	4·3	0·7	3·9	8·5	4·9	20·0	12·8	26·5	18·4
Investment support for microelectronics 1	5·4	0·2	0·2	—	18·2	23·1	14·7	0·8	27·4
Investment support for fibre optics and opto-electronics	—	—	—	6·7	10·0	56·7	26·6	—	—
Support for implementing quality assistance schemes	5·9	—	5·9	11·8	11·8	29·3	5·9	17·6	11·8
Coal firing scheme*	6·8	3·0	10·9	7·6	5·7	29·7	2·7	4·3	29·3
Selective investment scheme	18·0	18·6	2·7	4·3	9·8	8·3	3·6	13·5	20·6
Innovation-linked investment scheme	7·7	—	—	15·4	—	46·1	15·4	7·7	7·7
Investment support for microelectronics 2	3·4	—	—	—	—	43·2	24·0	0·7	26·7
Assistance to local enterprise agencies*	—	—	8·7	8·7	13·0	30·5	8·7	8·7	21·7

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many applications have been made for regional selective assistance in 1987 to the most recent practicable date; how many applications were made in 1986; what is the number of staff dealing with applications and what was the number in 1986; what was the average time taken to deal with an application in 1986 and 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: The information requested for regional selective assistance project grants in England is as follows:

	1986	[1]*1987*
Number of applications	1,659	1,337
Number of staff[2]	131	106
Average processing time on applications[3]	8·9	8·8

[1] To end-September.

[2] Approximate man-years on inquiry and appraisal work (1987 figure is an estimate).

[3] Average number of weeks between application (whenever received) and decision (offer, rejection or withdrawal) for decisions taken in the period shown.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many grants of regional selective assistance were awarded each to Shell, ICI, Hanson Industries, Lucas Industries, GKN and Esso, in 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: I am unable to provide this information. Whilst offers of regional selective assistance are published in *British Business* in the quarter after the first payment is made, information on the number of such offers made to each of the companies listed and all their subsidiaries could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Moreover, for reasons of commercial confidentiality, information could be provided only about offers which have already been published in *British Business*. The dates of the 1986 and 1987 issues in which such data have been published are:

28 February 1986
6 June 1986
26 September 1986
28 November 1986
27 March 1987
19 June 1987
28 August 1987

Steel Quotas

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the implications for manufacturing companies in the west midlands of the effect of current European Community quotas on steel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: My right hon. and learned Friend and I have received a number of representations from steel users, in the west midlands and elsewhere, concerning steel supply difficulties which arise to a large extent from the operation of the European quota system.

My Department has raised these difficulties with the European Commission, which has made some efforts within the Community-wide system to improve the position. None the less, I am aware that more needs to be done. In the forthcoming negotiations on the future European steel regime my right hon. and learned Friend will have as a prime consideration the needs of United Kingdom steel users for adequate supplies.

TRANSPORT

A453

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received the reports and surveys in respect of the improvements to the A453 *(a)* from the M1 to the Nottingham city boundary, and *(b)* from the Nottingham city boundary to the central area of the city; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consulting engineers have recently been appointed to undertake a study of the A453 from the M1 motorway to a point near the Nottingham city boundary. We do not expect to receive their report until early 1989. The Department's regional office is considering the report by consultants on the A453 mainly within the city through Clifton. Further work on the complex traffic analysis and environmental issues is required. It is too early for any firm conclusions to be made. I will make an announcement on the way forward as soon as I can.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The details are as follows. The expenditure involved in each case was through COI and the figures are provided in full cost terms including VAT where applicable.

Agency and Campaign	*Expenditure*
	£
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd Road Construction	29,400
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd Channel Tunnel	93,200
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd M1 Motorway Repairs	32,150
Davidson Pearce Ltd Bus Privatisation	44,990
Davidson Pearce Ltd Road Safety	3,605,700
Davidson Pearce Ltd Heavy Goods Vehicle	1,670
Dorland Advertising Ltd Vehicle Excise Duty	251,060

London Dial-a-Ride

Sir George Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of funding he plans for London Dial-a-Ride in 1988-89.

Mr. David Mitchell: Following this year's increase of 20 per cent., to £6 million, funding for Dial-a-Ride next year, through London Regional Transport, will be held constant in real terms while the scope for further cost savings and efficiency improvements is pursued.

Hospital Patients and Visitors (Transport)

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken by London Regional Transport to ensure that satisfactory means of public transport are available to hospital patients and visitors following the implementation of proposed alterations to bus routes serving hospitals.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport has a general duty to provide or secure the provision of public passenger transport services for greater London, having due regard to the transport needs for the time being of greater London, and efficiency, economy and safety of operation. The means by which it fulfils that duty in particular cases is a matter for the management of London Regional Transport.

Road Fund Licences

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on evasion rates, by region or by local authority, of road fund licences, measured by percentage of travel by unlicensed vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Best estimates of the percentage of travel by unlicensed vehicles, by region, derived from the survey undertaken in 1984, are set out in the table.

Details of confidence intervals and methodology are contained in "VED Evasion in Great Britain in 1984-85", which is available in the Library.

Department of Transport region	*per cent.*
Northern	1·9
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·2
East Midlands	3·1
Eastern	2·1
Greater London	8·0
South East (excluding Greater London)	2·6
South West	2·6
West Midlands	1·5
North West	2·4
Wales	2·6
Scotland	2·4

London Regional Transport

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what means he expects to announce his new objectives for London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: I expect to make an announcement to the House in the near future.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Under-age Drinking

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal convictions were made on licensees for under-age drinking for the years since 1974; and if he will express the figures as a percentage of the total number of convictions.

Mr. John Patten: The available information held centrally, which may be incomplete, is given in the following table. Data are not available prior to 1979.

Persons found guilty of offences under section 169(1) of the Licensing Act 1964

England and Wales	*Numbers*
1979	248
1980	233
1981	240
1982	187
1983	188
1984	164
1985	170
1986	165

Alcohol-related Offences

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many breach of the peace convictions were related to alcohol consumption in each of the years from 1980; and if he will express the figures as a percentage of the total number of convictions for each of the years;

(2) if he will list the number of criminal convictions in which alcohol was a contributory factor by region in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: The only information collected centrally on convictions in which alcohol is known to be a contributory factor relates to offences of drunkeness and offences against the intoxicating liquor laws and is given in the table. I understand that a review of the findings of research studies into the influence of alcohol and crime is to be included in a report prepared for the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention by an independent working group on "Alcohol and Young People": this is to be published on 24 November.

Persons found guilty of drunkenness offences and offences against intoxicating liquor laws by police force area

England and Wales *Number of persons*

Police force area	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Avon and Somerset	813	899	596
Bedfordshire	426	421	255
Cambridgeshire	362	396	144
Cheshire	761	679	705
Cleveland	1,325	993	741
Cumbria	673	755	573
Derbyshire	629	733	367
Devon and Cornwall	1,198	1,011	697
Dorset	248	313	303
Durham	765	799	547
Essex	535	495	128
Gloucestershire	235	239	185
Greater Manchester	4,065	3,855	2,109
Hampshire	1,901	2,036	1,846
Hertfordshire	512	591	373
Humberside	853	682	550
Kent	743	737	385
Lancashire	2,545	2,491	2,158
Leicestershire	266	117	56
Lincolnshire	329	314	182
London, City of	202	260	224
Merseyside	5,220	3,917	2,695
Metropolitan Police District	12,831	3,890	4,501
Norfolk	293	218	213
Northamptonshire	253	240	167
Northumbria	4,503	3,874	3,730
North Yorkshire	622	250	557
Nottinghamshire	482	637	485
South Yorkshire	2,171	2,932	1,964
Staffordshire	788	719	719
Suffolk	324	283	161
Surrey	184	218	196
Sussex	1,109	925	526
Thames Valley	1,762	1,516	1,453
Warwickshire	310	336	221
West Mercia	846	762	586
West Midlands	3,968	3,953	2,345
West Yorkshire	3,386	3,580	3,157
Wiltshire	365	256	180
Dyfed-Powys	742	622	625
Gwent	1,350	1,429	1,269
North Wales	477	512	515
South Wales	2,608	2,103	1,991
England and Wales	63,980	51,988	41,380

Drink-Driving

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal convictions were made for drink/driving offences by region in each of the past three years.

Mr. John Patten: The available information is published annually, for individual police force areas, in "Offences Relating To Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table 17 of the issue for 1985), copies of which are in the Library. Figures for 1986 will be published shortly.

Police Truncheons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of the purchase and use by police officers of non-regulation size truncheons; what action he has taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no such evidence, but I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that an officer of MS15 branch (complaints investigation bureau) has been appointed to investigate allegations contained in recent press reports. Similar inquiries are being made by officers of the Sussex constabulary.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what steps he is taking to ensure that only regulation size truncheons are used by his force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that uniformed officers produce their truncheons to a supervising officer each time they begin a shift. If any officer has occasion to use or draw his truncheon on duty, he is required to submit it for inspection to the custody officer as soon as practicable.

Licensed Premises

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking a requirement for licensed premises to display their hours of opening; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since 4 August, when our proposals for the reform of the Licensing Act 1964 were published, 83 representations supporting a statutory requirement for licensed premises to display their opening hours have been received. After careful consideration, it has been decided that it would not be appropriate to adopt this proposal. The Licensing Act specifies that premises are not required to open during the permitted hours and the compulsory display of hours of opening would risk restricting a licensee's flexibility to respond to demand. Licensed premises which are subject to a restriction order, requiring them to close during the afternoon, will however be required to display a notice stating the effect of that order.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received seeking to extend pub opening hours on Sundays and bank holidays in established tourist resorts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the Government's proposals for reform of the licensing law were published, 30 representations have been received from hon. Members, organisations and members of the public seeking to extend permitted hours on Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas day, and mentioning the benefits for tourism. We have no plans to change the licensing hours on these days. On other bank Holidays the general licensing hours for weekdays apply.

Cocaine (West Norwood Cemetery)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have not taken place following the discovery of £7·5 million of cocaine in West Norwood cemetery.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the police investigation has so far resulted in two arrests.

Iraqi and Iranian Nationals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to deport Iraqi or Iranian nationals seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom for as long as the Gulf war continues; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: No. Applications for asylum from Iraqi and Iranian nationals, as from all foreign nationals, will continue to be assessed on their individual merits.

Television Licences

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has available on evasion rates of television licences, including any information on the numbers of black and white licences purchased instead of colour, by region or by local authority areas.

Mr. Renton: It is estimated that in the United Kingdom as a whole there are about 1·4 million households with television but without a licence, and in addition about 400,000 households with colour television and a monochrome licence. Figures by region or local authority areas could not be obtained without disproportionate effort. In terms of lost revenue this represents an evasion rate of about 9 per cent.

Dogs and Cats (Research)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what controls are currently imposed on the supply of dogs and cats for research purposes;

(2) when the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 in respect of the supply of cats and dogs will be brought into force.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The controls on the source of commonly used laboratory animals, including cats and dogs, which are contained in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 will be brought into force in January 1990, as part of a phased programme of implementation of the provisions of the Act.

It has long been the practice of Home Office inspectors to encourage laboratories to obtain supplies of animals only from reputable and legal sources and to take particular care where cats and dogs are involved. This will continue until the new controls come into force.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Research Contracts

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all research contracts or agreements which his Department currently has placed with United Kingdom universities and other institutions of higher education.

Mr. Chris Patten: Details of research contracts awarded by the Overseas Development Administration are published in the Administration's annual reports on research and development. The edition for 1986-87 is currently being prepared and is expected to be published early next year. I shall send the hon. Member a copy of the last report, for 1985-86.

EC Development Council

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Community Development Council on 9 November.

Mr. Chris Patten: I represented the United Kingdom for the first part of the Council: we were later represented by our permanent representative to the European Community. Agreement was reached on a special programme to assist poor, heavily indebted African countries that are taking action to adjust the structure of their economies. It was agreed to allocate £70 million (100 mecu) for this purpose, of which £42 million (60 mecu) is additional to present European development fund resources.

Conclusions were adopted on how best to take account of the environmental factors and on the role of women in development programmes.

The Commission introduced its proposals for guidelines on EC aid to Asia and Latin America in 1988, and for amendments to the regulation governing EC food aid. There was also a discussion of the famine in Ethiopia and the help being given by the EC and the member states; and a report by the Commission on the EC programme to combat the spread of AIDS in developing countries.

Ethiopia

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current food situation in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: The people of Ethiopia are once again facing a famine. This follows the partial or complete failure of the rains in many parts of their country, particularly Eritrea and Tigre. The United Nations and the Ethiopian Government forcast that over 1 million tonnes of food aid will be needed in 1988, possibly substantially more. The early warning system has worked reasonably well. Unfortunately, conflict in Eritrea and Tigre has hampered the delivery of relief supplies.

Tigre in particular now faces a critical situation, with stocks of food almost exhausted and people leaving the rural areas and trekking to the towns. It is vital that no obstacles be put in the way of the distribution of relief supplies to those in urgent need. But even if free movement by road were assured, the road transport capacity is insufficient to meet the needs and will have to be supplemented by air operations.

Close donor co-ordination is essential. It is taking place in Addis Ababa and through the World Food Programme in Rome. It is supplemented by EC co-ordination in Brussels.

So far this year the United Kingdom has committed about £20 million for famine relief in Ethiopia; this includes our share of the cost of aid pledged by the European Community. Nationally, we have delivered this year 13,000 tonnes of food aid pledged in 1986. During 1987 we have pledged 37,000 tonnes through British non-governmental organisations, the World Food Programme and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This is being delivered this year and early next. We have also provided £1 million for port and transport equipment, £300,000 towards the running costs of the Save the Children Fund/OXFAM trucking fleet and £500,000 for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees' programme of assistance to returned refugees.

In the light of the urgent needs in Tigre, the office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator has asked donors for contributions to enable them to mount an airlift. I have therefore decided to allocate a further £2 million. This will be used to help meet the cost of transport aircraft chartered by UNDRO to fly food into Tigre. Any balance will be used for other urgent needs in the light of advice provided by our embassy in Addis Ababa.

An FAO crop assessment mission is at present in Ethiopia and I shall consider a further food aid pledge in the light of its conclusions.

I shall keep the House informed of further progress in the famine relief operations and the role being played by Her Majesty's Government.

Passports

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the purpose of the computerised slip inside the back cover of the new common format European passport; what information stored on the strip is envisaged as being interchangeable between member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The machine-readable element of the new British passport in the European Community common format will contain the following information which will be readable by the human eye as well as by optical character recognition equipment:

- (*a*) a letter identifying the document as a passport;
- (*b*) the number and date of expiry;
- (*c*) internationally agreed letters identifying the country of issue and the nationality of the holder;
- (*d*) the holder's name, date of birth and sex;
- (*e*) check digits calculated according to a published formula, which enable the machine reader to confirm that it has read the document correctly.

The machine-readable format should help to speed the movement of travellers through immigration controls where passport-reading equipment is installed.

There are already circumstances, for example when there may be doubts about the genuineness of a passport, when the factual information that has been recorded on the document may be passed to the authorities of another country, but we have no plans to use the new method of issue to facilitate the routine exchange of information between member states.

ENVIRONMENT

Hedgerows and Stone Walls

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce legislation to bring the destruction of hedgerows and stone walls under planning control.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have no plans to make removal of hedgerows and stone walls subject to development control, which would not be an appropriate way of protecting them. Instead, the retention of these features of the landscape is encouraged by making grants available from the Countryside Commission for re-planting or reinstatement, and from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for hedge planting and laying, and for the erection of traditional stone walls.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Ridley: The table lists the subjects and costs of campaign for which advertising agents were appointed on behalf of my Department in the financial year 1985-86.

Campaign date and agency	*Cost of campaign* £
Historic Houses promotion (May-June 1985)	
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	12,480
Urban Development Grants (July 1985)	
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	28,347
Kensington Palace promotion (July-August 1985)	
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	43,000
Right to Buy-new legislation (September 1985)	
Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd.	262,800
Building Research Establishment (October 1985)—subscription sales	
Francis, Killingbech Bain Ltd.	23,412

All figures are in full cost terms, including VAT.

Insulation Grant

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Enviroment what plans he has to improve the grants that can be claimed towards the cost of insulating a person's home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have announced proposals for targeting grants under the homes insulation scheme on those least able to afford the work. A further announcement will be made about the introduction of the new scheme.

Wind Power

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been received from wind power developers who wish to generate electrical power for use on the national grid concerning their rating assessments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: We have received a number of representations expressing concern about the effect of rates on wind energy plants. My right hon. Friend hopes to make a statement shortly.

West Cumbria

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what seismic movements have occurred in the area of west Cumbria in the last two months.

Mr. Moynihan: Seismic monitoring equipment operated by the British geological survey has detected one small seismic event in western Cumbria and its offshore area in the last two months. It occurred on 9 November with a magnitude of about 2·5 Richter and was felt on the Isle of Man. During October a number of other tremors were detected by instruments, but these are believed to have been caused by man-made disturbances such as sonic booms. Data processing for the period is not yet complete and further information may become available.

Sheffield (Urban Development Status)

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations have been made to him seeking any form of special urban development status for Sheffield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Spectrum Arena

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 10 November, whether the best consideration reasonably obtainable for the Spectrum arena is the same as the market price; if there is a reserve price; whether in his Department's recent consultations with Warrington and Runcorn development corporation concerning the Spectrum arena, any indication was given concerning the classification of the arena as a community-related asset; and if any parties are currently involved in negotiations over the sale of the arena.

Mrs. Roe: The price which can be obtained for the property on the open market is obviously the major factor in deciding whether "the best consideration" has been secured. The Department has not stipulated a reserve price, but we have advised the Development Corporation that we could not countenance a concessionary disposal. I understand that the Spectrum arena is now being marketed as part of a wider package of assets including the Birchwood district centre.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 9 November, *Official Report*, column *14*, regarding households facing one-off increases under the community charge, he will give a regional breakdown by household size of the affected households.

Mr. Howard: As I explained in my reply of 26 October at column *37-38*, no regional breakdown of gainers and losers by household type is available.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply on regional gainers and losers with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge, on 26 October, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*, what assumptions he used in that reply regarding transitional grant provisions; and what assumptions he used for figure J7 in the Green Paper Cmnd. 9714, "Paying For Local Government."

Mr. Howard: As I told the hon. Member in my reply of 2 November, my reply of 26 October assumed no transitional grant provisions. Figure J7 assumes the existence of the "safety net" arrangements described on page 26 of the Green Paper.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision on the transitional arrangements for the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Ridley: The Government have given careful consideration to the arrangements for introducing the community charge in England in 1990-91, in the light of the many representations that have been made. There are two elements: the introduction of the community charge and abolition of domestic rates within each area; and the phasing in of the impact of changes in grant and non-domestic rates on individual areas (safety netting).

We have decided that the vast majority of areas should introduce the full, safety netted community charge in 1990-91; domestic rates will be abolished in those areas from 31 March 1990. However, in some areas where spending is particularly high, either as a result of ILEA or the borough or both, it would be too disruptive to introduce the new system in full in one go. That was the reason for our initial phasing-in proposals. In the light of comments on these proposals we have now decided to concentrate the phasing-in on these particular areas only. This will give them more time to adjust their spending while ensuring that the benefits of the new system will flow through more quickly elsewhere.

In areas where local authorities have budgeted to spend more than £130 per head above their grant-related expenditure assessments in 1987-88, we propose that the community charge should therefore be introduced only partially in 1990-91 at £100 (assuming unchanged spending). Domestic rates there will be phased out and the full community charge phased in between 1990-91 and 1994-95. On this basis the phasing-in would only apply throughout inner London and in the London borough of Waltham Forest.

The safety net, which we have already announced, will enable the effect on domestic taxpayers of changes in the grant and non domestic rate arrangements to come through gradually. In 1990-91 the safety net will ensure that there is no change in the distribution of grant and non-domestic rates between areas, except that we now propose that contributions will be limited to a maximum of £75 per adult in any area. This will slightly reduce the extent to which areas are able to gain from the safety net. The safety net will be phased out in equal steps between 1991-92 and 1994-95.

I have today placed in the Library tables illustrating the impact of these proposals on each local authority area, on the basis of 1987-88 spending.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be in a position to provide updated data on the effects of his proposed changes to local government finance, taking into account the updated tax benefit model and other data.

Mr. Ridley: I hope to be able to provide this information before the Christmas recess, although this could be delayed if those concerned have to continue to provide statistical information in answer to the parliamentary questions at the present rate.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether occupants of sheltered accommodation will be liable for *(a)* standard community charge, *(b)* collective community charge, or *(c)* will be exempt from community charge by virtue of their being in residential care.

Mr. Ridley: Occupants of sheltered accommodation will almost always be liable for the personal community charge, subject to any rebate to which they may be entitled.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of the likely incidence of *(a)* pressure being applied to occupants of tied farm cottages and other accommodation not to enter themselves on the electoral register in order to avoid payment of community charge, *(b)* 18-year-olds, and rising 18-year-olds being omitted from the electoral register in order to avoid liability for community charge, *(c)* owners of two homes avoiding being registered for electoral registration at their main residence, but instead registering where they think a lower community charge will apply and *(d)* difficulties faced by local authorities and electoral registration offices in compiling the new electoral register.

Mr. Ridley: None.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *592*, how the sufficiency of the resources to be made available to community charge registration officers will be decided.

Mr. Ridley: It will be for the local authority, in the first instance, to decide what level of resources is sufficient to allow the registration officer to carry out his functions.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage change in community charge for a 1 per cent. increase in spending for each authority, taking into account the actual spending figures implicit in his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *44*, and not assuming each authority spends at the level of its assessed need.

Mr. Ridley: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker) on 21 October at column *819*.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what latest information he has for each local authority on *(a)* the numbers of adults that will be exempt from payment of the community charge, and *(b)* the numbers of students who will pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge; and how these figures will affect his community charge estimates published on 29 June.

Mr. Ridley: We estimate that, nationally, around 500,000 people may be exempt from the community charge in England, and that around 750,000 students will pay 20 per cent. of the charge. The exemplifications published on 29 June did not take account of exemptions. But nor did they take account of the product of the standard community charge, which will provide local authorities with additional income.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the National Union of Ratepayers Associations on his proposals to abolish domestic rates; and if he will indicate whether the National Union of Ratepayers Associations supports his schemes for a community charge.

Mr. Ridley: The National Union of Ratepayers Association submitted comments on the proposals contained in "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 8714). Although I do not have the permission of those who submitted comments to publish their views, I placed a summary of the responses we received in the Library on 15 December 1986.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether student nurses will benefit from the dispensation that students will be liable for only 20 per cent. of the community charge payment.

Mr. Ridley: Student nurses will not come within the definition of full-time students for these purposes.

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is his intention to introduce comparable property values throughout the United Kingdom for the purposes of applying the national uniform business rate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: We shall start the process of harmonising valuation practice within Great Britain with the 1990 revalution.

Severe Weather (Expenditure)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what encouragement he has given to local authorities to capitalise expenditure following the storms of 15 and 16 October.

Mr. Ridley: My Department has invited local authorities which expect to incur capital expenditure in the current financial year on making good storm damage to apply for additional capital allocations. Where items are not insured, or are not covered by the special grant aid under the Bellwin rules, authorities should consider the scope for capitalising costs. Whether any particular item of expenditure is properly chargeable to capital account is a matter for the chief financial officer, and the auditor, of the authoriy concerned. But I would draw attention to the schedule 12 to the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 which provides (inter alia) that expenditure on the renewal or replacement of buildings and structures, the repair of maintenance of dwelling houses (when financed by borrowing), and the renewal or replacement of vehicles, vessels, and immovable plant, machinery, and apparatus is prescribed expenditure for the purposes of part VIII of that Act, which is concerned with the capital expenditure of local authorities.

Water

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes that use of water services provided by water authorities will be paid for by a water community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Each water authority is free to decide how it wishes to charge for water services; provided that the

charges comply with the principles set out in section 30 of the Water Act 1973. I understand that the water authorities do not at present favour community charge for water.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table, in rank order, for each authority showing *(a)* its income from non-domestic rates in 1987-88, and *(b)* its percentage inflow of commuters.

Mr. Ridley: The information requested is as follows:

Income from non-domestic rates (£M) and percentage net inflow of commuters

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Greater London				
City of London	425	2	6,106	1
Camden	196	3	67	3
Greenwich	30	64	−8	256
Hackney	45	28	3	73
Hammersmith and Fulham	44	30	7	44
Islington	62	19	27	7
Kensington and Chelsea	37	45	15	21
Lambeth	72	12	3	63
Lewisham	28	76	−16	346
Southwark	80	10	16	19
Tower Hamlets	69	16	18	12
Wandsworth	22	111	−12	314
Westminster	443	1	222	2
Barking and Dagenham	27	79	7	45
Barnet	37	46	−10	302
Bexley	21	116	−19	362
Brent	58	21	−1	124
Bromley	27	80	−16	348
Croydon	51	24	−5	200
Ealing	70	14	−5	207
Enfield	39	39	−9	279
Haringey	39	40	−13	327
Harrow	23	101	−16	345
Havering	24	92	−19	361
Hillingdon	74	11	4	58
Hounslow	70	15	17	18
Kingston-upon-Thames	24	93	−0	114
Merton	20	121	−10	294
Newham	43	34	−4	188
Redbridge	19	126	−16	349
Richmond-upon-Thames	24	94	−13	328
Sutton	21	117	−15	341
Waltham Forest	35	54	−13	330
Greater Manchester				
Bolton	28	75	−2	148
Bury	18	133	−10	297
Manchester	158	5	27	6
Oldham	25	83	−2	145
Rochdale	29	69	−7	247
Salford	36	49	1	92
Stockport	33	57	−8	274
Tameside	25	84	−8	270
Trafford	38	42	3	72
Wigan	37	44	−8	273
Merseyside				
Knowsley	29	70	2	79
Liverpool	100	8	14	23
St. Helens	30	63	−3	176
Sefton	33	58	−9	285
Wirral	41	36	−9	278
South Yorkshire				
Barnsley	27	78	−4	197
Doncaster	43	32	−1	125

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Rotherham	32	59	−4	196
Sheffield	106	7	6	52
Tyne and Wear				
Gateshead	22	110	−3	174
Newcastle upon Tyne	70	13	21	9
North Tyneside	24	90	−6	228
South Tyneside	15	161	−4	184
Sunderland	35	53	−3	159
West Midlands				
Birmingham	188	4	11	28
Coventry	52	23	7	46
Dudley	38	43	−7	242
Sandwell	56	22	5	54
Solihull	21	115	−14	338
Walsall	43	33	0	107
Wolverhampton	48	26	6	50
West Yorkshire				
Bradford	66	17	−0	113
Calderdale	24	91	−1	119
Kirklees	45	27	−3	169
Leeds	121	6	2	77
Wakefield	50	25	0	111
Avon				
Bath	12	189	8	41
Bristol	84	9	11	29
Kingswood	7	289	−20	363
Northavon	23	95	2	82
Wansdyke	7	290	−11	310
Woodspring	16	144	−10	291
Bedfordshire				
North Bedfordshire	26	81	1	103
Luton	43	31	3	65
Mid Bedfordshire	13	175	−10	304
South Bedfordshire	26	82	−7	234
Berkshire				
Bracknell	14	162	−4	180
Newbury	17	134	−7	244
Reading	35	50	15	22
Slough	28	71	14	24
Windsor and Maidenhead	22	102	−6	222
Wokingham	13	176	−14	337
Buckinghamshire				
Aylesbury Vale	19	122	−6	211
South Buckinghamshire	12	190	−7	237
Chiltern	10	232	−17	351
Milton Keynes	35	51	1	100
Wycombe	29	65	−5	208
Cambridgeshire				
Cambridge	29	66	21	8
East Cambridgeshire	5	335	−11	309
Fenland	8	271	−4	191
Huntingdonshire	16	145	−6	216
Peterborough	28	72	8	39
South Cambridgeshire	14	163	−12	321
Cheshire				
Chester	22	103	6	51
Congleton	10	233	−6	218
Crewe and Nantwich	13	177	3	69
Ellesmere Port and Neston	24	85	10	35
Halton	22	104	−0	115
Macclesfield	20	118	−8	258
Vale Royal	16	146	−6	215
Warrington	33	56	2	84
Cleveland				
Hartlepool	17	135	1	96

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Langbaurgh	40	37	−0	112
Middlesbrough	22	105	2	81
Stockton-on-Tees	41	35	1	90
Cornwall				
Caradon	5	336	−10	290
Carrick	8	272	2	87
Kerrier	7	291	−3	153
North Cornwall	6	315	−1	137
Penrith	5	337	−1	128
Restormel	11	212	1	94
Cumbria				
Allerdale	11	213	−3	165
Barrow in Furness	9	258	2	78
Carlisle	17	136	4	62
Copeland	15	153	1	102
Eden	7	292	−1	133
South Lakeland	13	178	−2	151
Derbyshire				
Amber Valley	15	154	−4	185
Bolsover	7	293	−10	300
Chesterfield	18	127	7	42
Derby	44	29	8	38
Erewash	14	164	−12	319
High Peak	13	179	−8	264
North East Derbyshire	10	234	−18	360
South Derbyshire	14	165	−13	332
Derbyshire Dales	7	294	−3	163
Devon				
East Devon	9	259	−2	138
Exeter	16	147	11	30
North Devon	8	273	−2	144
Plymouth	29	67	4	56
South Hams	6	316	−3	167
Teignbridge	9	260	−3	179
Mid Devon	5	338	−6	224
Torbay	17	137	−2	142
Torridge	3	356	−3	157
West Devon	3	357	−6	221
Dorset				
Bournemouth	24	86	3	67
Christchurch	5	339	3	64
North Dorset	4	350	−5	198
Poole	17	138	2	85
Purbeck	5	340	−3	171
West Dorset	7	295	0	106
Weymouth and Portland	5	341	−4	186
Wimborne	6	317	−11	311
Durham				
Chester-le-Street	4	351	−18	359
Darlington	18	128	4	60
Derwentside	8	274	−10	299
Durham	11	214	7	43
Easington	7	296	−3	173
Sedgefield	13	180	−3	155
Teesdale	3	358	−9	276
Wear Valley	8	275	−6	223
East Sussex				
Brighton	24	87	7	48
Eastbourne	12	191	5	53
Hastings	7	297	0	110
Hove	10	235	−4	189
Lewes	9	261	−5	209
Rother	6	318	−5	210
Wealden	8	276	−12	318
Essex				
Basildon	28	73	−6	229
Braintree	14	166	−8	271

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Brentwood	10	236	-11	306
Castle Point	8	277	-21	365
Chelmsford	23	96	-3	170
Colchester	18	129	1	98
Epping Forest	14	167	-17	353
Harlow	21	112	-3	164
Maldon	6	319	-11	307
Rochford	7	298	-16	347
Southend-on-Sea	23	97	-3	178
Tendring	10	237	-7	238
Thurrock	38	41	-4	195
Uttlesford	7	299	-13	325
Gloucestershire				
Cheltenham	15	155	10	34
Cotswold	7	300	-4	187
Forest of Dean	6	320	-8	257
Gloucester	15	156	8	37
Stroud	10	238	-7	241
Tewkesbury	10	239	-2	143
Hampshire				
Basingstoke and Deane	22	106	-5	203
East Hampshire	9	262	-9	281
Eastleigh	14	168	-7	239
Fareham	11	215	-10	301
Gosport	8	278	-4	194
Hart	7	301	-17	356
Havant	12	192	-12	320
New Forest	23	98	-7	233
Portsmouth	31	60	17	16
Rushmoor	14	169	5	55
Southampton	36	47	12	27
Test Valley	13	181	-5	205
Winchester	11	216	2	89
Hereford and Worcester				
Bromsgrove	7	302	-18	358
Hereford	7	303	12	25
Leominster	2	364	-8	254
Malvern Hills	5	342	-9	288
Redditch	12	193	-4	182
South Herefordshire	3	359	-9	289
Worcester	13	182	11	31
Wychavon	10	240	-8	265
Wyre Forest	11	217	-6	227
Hertfordshire				
Broxbourne	12	194	-12	313
Dacorum	24	88	-8	252
East Hertfordshire	17	139	-8	267
Hertsmere	16	148	-7	245
North Hertfordshire	19	123	-5	201
St. Albans	22	107	-10	292
Stevenage	18	130	-2	139
Three Rivers	10	241	-14	334
Watford	23	99	10	33
Welwyn Hatfield	22	108	2	88
Humberside				
Beverley	10	242	-8	268
Boothferry	5	343	-9	280
Cleethorpes	12	195	-14	339
Glanford	12	196	-10	295
Great Grimsby	15	157	12	26
Holderness	5	344	-10	303
Kingston upon Hull	40	38	6	49
East Yorkshire	7	304	-6	225
Scunthorpe	20	119	17	17
Isle of Wight				
Medina	8	279	4	61
South Wight	5	345	-7	236

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Kent				
Ashford	10	243	−4	181
Canterbury	12	197	−1	130
Dartford	14	170	−1	134
Dover	9	263	2	86
Gillingham	6	321	−16	350
Gravesham	10	244	−15	342
Maidstone	15	158	−3	172
Rochester upon Medway	22	109	0	109
Sevenoaks	10	245	−13	323
Shepway	12	198	−2	150
Swale	12	199	−6	226
Thanet	11	218	−4	193
Tonbridge and Malling	14	171	−1	121
Tunbridge Wells	10	246	−1	127
Lancashire				
Blackburn	17	140	4	59
Blackpool	20	120	−3	158
Burnley	11	219	4	57
Chorley	7	305	−11	312
Fylde	8	280	9	36
Hyndburn	7	306	−8	260
Lancaster	16	149	−0	116
Pendle	6	322	−3	175
Preston	19	124	19	11
Ribble Valley	5	346	−7	246
Rossendale	5	347	−8	272
South Ribble	10	247	−9	277
West Lancashire	11	220	−7	248
Wyre	9	264	−7	251
Leicestershire				
Blaby	8	281	−14	340
Charnwood	18	131	−6	232
Harborough	6	323	−12	317
Hinckley and Bosworth	11	221	−6	220
Leicester	62	18	18	13
Melton	4	352	−8	262
North West Leicestershire	11	222	−2	146
Oadby and Wigston	6	324	−13	331
Rutland	3	360	−3	162
Lincolnshire				
Boston	6	325	0	108
East Lindsey	12	200	−3	166
Lincoln	12	201	18	14
North Kesteven	6	326	−11	305
South Holland	6	327	−4	183
South Kesteven	11	223	−5	206
West Lindsey	7	307	−10	298
Norfolk				
Breckland	9	265	−6	212
Broadland	6	328	−17	354
Great Yarmouth	12	202	1	93
North Norfolk	8	282	−2	147
Norwich	30	61	29	5
South Norfolk	6	329	−13	333
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	16	150	−2	140
Northamptonshire				
Corby	8	283	−0	118
Daventry	9	266	−10	293
East Northamptonshire	6	330	−7	235
Kettering	7	308	−3	161
Northampton	35	52	7	47
South Northamptonshire	5	348	−18	357
Wellingborough	9	267	−3	168
Northumberland				
Alnwick	3	361	1	97
Berwick-upon-Tweed	3	362	−1	135
Blyth Valley	7	309	−13	329
Castle Morpeth	7	310	−1	122

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Tynedale	7	311	−6	213
Wansbeck	12	203	−8	269
North Yorkshire				
Craven	5	349	−2	152
Hambleton	7	312	−5	199
Harrogate	17	141	−3	177
Richmondshire	4	353	−1	129
Ryedale	6	331	−13	326
Scarborough	11	224	−2	149
Selby	24	89	1	99
York	14	172	16	20
Nottinghamshire				
Ashfield	12	204	1	91
Bassetlaw	29	68	3	68
Broxtowe	12	205	−8	266
Gedling	10	248	−17	355
Mansfield	11	225	−6	230
Newark & Sherwood	12	206	−4	190
Nottingham	61	20	20	10
Rushcliffe	14	173	−14	336
Oxfordshire				
Cherwell	19	125	−3	156
Oxford	30	62	31	4
South Oxfordshire	18	132	−14	335
Vale of White Horse	21	113	−8	253
West Oxfordshire	10	249	−10	296
Shropshire				
Bridgnorth	4	354	−9	284
North Shropshire	4	355	−4	192
Oswestry	3	363	−3	154
Shrewsbury and Atcham	12	207	2	76
South Shropshire	2	365	−1	131
Wrekin	16	151	−1	126
Somerset				
Mendip	9	268	−1	136
Sedgemoor	10	250	−5	204
Taunton Deane	10	251	3	74
West Somerset	8	284	3	70
South Somerset	13	183	0	105
Staffordshire				
Cannock Chase	11	226	−8	255
East Staffordshire	14	174	3	71
Lichfield	10	252	−12	315
Newcastle-under-Lyme	12	208	−11	308
South Staffordshire	8	285	−21	364
Stafford	16	152	2	83
Staffordshire Moorlands	8	286	−15	344
Stoke-on-Trent	36	48	10	32
Tamworth	7	313	−15	343
Suffolk				
Babergh	8	287	−7	243
Forest Heath	6	332	3	66
Ipswich	23	100	8	40
Mid Suffolk	7	314	−7	249
St. Edmundsbury	12	209	2	80
Suffolk Coastal	13	184	−1	132
Waveney	10	253	−1	120
Surrey				
Elmbridge	17	142	−8	259
Epsom and Ewell	9	269	−13	322
Guildford	21	114	−3	160
Mole Valley	9	270	−6	231

Authority	*Income from non-domestic rates 1987-88*	*Rank*	*Percentage net inflow of commuters*	*Rank*
Reigate and Banstead	15	159	−9	286
Runnymede	11	227	−7	240
Spelthorne	27	77	−6	217
Surrey Heath	11	228	−8	261
Tandridge	6	333	−17	352
Waverley	11	229	−9	287
Woking	15	160	−8	263
Warwickshire				
North Warwickshire	10	254	−6	214
Nuneaton and Bedworth	13	185	−12	316
Rugby	13	186	1	95
Stratford-on-Avon	13	187	−8	275
Warwick	17	143	−0	117
West Sussex				
Adur	8	288	−9	283
Arun	10	255	−7	250
Chichester	10	256	−1	123
Crawley	28	74	17	15
Horsham	12	210	−9	282
Mid Sussex	13	188	−13	324
Worthing	11	230	1	101
Wiltshire				
Kennet	6	334	−6	219
North Wiltshire	10	257	−5	202
Salisbury	12	211	1	104
Thamesdown	34	55	3	75
West Wiltshire	11	231	−2	141

Notes

Income from non-domestic rates in 1987-88 estimated using shares of gross rateable value between domestic and non-domestic hereditaments and adjusted for rebates and grants.

Net inflow of commuters relates to 1981 Census information expressed as a percentage of the resident population in 1986.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there are any plans to exclude local authorities' expenditure from the public expenditure White Paper if his proposals to reform local government finance are enacted.

Mr. Ridley: No. As the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" made clear, local authority expenditure affects the overall burden of taxation, the level of public borrowing and the balance between public and private sector output. Restraint of both central and local government expenditure must continue so that taken together they represent a declining share of the national income.

Rates

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any figures that compare rates poundages with rate bills per square metre of floor space occupied by non-domestic ratepayers for each local authority, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I do not have any figures which make this comparison.

Rolling Revaluation

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends ultimately to introduce a system of rolling revaluation to non-domestic property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: There are no plans to introduce a system of rolling revaluations before 1995 for the reasons set out in the consultation paper "Paying for Local Government: Non-Domestic Rates — Amendments to Rating Legislation in England and Wales" which was published on 31 July.

Business Vote

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to extend the business vote to areas, other than the corporation of the City of London, where there is a high income from non-domestic rates and a high inflow of commuters.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Private Tenants

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the amendments to the succession rules for existing private tenants which he proposes to make.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: The proposed amendments are as follows:

> When an existing tenant with a regulated tenancy dies, a surviving spouse who was living with the tenant at the time of his or her death would be able to succeed to a regulated tenancy.
>
> Where there is no qualifying spouse, a member of the tenant's family who had been living with the tenant for five years before his or her death would be able to succeed to a new-style assured tenancy at a market rent.
>
> A second succession would be possible at the death of the first successor for a member of the original tenant's family who had lived with the first successor for five years before his or her death.

The rights of any tenant who has already succeeded to a regulated tenancy would be unaffected.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier) to Liverpool.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: I visited Liverpool on 9 November 1987. In the morning I met officials from Merseyside task force and also had discussions with representatives of the local business community. I then went on to tour the headquarters of the Merseyside Council for Voluntary Services, saw various projects and met the director, and other senior officials. In the afternoon I held a press conference prior to attending the launch of the Nat West Liverpool business week at the Adelphi hotel.

ENERGY

Limestone

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to what approximate tonnage of limestone will be required per annum by the flue gas desulphurisation equipment on a 2,000MW coal-fired power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A 2,000MW coal-fired power station using the limestone-gypsum flue gas desulphurisation process would use about 300,000 tonnes per year when operating at high load factors. This is approximately 0·3 per cent. of total limestone production in this country.

Tidal Barrage Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many plans for tidal barrage schemes with an energy component are presently under consideration.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department is currently funding studies into two tidal barrage proposals on the Severn and Mersey estuaries.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax (Appeals)

Mr. Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidance the Inland Revenue issues about the criteria governing the rights of an income tax payer to have access to an independent appeal if he is dissatisfied with Inland Revenue treatment of his income tax payments.

Mr. Lawson: Notices of assessment to tax and accompanying notes draw taxpayers' attention to their right of appeal, including a hearing before independent appeal commissioners, if they think that a tax assessment is wrong. In many cases the taxpayer may have the choice of appealing either to the general commissioners or to the special commissioners. The right of appeal to appeal commissioners is also covered in the Inland Revenue leaflet IR37 on appeals and in the taxpayer's charter issued jointly by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise in July 1986. The charter also explains that it is open to an hon. Member to ask the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to investigate a complaint of maladministration by the Inland Revenue.

Disposable Income

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the latest estimate of per capita disposable income for each region in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: I refer my hon. Friend to the regional accounts for 1985, published in chapter 10 of "Regional Trends 1987", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. Regional accounts for 1986, together with revised estimates for 1985, will be published in the November 1987 issue of "Economic Trends" on 16 December 1987.

Board of Banking Supervision

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to his response to the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn), 5 November, column *853*, he will indicate the background and experience of each of the members he has appointed to the Board of Banking Supervision.

Mr. Lilley: I refer the hon. Member to the press notices issued by the Bank of England at the time the independent members of the board were appointed on a non-statutory basis. I am placing a copy of the press releases in the Library.

£2 Note

Mr. Walters: To ask the Chancellor of Exchequer (1) what representations he has received regarding the case of a £2 note;

(2) if during his recent review of English currency, he considered introducing a £2 note; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The idea of introducing a £2 note has been mentioned in one or two of the many responses to the review of the United Kingdom coinage. The Bank of England has also received suggestions from time to time in the past that it should issue a £2 note, but there are no plans to do so.

Wines and Spirits (Duty)

Mr. George Gardiner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the periods permitted for the deferment of payments of excise duties on wines and spirits in each country in the European Community.

Mr. Lilley: A wide variety of rules and procedures governing the payment of duty apply in different EC member states. The table outlines the normal periods of excise duty deferment on wines and spirits according to the latest information available.

Wines	*Spirits*
Belgium	
Two to six months, according to type	15th day of the fourth month following month of release for consumption
Denmark	
20 days from end of month of delivery	End of month following month of release for consumption
France	
Within two months of the date of release for consumption	Within two months of the date of release for consumption
Germany	
No excise duty on still wine; duty on sparkling wine payable on 25th day of month following month when liability arose	15th day of the third month following month of release for consumption
Greece	
No excise duty	No information available
Ireland	
15th day of month following month of release for consumption	Last day of month following month of release for consumption
Italy	
No excise duty on table wine; no information on fortified wine	No deferment
Luxembourg	
Two to six months, according to type	15th day of the fourth month following month of release for consumption
Netherlands	
15th day of month following month of release for consumption	15th day of month following month of release for consumption
Portugal	
No information available	No information available
Spain	
No information available	No information available
United Kingdom	
For clearances between 15th of one month and 14th of the following month, payment is due on 29th day of that following month	For clearances between 15th of one month and 14th of the following month, payment is due on 29th day of that following month

National Economic Development Council

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to change the criteria for selection of members of the National Economic Development Council.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: No.

CIVIL SERVICE

Professionalism

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what improvements have been made in the professionalism of the Civil Service since 1979.

Mr. Luce: In recent years the Civil Service has built on its traditional professionalism and dedication new strengths and skills which are an investment for the future. There is now a greater readiness to adapt efficiently to change, to manage the public service more effectively, and to pursue further improvements in value for money for the taxpayer and the citizen. More details of these changes are included in "Reforms at Work in the Civil Service", a copy of which is in the Libraries of Parliament.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Palestinians (Self-determination)

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to further the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to support all efforts to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute based on two well-established principles: the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; and the right of all states in the region, including Israel, to secure existence.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Training Scheme

4. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to combine the job training scheme with any other employment initiatives.

Mr. Fowler: As the House knows, I am currently reviewing adult training and I hope to make a statement shortly.

34. **Mr. Stott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of job training scheme participants have gained full-time employment since joining the scheme.

Mr. Cope: The information is not yet available. The new job training scheme has been operating in most places for less than six months. The Manpower Services Commission has commissioned a follow-up survey of leavers to look into the destination of trainees. The first results will be available in the new year.

42. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many clients are currently on the job training scheme; and how many have left before completing the course.

Mr. Cope: At 25 September, the latest date for which figures are available some 22,111 formerly unemployed people were participating in the new job training scheme. Figures for those who have left before completing the course are not available. Courses vary in length with the needs of the individual. The Manpower Services Commission has commissioned a follow-up survey of leavers, the first results will be available in the new year.

50. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost of training per trainee per week in the job training scheme.

Mr. Cope: The information requested is not available. The new job training scheme provides a varity of training tailored to individual needs. Managing agents receive £13.72 per trainee week to fund training and firms which provide training placements also contribute to the costs.

69. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for how long he anticipates that the job training scheme will continue in its present form.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave today to the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle).

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of job training scheme participants have failed to find placement.

Mr. Cope: I regret that the information requested is not available. A survey of trainees is currently being undertaken and initial results are expected in early in 1988. The MSC has commisioned a follow-up survey of leavers. Results are expected early in the new year.

British Tourist Authority

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman and board of the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment last met the chairman and board of the British Tourist Authority on 15 July. My last meeting with the chairman and the board was on 9 September.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Enployment if he will make a statement on the progress of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: Since the enterprise allowance scheme began in 1982, almost 290,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own business. 102,500 places are available this year and 110,000 will be available next year.

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what effect the enterprise allowance scheme has had on job creation.

Mr. Cope: The enterprise allowance scheme has had a significant effect on job creation. Since the scheme began in 1982, more than 289,000 unemployed people have created new jobs for themselves by becoming self-employed and starting now businesses. In addition, recent survey results indicate that for every 100 EAS businesses still trading three years after start-up, an additional 114 jobs have been created.

Mr. Fallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have participated in the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: To the end of October, the latest date for which figures are available, 289,936 people have received the enterprise allowance since the scheme began in 1982.

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Cope: Since the enterprise allowance scheme began in 1982, almost 290,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own business. 102,500 places are available this year and 110,000 will be available next year.

Hotel and Leisure Industries

14. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on improvements in training in the hotel and leisure industries.

Mr. Lee: We are actively encouraging a more co-ordinated approach to training across the spectrum of hotel and leisure industries. Training in the hotel industry is already being developed centrally through the Hotel and Catering training board. I recently chaired — and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State opened—a short conference which discussed relevant training across all sectors of the leisure and tourism industries.

North-West Region

15. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present level of job vacancies registered at jobcentres in the north-west region.

Mr. Lee: The number of unfilled vacancies at job centres in the north-west region on 2 October 1987, was 28,400

Tourism

16. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will encourage the setting up of more tourism business advice services similar to the one set up by the Small Firms Service and the East Anglia tourist board.

Mr. Lee: I was very pleased to launch the East Anglian initiative last June which I understand is working well. I also applaud the further initiatives undertaken by the small firms service and the Northumbria and Cumbria tourist boards; and I would strongly urge similar collaborative efforts in other regions.

22. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for employment whether inner city capital refurbishment schemes are being used to rejuvenate areas of tourist interest.

Mr. Lee: Yes. Both the urban programme and the urban development grant scheme have assisted projects to provide facilities and amenities in inner city areas which improve their attractiveness to tourists.

51. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on how much of the turnover in the United Kingdom tourist industry in 1986 can be accounted for in percentage terms by *(a)* the accommodation, food and drink sector, *(b)* the transport and related services sector, *(c)* the retail distribution sector and *(d)* the recreation and entertainment sector.

Mr. Lee: The approximate percentages of the turnover in the United Kingdom tourist industry in 1987 accounted for by the four specific sectors are:

	Per cent
Accommodation, food and drink	40
Transport and related services	35
Retail distribution	15
Recreation and entertainment (includes some other miscellaneous services)	10

52. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has regarding the effectiveness of the English tourist board's gold crown hotel classification in achieving higher standards in hotels.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board's five gold crown awards are made to hotels that have achieved five crown status under the board's crown classification scheme and in addition offer the highest standards of facilities and service. So far about six hotels have received the award and the ETB expects to make more awards in the near future. As the scheme has been in operation for less than a year. Information on its effect in raising standards is not yet available.

68. **Mr. Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a breakdown by region of 1986's job gains in the tourism sector.

Mr. Lee: The regional breakdown requested is not available for tourism-related industries in 1986. However, regional estimates for employees in employment in the hotel and catering industry, which includes canteens and messes, are available and the changes in each region from December 1985 to December 1986, in both absolute and percentage terms, are shown in the table:

	Absolute	*Percentage*
South East	+ 1,000	—
East Anglia	+ 1,000	+ 4
South West	+ 1,000	+ 1
West Midlands	0	—
East Midlands	+ 4,000	+ 7
Yorks and Humberside	+ 7,000	+ 7
North West	+ 8,000	+ 6
North	+ 1,000	+ 1
Wales	+ 3,000	+ 7
Scotland	− 1,000	− 1
Great Britain	+ 25,000	+ 2

72. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the working population in employment works in the tourist industry.

Mr. Lee: In June 1987, the industries most directly related to tourism accounted for approximately 6 per cent. of all employees in employment. Up-to-date estimates for the number of self-employed in tourism-related industries are not available.

88. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements he intends to make to provide for co-ordination of the work of the British Tourist Authority and the national tourist boards.

Mr. Lee: The chairmen of the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Ireland tourist boards are ex-officio members of the British Tourist Authority under the terms of the Development of Tourism Act 1969. The chairman of the British Tourist Authority also holds the post of chariman of the English tourist board. Ministers with responsibility for tourism matters also meet regularly to discuss items of common interest.

89. **Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary for State of Employment if he will make a statement on the impact of the tourist industry on employment in greater London.

Mr. Lee: The latest estimate of employees on tourism-related industries in greater London is 187,000 and relates to September 1984. More recent estimates of employment in just the hotel and catering industry, which includes canteens and messes, but excludes libraries, museums, art galleries, sports and other recreational facilities, show that there were 168,000 employees in employment in greater London in June 1987 compared with a figure of 157,000 in September 1984.

90. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate for the volume of visitors to the United Kingdom in the current year and the value of their expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: In the first eight months of 1987 there were 11 million visits to the United Kingdom by overseas residents, who spent a total of £4,200 million while in this country. These figures represent an increase in visitor numbers of 14 per cent. over the corresponding period in 1986, and a 17 per cent. increase in their spending. The figures are very encouraging and give rise to the hope that 1987 will be a very good year for the United Kingdom tourism industry.

Skill Shortages

17. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether skill shortages are identified and used to determine training places.

Mr. Nicholls: Reports of skill shortages are one of the factors taken into account in assessing Government support for training provision.

Community Newspapers

18. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what instructions he has given to the Manpower Services Commission with regard to its funding of community newspapers.

Mr. Cope: A number of community newspapers are currently supported under the community programme. No separate instructions have been given to the Manpower Services Commission.

YTS

19. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many young people have refused a place on YTS, or left the scheme early, since 1983.

Mr. Nicholls: The Manpower Services Commission estimates that there are between 20,000 and 30,000 unemployed 16-year-olds who do not participate in YTS. The number of young people who leave the YTS programme early has averaged around 20,000 in each year since 1984 and the latest surveys show some 69 per cent. of these early leavers were in work, further education or training three months after leaving.

24. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of two-year YTS.

Mr. Nicholls: At the end of September 1987, there were some 428,000 young people receiving high quality training on YTS schemes, the highest figure ever for the programme. The latest information on those young people leaving YTS between April 1986 and May 1987 shows that 74 per cent. were going into work or further education and training.

74. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many youth training schemes there are currently within the travel trades.

Mr. Cope: There are some 2,000 young people in training on YTS in the travel industry under schemes operated by the Association of British Travel Agents and some individual tour operators. This figure is likely to understate the total number of young people training within the travel trades, but information is not held in such a way that all travel trade schemes can be readily identified.

In addition, the MSC estimates that there are some 16,000 contracted YTS places in tourism-related industries (including the hotel and catering industry).

87. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of youth training scheme trainees in Devon who obtained jobs during or at the end of this period on the scheme.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission conducts regular follow-up surveys of all YTS leavers. The latest results cover leavers from YTS during the period April 1986 and May 1987 and show that in Devon 71 per cent. were in jobs at the time of the surveys.

Labour Statistics

20. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of 18 to 25-year-olds in employment.

Mr. Cope: The number of young people aged 18 to 24 years inclusive in employment in June 1987 is provisionally estimated to be 4,359,000.

27. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of unemployed persons in the Leicester travel-to-work area at the latest available date.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Leicester travel-to-work areas was 21,488.

28. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the trend of unemployment levels in the Yorkshire and Humberside travel-to-work areas compared with all other travel-to-work areas in the English regions and in particular areas having assisted areas status.

Mr. Lee: The number of unemployed claimants in the Yorkshire and Humberside region has decreased by 44,500, or 14·3 per cent. over the last year. The comparable figures for the rest of England are 375,500, and 16·6 per cent. and for all areas with assisted areas in England are 145,200 and 14 per cent.

29. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are at present unemployed; and how many of these are under 21 years of age.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 2,751,384. The numbers aged under 21 years are not separately identified, however those aged under 20 numbered 374,445.

31. **Mr. Kirkhope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the recent labour market statistics.

Mr. Lee: The latest labour market statistics show a continuing sharp fall in unemployment in all regions. The unemployment rate fell below 10 per cent. in October and the seasonally adjusted total was the lowest for five years and nearly half a million lower than in June 1986. Vacancies have continued to rise and employment was up by 372,000 in the year to September contributing to a total of more than 1·3 million extra jobs since June 1983.

39. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of women in employment.

Mr. Lee: In June 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 10,337,000 females in the employed labour force in Great Britain. This represents an increase of 931,000 since June 1983. The figures are adjusted for the effects of seasonal variation. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

40. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the work force was unemployed, on the basis of the last recorded figures, in the Sheffield travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987 number of unemployed claimants in the Sheffield travel-to-work area expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed was 14·6 per cent.

41. **Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current rate of male and female unemployment in Birmingham.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the Birmingham travel-to-work area expressed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed was 16 per cent. for males and 9·6 per cent. for females.

48. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of men over the age of 50 years who were registered as unemployed in the greater London area on 31 October.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed male claimants aged 50 years and over, in the greater London area was 47,486.

49. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of people currently unemployed in the Basildon constituency; and what were the figures for the same period in each of the last four years.

Mr. Lee: Following is the available information. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Basildon in October of each year since 1984. The comparison is affected by the change in the comparison of the unemployment statistics in March 1986.

	Number
October 1984	6,972
October 1985	6,492
October 1986	6,159
October 1987	4,877

53. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present level of job vacancies registered at jobcentres in the south-west region.

Mr. Lee: On 2 October 1987 the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the south-west region was 22,081.

57. **Mr. Neil Hamilton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds in employment.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested. It is estimated that in January 1987 1,095,000 people in Great Britain aged 16 to 18 at 31 August the previous year were in employment outside YTS; however, this figure also includes small numbers who were unemployed but not claiming benefit, who were neither seeking work nor claiming benefit, or who were on Government schemes outside YTS, and it excludes some people in full-time education who also had some paid employment. Jobs for young people are also available within YTS. About one in 10 YTS trainees have employed status and also benefit from the quality training YTS provides.

73. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of unfilled vacancies in each of the jobcentres covering the South Hams constituency.

Mr. Lee: The South Hams parliamentary constituency is covered by the Totnes, Dartmouth and Kingsbridge jobcentres, where there were 120, 51 and 83 unfilled vacancies respectively on 2 October 1987.

80. **Mr. Andrew McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the number of people in employment.

Mr. Lee: In June 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 24,359,000 in the employed labour force in Great Britain. This represents an increase of 1,321,000 since June 1983. The figures are adjusted for the effects of seasonal variation. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's Forces.

86. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current numbers of people employed and what was the level in May 1979.

Mr. Lee: In June 1987, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 24,359,000 in the employed labour force in Great Britain. In June 1979—figures are not available for May — there were 24,767,000. The figures are adjusted for the effects of seasonal variation. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's forces.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information showing the number of *(a)* female part-time employees and *(b)* male part-time employees in the United Kingdom and if he will provide a break down of this information by age-group and region.

Mr. Lee: The regularly published employees in employment series does not separately identify part-time employees by age and region. The labour force survey provides information on a different basis, but allows such analyses. LFS estimates for the spring of 1986 are shown in the table.

Part-time[1] employees

Thousands, Spring 1986

	16-29		*30-49*		*50 and over*		*All ages*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Region								
Northern	10	49	13	144	11	55	34	248
Yorkshire and Humberside	28	84	15	240	16	114	59	437
East Midlands	19	57	14	200	18	88	51	345
East Anglia	12	38	[2]—	96	[2]—	35	27	169
South East	102	254	42	714	82	371	226	1,338
South West	18	71	16	210	24	90	58	371
West Midlands	25	71	19	232	18	99	62	403
North West	33	90	21	294	19	125	73	508
Wales	11	43	11	123	[2]—	51	32	217
Scotland	20	65	13	209	16	112	49	386
Northern Ireland	[2]—	15	[2]—	51	[2]—	21	15	87
United Kingdom	284	836	173	2,511	228	1,162	685	4,509

[1] Basic usual hours (i.e. excluding paid and unpaid overtime and meal breaks) of 30 hours or less per week. Estimates exclude those employees who did not state hours worked.

[2] Sample size too small to provide a reliable estimate.

Unit Labour Costs

21. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the trend in unit labour costs from 1979-80 to date in the United Kingdom and its major international competitors.

Mr. Lee: Our unit labour cost increases have fallen back sharply over the period and now match those of our major international competitors.

Community Programme

23. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how the proposed change in the community programme from employee to benefit status will effect women currently prevented from participating in the community programme.

Mr. Lee: It will not.

38. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has considered the premium to be given to unemployed people participating in the community programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment intends to make a statement to the House shortly.

Barnsley

25. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any special proposals for reducing unemployment in the Barnsley, East constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: All my Department's employment, training and enterprise measures are already available in Barnsley. Moreover, unemployment in Barnsley, East has fallen by 816 in the last year.

Child Care Facilities

26. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether child care facilities and payments will be offered to parents under 18 years who have to take up a YTS place under the provisions in the current Employment and Social Security Bills.

Mr. Cope: No one will be forced to take up a place on YTS under the provisions of the present Employment and Social Security Bills. YTS is and will remain a voluntary scheme. Special arrangements have been made in the Social Security Bill to protect the position of parents under 18 who will remain entitled to income support.

Trade Unions (Accounts)

30. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the timetable for the implementation of his plans to require trades unions to keep their accounting records available for inspection and to give trades union members the right to inspect those records on request accompanied by an accountant.

Mr. Nicholls: The right for a trade union member and his accountant to inspect the accounting records of his union is provided by part I of the Employment Bill. It is intended that part I of the measure will be brought into force by order on a date to be specified.

Job Clubs

32. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many job clubs have been opened in 1987.

Mr. Lee: Seven hundred and seventy eight job clubs have opened between 1 January and 30 October 1987. This brings the total to 1,078.

67. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of job clubs.

Mr. Lee: Job clubs have proved a very effective means of helping long-term unemployed people to find the jobs they want. In the current financial year to the end of September 1987, 47,664 people had passed through job clubs. Of these 25,931 (54·4 per cent.) found work and a further 6,424 (13·5 per cent.) took up a place on the community programme, a training scheme or the enterprise allowance scheme.

79. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the work of the job clubs established so far.

Mr. Lee: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight (Mr. Field).

National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses

33. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the National Federation of Self Employed.

Mr. Fowler: I have not met the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, although I shall be doing so in the new year. Ministers of my Department have however, met them from time to time.

East Midlands

35. **Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present level of job vacancies registered at job centres in the east midlands.

Mr. Lee: On 2 October 1987 the number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the east midlands region was 14,425.

Discrimination

36. **Ms. Abbot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to ensure that black and ethnic minority Manpower Services Commission trainees are not discriminated against either in the type of scheme they are offered or in the treatment meted out to them whilst on training schemes.

Mr. Cope: I have taken steps by issuing orders under section 13(2)*(d)* of the Race Relations Act 1976 to apply the relevant sections of the Act to trainees seeking access to MSC-sponsored training schemes. To help the commission ensure that its equal opportunities policy is working effectively, the participation of ethnic minority groups in its programmes is monitored closely. The commission also provides courses specifically for ethnic minorities, where they have special needs or where they are under-represented in particular skills or occupations. All contracts require training providers to comply with current race relations legislation.

Hotel Occupancy

43. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the average hotel room occupancy rate in (i) London, (ii) England, (iii) Scotland, (iv) Wales and (v) Northern Ireland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lee: The table shows the average hotel room occupancy rates for London and England for each year since 1979.

	London per cent.	*England per cent.*
1979	63	52
1980	59	50
1981	58	46

	London per cent.	England per cent.
1982	62	47
1983	72	54
1984	78	57
1985	78	58
1986	71	56

Tourism issues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of their respective Secretaries of State.

Local Employer Network Scheme

44. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Manpower Services Commission will extend its funding of the local employer network scheme for a further year.

Mr. Cope: The Manpower Services Commission helps to finance each local employer network for one year only. There are no plans to change that arrangement. The commission is working with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and the Confederation of British Industry to increase the ability of the networks to finance themselves.

Suffolk

45. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about unemployment in Suffolk.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Suffolk was 17,737, compared with 22,316 in October 1986.

Self-employed

46. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in the numbers of self-employed since 1983.

Mr. Cope: Between June 1983 and June 1987 the numbers of self-employed in Great Britain increased by an estimated 509,000.

66. **Mr. Beaumont-Dark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the increase of self-employment since 1979.

Mr. Cope: Since 1979 the estimated number of self-employed people in the United Kingdom has risen from 1·9 million to 2·7 million, an increase of 43 per cent. This increase is very encouraging as self-employment has an important role to play in the regeneration of the economy and the reduction in unemployment.

West Midlands

47. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the latest figures of unemployment in the west midlands; and what was the comparable figure 12 months ago.

Mr. Lee: On 8 October 1987, the number of unemployed claimants in the west midlands region was 285,567. The corresponding figure for October 1986 was 343,453.

Apprentices

55. **Mr. Michael Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest estimate of the number of apprentices in the United Kingdom; and what it was 10 years ago.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest available estimate of the number of persons undertaking an apprenticeship in the United Kingdom is 331,000 at spring 1986, based on information from the labour force survey. Further estimates from the labour force survey show that in Great Britain the number of apprentices fell from 367,000 at spring 1979 (the earliest date available) to 318,000 at spring 1986. With the move away from traditional apprentice training in many industries, some long-duration schemes of a type which previously could have involved apprenticeships may now no longer do so.

Budget Hotels

56. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any proposals to seek to remedy the shortage of capacity in the budget hotel sector.

Mr. Lee: I am not aware of any general shortage of supply of low-priced and medium-priced accommodation in England, but there is a need for more good quality budget hotel capacity, particularly in strategic locations such as London and near to the main motorway network, to cater for future tourist demand. The English tourist board is encouraging private sector investment in new and improved budget hotel capacity. In appropriate cases, the board may also be able to consider section 4 financial assistance to encourage such developments.

Caravan Sites

58. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many holiday caravan sites have been established since May 1979.

Mr. Lee: According to English tourist board statistics, there are currently some 2,859 caravan sites in England compared with 2,279 at the beginning of 1983, the earliest date for which information is available. However, these figures may not reflect total site capacity and firm conclusions cannot be drawn about the number of new sites established.

Labour Mobility

59. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new initiatives are being considered to assist the mobility of labour.

Mr. Lee: I have plans to evaluate and develop a number of the ways in which the employment service can help people seeking jobs in other areas. In particular the service is discussing with Oracle Teletext Ltd. an agreement for jobs information to be made available nationally through the televison network.

Day Trips

60. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many day trips were made to Britain last year; and what was the comparable figure in each of the past six years.

Mr. Lee: The number of day trips to the United Kingdom by overseas residents in 1986 is shown below together with comparable figures for the previous six years. These data exclude visitors from the Republic of Ireland, for whom day-trip figures are not available.

Day-trips to the United Kingdom 1980 to 1986 (excluding visitors from Republic of Ireland)

	Number
1980	700,000
1981	552,000
1982	434,000
1983	533,000
1984	519,000
1985	556,000
1986	674,000

Oil and Oil-related Sector

61. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give his current assessment of employment trends within the oil and oil-related sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: There are no comprehensive data available for the oil and oil-related sector, but following is a table giving the estimated number of employees in employment in extraction of mineral oil and natural gas (class 13 of the 1980 standard industrial classification) in Great Britain from 1979:

June	*Employees in employment*
1979	19,000
1980	22,000
1981	24,000
1982	27,000
1983	28,000
1984	31,000
1985	31,000
1986	28,000
1987	26,000

The estimates are subject to considerable potential estimation error due to the relatively small number of employees in the sector. Although oil production is expected to decline gradually from now on, offshore gas production is at record levels and is set to continue rising for several years.

Health and Safety Executive (Ministerial Visit)

62. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) to the Health and Safety Executive's headquarters in Bootle on 11 November.

Mr. Nicholls: I was pleased to visit HSE's Bootle headquarters on 11 November. This was a further opportunity to meet more of the organisation's staff and proved most worthwhile.

Tourism and Leisure Developments

63. **Mr. Hunter** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the value of capital investment in major tourism and leisure developments in England in the six months to June.

Mr. Lee: The English tourist board estimates that during the six months ending 30 June 1987 some £1,235 million worth of capital investment in tourism and leisure projects was completed or was in progress in England. These figures are based on a survey of projects with a value of over £500,000.

Historic Buildings and Gardens

64. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the number of admissions to historic buildings and gardens in Britain last year and the amount of revenue raised by admission chages.

Mr. Lee: The British tourist authority estimates that in 1986, a total of 67·8 million visits were made to historic buildings and gardens in Britain. Admission charges for these visits are estimated to have produced revenue of £118 million.

Small Businesses

65. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new small businesses were created in 1986-87.

Mr. Cope: In 1986, the latest year for which figures are available, the number of businesses registered for VAT is estimated to have increased by 29,000. This was the net result of 193,000 registrations and 164,000 deregistrations.

76. **Mr. William Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his Department's policy of purchasing goods and services from small businesses.

Mr. Cope: The purchasing policy of my Department places special emphasis on the role of small firms in achieving value for money. This policy is set out in guidance and training to all my Department's staff who now have greater discretion to use commercial suppliers since we have signed new customer agreements with the central procurement agencies.

More generally, as Minister responsible for small firms, I am concerned to promote their role in Government purchasing as a whole. Small firms can face particular difficulties when trying to break into these markets, but to overcome this my department is encouraging simplified procedures for Government purchasing and improved information such as the small firms service's booklet "Tendering for Government Contracts".

Maternity Leave

71. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women for each year from 1981 have been refused the right to return to their job after maternity leave under section 12 of the Employment Act 1980.

Mr. Nicholls: No records are kept of the number of women who have been refused the right to return after maternity absence under the conditions set out in section 12 of the Employment Act 1980.

Sightseeing Tour Operators

75. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he is taking to ensure that high standards are maintained by sightseeing tour operators.

Mr. Lee: The regional tourist boards are continuing to provide training courses to meet their regions needs for blue badge tourist guides. The national tourist boards of England, Scotland and Wales are examining the need to provide enhanced training and qualifications for guides who wish to escort visitors to a wider area. I also understand that the bus and coach industry is developing new training systems to meet its own needs.

Job Creation

77. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has further plans to assist the unemployed to find employment.

Mr. Lee: We shall continue to pursue sound economic policies for steady growth and low inflation which have so far produced more than 1 million new jobs since 1983.

As part of this overall policy, we have developed a wide range of measures to help unemployed people back into employment. These are set out in our "Action for Jobs" booklet. We regularly review these measures to ensure that they provide help appropriate to the needs of unemployed people.

78. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to reduce unemployment in the inner cities.

Mr. Cope: The Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission provide a wide range of national programmes which aim to equip individuals with the skills and motivation to compete for available jobs and to stimulate enterprise and the growth of small businesses. The Government have guaranteed that *(a)* all unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds will receive an offer of a place on YTS *(b)* all 18 to 25-year-olds unemployed between six and 12 months will receive an offer of a place on the job training scheme, enterprise allowance scheme or in a job club; and *(c)* all those unemployed over six months will receive a Restart interview every six months. These guarantees provide direct help to unemployed inner city residents and serve to target resources on those areas of greatest need. The expenditure this year of over £240 million in inner city areas by the Department and the Commission, reflects the extent of this effort.

Health and Safety Inspectors

81. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to increase the number of health and safety inspections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government's allocation of resources for 1988-89 to the Health and Safety Commission, together with some revision of current priorities, will allow the Health and Safety Executive's factory inspectorate to increase the number of inspections above the level planned for 1987-88.

Industrial Injury

82. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many working days were lost in 1985, 1986 and in 1987 to the most recent practicable date because of industrial injury.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 24 July 1987 at column 669.

Industrial Relations

83. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service to discuss the general state of industrial relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I have no such plans at present although Ministers of this Department meet the chairman from time to time to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Pre-strike Ballots

84. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many pre-strike ballots have been held in accordance with the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department is aware of some 320 pre-strike ballots apparently designed to comply with the provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984. There have been other ballots which we do not know about.

Sex Discrimination

85. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he has taken to publicise the right of women working for small employers to claim sex discrimination rights under the Sex Discrimination Act 1986.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department issued a press notice about all the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 on 7 November 1986 when the Act received Royal Assent. It has subsequently produced a special leaflet for small employers; this was published on 7 February 1987 when the small firms provisions came into force. This leaflet has been distributed widely to small firms organisations. The CBI, the TUC, the Advisory Committee on Women's Employment and the Women's National Commission. Copies are freely available to both employers and employees from jobcentres, unemployment benefit offices and citizens advice bureaux. Copies of the press notice and the leaflet have been placed in the Library.

Information about the extension of sex discrimination legislation to small employers has also been included in the Home Office's general guide to the Sex Discrimination Act. This, too, is freely available from jobcentres, unemployment benefit offices, and citizens advice bureaux, as well as from the Equal Opportunities Commission which has also issued its own guidance on the 1986 Act.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the most recent information on the average earnings and earnings distribution of YTS leavers who enter employment; and if he will break down the information by gender and by racial group.

Mr. Cope: The most recent information available from the England and Wales youth cohort study and the equivalent Scottish survey is given in the tables. The figures are broken down by gender; sample sizes are too small to allow a statistically reliable breakdown by ethnic group.

Table 1: 1984 School Leavers—England and Wales YTS Leavers in Full-Time Job February 1986

Weekly take-home pay	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Weighted base	1,353	747	606
Up to £29.99	1 per cent.	1 per cent.	[1]
£30–£39·99	11 per cent.	6 per cent.	17 per cent.
£40–£49·99	22 per cent.	25 per cent.	19 per cent.
£50–£59·99	24 per cent.	23 per cent.	26 per cent.
£60–£69·99	17 per cent.	19 per cent.	14 per cent.
£70–£79·99	9 per cent.	10 per cent.	7 per cent.
£80–99·99	5 per cent.	5 per cent.	4 per cent.
£100–£149·99	2 per cent.	3 per cent.	1 per cent.
£150+	[1]	[1]	—
Don't know/Not answered	9 per cent.	9 per cent.	10 per cent.
Average	£55·89	£57·82	£53·47

(Source: England and Wales Youth Cohort Study.)

[1] Respondents who had left YTS between September 1984 and February 1986.

Table 2: 1984 School Leavers—Scotland YTS Leavers in Full-Time Job in Spring 1986

Weekly take home pay	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Unweighted base	819	434	385
Less than £20	[1]	—	[1]
£20–£29·99	1 per cent.	1 per cent.	1 per cent.
£30–39·99	16 per cent.	12 per cent.	20 per cent.
£40–£49·99	33 per cent.	39 per cent.	26 per cent.
£50–59·99	22 per cent.	18 per cent.	27 per cent.
£60–£69·99	16 per cent.	15 per cent.	16 per cent.
£70–£79·99	7 per cent.	7 per cent.	6 per cent.
£80–£89·99	3 per cent.	3 per cent.	3 per cent.
£90–£99·99	1 per cent.	1 per cent.	1 per cent.
£100+	2 per cent.	3 per cent.	[1]
Average	£48·79	£50·13	47·27

(Source: Scottish Young Peoples Survey)

[1] Respondents who reported have been on YTS in October 1984 Spring 1986 or October 1985 and having since left YTS.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the sources of official information that give details of the earnings of employees in different racial groups.

Mr. Lee: Earnings surveys carried out by the Department of Employment do not distinguish employees in different racial groups.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information showing the numbers of male part-time workers in Great Britain in April and the proportion of these workers whose earnings fell below *(a)* £3·40 per hour and *(b)* £3·60 per hour.

Mr. Lee: In March 1987 it was estimated there were 869,000 male part-time employees in Great Britain. The latest information available on the distribution of hourly earnings of part-time employees is from the April 1987 new earnings survey. This indicates that of all part-time adult male employees in the survey sample whose gross earnings were not affected by absence, 76 per cent. earned less than £3·40 per hour and 79 per cent. earned less than £3·60 per hour. However, the new earnings survey sample does not include all part-time employees whose earnings are below the PAYE threshold.

New Earnings Survey

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his best estimate of the proportion of employees not represented in the new earnings survey; if he will estimate the proportions of young employees *(a)* aged under 21 years and *(b)* aged under 18 years excluded; and if he will provide details of any estimates of the earnings of these excluded groups.

Mr. Lee: It is estimated that less than one tenth of employees are not represented in the new earnings survey sample. The majority of these are part-time employees with gross earnings below the PAYE threshold which was £45 per week at the time the sample for the 1987 survey was drawn. Information is not available on which to make estimates of the ages or earnings of employees not covered by the survey.

Lost Days (Strikes)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many days were lost through strikes in August; and how this compares with August 1978.

Mr. Lee: It is provisionally estimated that 35,000 working days were lost through industrial disputes in August 1987: this compares with a total of 472,000 days lost in August 1978.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Employment Credit Scheme

93. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider introducing an employment credit scheme which would allow the long-term unemployed to combine their earnings from part-time work with their benefits.

Mr. Scott: I am aware of proposals that have been made for the introduction of an employment credit scheme. Officials in this Department and their colleagues in the Department of Employment are looking very carefully at the implications.

Supplementary Benefit

91. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received in the last three months on the removal of entitlement to supplementary benefit of school leavers.

Mr. Portillo: Since 1 August I have received five letters on this subject. Three were generally in favour of the proposals and the other two expressed concern about various groups that were thought to be special cases.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many elderly or disabled people received a board and lodging allowance within the supplementary benefit scheme in the Wakefield metropolitan district during 1979, 1983 and 1986; and if he will provide details in these years at constant prices of the total cost of these allowances and detail what proportion went to voluntary or private sector establishments.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Benefit

92. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what savings he expects to make by

introducing the rule that a claimant of unemployment benefit must have a minimum of two years consecutive employment.

Mr. Scott: Clause 5 of the Social Security Bill does not require that a claimant for unemployment benefit must have a minimum of two years consecutive employment. It requires that a person will have to satisfy the contribution condition of having an earnings factor of 50 times the lower earnings level from contributions paid or credited in the last two tax years before the start of the benefit year instead of the last one year as now, and that in one of those years the earnings factor from contributions actually paid must be not less than 25 times the lower earnings limit. The estimated savings arising from this measure are about £7 [illegible] million in a full year (as shown in the explanatory and financial memorandum of the Bill).

AIDS

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals his Department has to commission studies of the effects of Ampligen in the treatment of AIDS in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: The Department does not directly commission studies of novel compounds of possible value in the treatment of AIDS. However, the Medical Research Council has established a committee to consider all promising therapies, including Ampligen, and this committee will commission and co-ordinate studies where appropriate.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the number of United Kingdom health care workers who have become HIV positive as a result of blood splashes from patients.

Mr. Newton: No reports have been received by the communicable disease surveillance centre of any United Kingdom health care worker becoming HIV positive as a result of blood splashes from patients.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to forward projections of AIDS infections in other countries.

Mr. Newton: We have had discussions with a number of countries which are looking into the question of forward projections of AIDS cases and HIV infection. They all accept that it is extremely difficult to make a prediction with any accuracy. Based on numbers of AIDS cases reported to them, and estimates of HIV infection, the World Health Organisation has made a broad projection that in the next five years between half a million and 3 million deaths from AIDS can be expected throughout the world, with perhaps 50 million to 100 million persons infected with the virus.

Abortions

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost to the National Health Service of an abortion performed at 18 weeks or over.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), on 26 October, at column *178*.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the bands of fees including initial consultations payable by patients in private clinics licensed by his Department in 1986 for abortions carried out at *(a)* under nine weeks, *(b)* nine to 12 weeks, *(c)* 13 to 17 weeks and *(d)* 18 weeks and over.

Mr. Newton: The Department approves the general level of fees in the case of pregnancy advice bureaux, and nursing homes with more than six beds approved for use for abortion cases or with more than 25 per cent. of their total beds so approved. This information on fees is provided to the Department in confidence. The level of fees reflects a variety of factors of which gestational age, in so far as it affects the type and complexity of the operation, may be one; other factors include length of stay in the nursing home and the type of accommodation provided.

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give (i) the total number of social security appeal tribunals held *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Newcastle upon Tyne in each month in the 12 months ended 31 October and (ii) the average length of time from the date of the claim which gave rise to the appeal and the date of the hearing.

Mr. Portillo: National administrative statistics of social security appeal tribunals are not disaggregated for localities smaller than a social security region, and are produced only on a quarterly basis.

The figures in the table relate to the four quarters to 31 March 1987, the latest period for which statistics are available.

Statistics are not kept on the length of time between the original claim or decision appealed against and subsequent hearing, but only on the time between the lodgement of an appeal and hearing.

The number of social security appeals heard and average time between lodgement of appeal and hearing (weeks)

	Quarter ending			
	30 June 1986	*30 September 1986*	*31 December 1986*	*31 March 1987*
North Eastern region (including Newcastle)				
Total number of social security appeals heard	4,788	5,048	5,185	6,408
Average time between lodgement and hearing (weeks)	14·2	15·7	13·7	17·1
Great Britain				
Total number of social security appeals heard	31,347	30,456	33,145	37,685
Average time between lodgement and hearing (weeks)	16·1	16·1	15·4	18·2

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will bring forward proposals to expand the kidney transplant programme.

Mrs. Currie: The limiting factor in the expansion of kidney transplantation is not a shortage of facilities, but the availability of organs. We are constantly seeking to encourage organ donation through the donor card scheme and by supporting local initiatives. We are currently considering what action we should ask health authorities to take following a report on the supply of organs for transplantation, which was prepared at our request by the medical royal colleges.

Data Network

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department is reviewing its commitment to the Government data network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The Department is continuing to work with other Government Departments and the three potential contractors to define the specification and contractual conditions for the Government data network project. Decisions about whether to proceed with the project depend on satisfactory resolution of these issues and on the prices eventually tendered by the contractors.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what priority is being given to people with haemophilia and HIV for treatment with new life-saving drugs.

Mr. Newton: The question of which drugs should be prescribed for a particular patient is a matter for the judgment of the individual clinician providing treatment.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the current number of claimants registered at each individual office of his Department; and if he will express the social fund allocations to each individual local office, announced in the *Official Report*, 4 November, columns 774-80, as a sum per head for the claimants of each office.

Mr. Scott: I shall place the information in the Library.

Single Payments

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the totals disbursed on essential payments for single items by his Department *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in the United Kingdom in each year since 1978, at constant prices.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available for 1978. The expenditure on single payments of supplementary benefit for succeeding years is as follows:

Year (ending April)	*Scotland* Total cost (£ million)	Cost at 1987 prices[1] (£ million)	*United Kingdom* Total cost (£ million)	Cost at 1987 prices[1] (£ million)
1979-80	10	16	40	64
1980-81	14	19	48	67
1981-82	12	15	57	72
1982-83	23	27	98	115
1983-84	37	42	166	186
1984-85	54	58	241	259
1985-86	71	73	335	344
1986-87	71	71	330	330

Source: Management Information System (100 per cent. count) provisional only for 1986-87.

[1] Based on the increase in the retail prices index (less housing) financial year average 1986-87.

Hospitals (Correspondence)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what so far unanswered representations his Department has received about problems affecting hospitals in the north-west; when they were received; and when replies may be expected.

Mr. Newton: None, but I have undertaken to write further to the right hon. Member about representations from the South Manchester community health council.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners now receiving housing benefits will lose rights after the change in the social security system in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 9 November, at column *93*.

Social Fund Commissioner

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has appointed the social fund commissioner.

Mr. Moore: I am pleased to announce that Mrs. Rosalind Mackworth has agreed to serve as social fund commissioner for a period of three years from 1 December 1987. Mrs. Mackworth is the senior partner in a London firm of solicitors.

Income Support

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide, in relation to the personal allowances and premiums contained within the income support scheme which is to be implemented in April 1988, a list of the detailed assumptions concerning claimants' needs which have led him to arrive at the particular amount of each allowance and premium.

Mr. Scott: In arriving at the amounts for the allowances and premiums we have taken into consideration current levels of supplementary benefit, evidence as to the relative circumstances of particular groups, available resources and the commitment to compensate claimants for the average value of the 20 per cent. rates contribution that householders will have to meet.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sewage Disposal

Mr. Speller: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representation she has received about the dumping of sewage in the Bristol channel adjacent to the beaches of north Devon.

Mr. Gummer: Representations have been received from Lynton and Lynemouth town council, Ilfracombe town council and Combe Martin parish council about the sea disposal of sewage sludge, the residue from sewage treatment, which takes place some 11 miles north of Ilfracombe. Scientific surveillance by my Department suggests that these operations are unlikely to have any significant effect on the quality of the north Devon beaches.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sewage sludge dump sites there are along the United Kingdom coast.

Mr. Gummer: Fifteen such sites are in regular use and three reserve sites are used occasionally in rough weather.

Surplus Food and Drink

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total volume and value of surplus food and drink in the EEC and the cost of storage.

Mr. MacGregor: The table sets out the quantities and book value of commodities in structural surplus held in public intervention stores in the EC at the end of September:

	Quantity ('000 tonnes)	*Value (mecu)*
Cereals	12,960	2,597
Sugar	0	0
Olive oil	216	303
Wine alcohol	[1]42	4
Butter[2]	1,037	3,185
SMP[2]	739	1,216
Beef	625	1,753

[1] Million hectolibres.

[2] Situation at 31 August 1987.

Source: EC Commission.

For the commodities listed above, the 1987 EC budget provides for expenditure of 1,245 mecu (£871 million) on the costs of handling and storing stocks in public intervention, including the financing costs of holding the stocks.

Cheese

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much cheese production is currently being lost through the non-availability of milk supplies; and if he will review milk quotas in the light of the shortfall.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Although up to September this year some 3 per cent. more milk was used for cheese manufacture in England and Wales than a year earlier, I recognise that there were some difficulties during the seasonal trough this year in meeting the requirements of cheese producers. This is basically a marketing problem, not the result of quotas, and as such it is a matter for the industry. Nevertheless, we have discussed the question with the Milk Marketing Board for England and Wales which is fully aware of the problem and has sought to minimise it. Earlier this year the industry's joint committee agreed changes to the milk supply arrangements, and more recently the price structure has been adjusted with a view to ensure adequate supplies for cheese production.

Poultry

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many battery hen factories were visited by his Department's veterinary inspectors in each of the last five years and in 1987 to date; what proportion of all such factories this represents in each year; and how many visits were made in total for each year;

(2) what efforts are made by his Department to monitor compliance with the code of recommendations for the welfare of domestic fowl and battery hens in particular; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My veterinary staff make specific welfare visits to livestock farms, including battery hen units, to check on compliance with the welfare codes. Where it is found that code provisions are not being followed, advice is given on the steps needed to improve conditions. Follow-up visits are made to check that the necessary action has been taken.

The total number of welfare visits in the period in question is as follows. I regret that information on the number of visits to battery hen establishments is not available, but these will have accounted for a significant proportion of the total.

Year	*Number of welfare visits*
1982	3,987
1983	5,498
1984	5,391
1985	6,064
1986	5,804
[1]1987	3,891

[1] January to September.

Pollution

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of reported pollution incidents from farming for the years 1979-80 through to 1986-87.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 10 November 1987]*: The number of water pollution incidents resulting from farm waste reported in England and Wales on a calendar years basis were:

	Number
1979	1,484
1980	1,671
1981	2,367
1982	2,428
1983	2,795
1984	2,828
1985	3,510
1986	3,427

Drainage

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to announce his revised land drainage and conservation guidance notes on procedures for water authorities, internal drainage boards, the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission; and if these notes will provide guidance to drainage authorities on their operations in environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: The text of the guidelines has been finalised and we plan to issue them in the form of a booklet in about two months' time. I can confirm that the guidelines will offer specific advice on environmentally sensitive areas.

Marine Pollution

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will define his responsibilities in relation to the marine pollution implications of proposed undersea depositories for nuclear waste storage.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: The deposit of substances or articles under the seabed within waters under United Kingdom jurisdiction requires a licence under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985, either from my Department or from the Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish Departments as appropriate. Section 8 of the Act sets out the factors which have to be taken into account by the licensing authority in determining whether to issue such licences. I am also jointly responsible, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, for the authorisation of disposals of radioactive waste from licensed nuclear sites and UKAEA establishments in England under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Radioactivity (Monitoring)

Dr David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will place in the Library details of (*a*) the precise location and (*b*) the geology of each of the sites for the monitoring of radioactivity conducted in Yorkshire during the weeks beginning 2 and 9 November.

Mr. Donald Thompson *[pursuant to his reply, 13 November 1987]*: I am pleased to inform the hon. Member that the results of monitoring in Yorkshire between 5 and 12 November are being placed in the Library of the House today.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Storm Damage

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to compensate those who suffered severe damage to farmland, business and domestic premises as a result of the harsh weather and flooding on the night of 28 October.

Mr. Viggers: The Government do not compensate private individuals for losses or damages which would normally be covered by insurance, but we have instructed Northern Ireland Departments to react as sympathetically as possible to individual problems. Where employment is at risk, the Industrial Development Board and the local enterprise development unit are prepared to consider, on an individual basis and on their merits, requests for financial assistance from their client companies. Under the supplementary benefit scheme, some £252,000 has been paid to meet exceptional and urgent needs arising from the flooding. In addition, England, Wales and Northern Ireland are to receive help from the EC for disaster relief.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to complete his assessment of flood damage in Northern Ireland due to the exceptional rainfall of 21 October and; if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a full initial assessment of the flood damage. Government Departments have already been in action to help those affected. Over £250,000 has been paid by DHSS to meet urgent needs; homes have been visited to see where personal help can be provided; special EC funds are to be provided; and British Coal has donated a stockpile of coal.

The initial assessment of flood damage shows that in seven areas of the Province 500 houses, 200 commercial premises, six manufacturing premises and several schools and hospitals were flooded. Some 16,000 poultry, 300 sheep and a few pigs and cattle were reported drowned while some 80 hectares of arable crops and 130 hectares of winter sown crops were flooded. In addition many roads were damaged and in particular four bridges were entirely destroyed, including the bridge at Kilmaddy on the main A4 road between Dungannon and Ballygawley, although a Bailey bridge to replace this was erected on Sunday 25 October.

The emergency services and the security forces both reacted excellently in mitigating the effects of the flooding at the time.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what would be the estimated charge, on the basis of current expenditure *(a)* per household and *(b)* per capita for each district council in Northern Ireland if a system of local income tax were to be introduced.

Mr. Stanley: The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" proposals do not apply to Northern Ireland. In monitoring the development of the proposals in England and Wales, before deciding whether or to what extent they should be applied in Northern Ireland, we have not considered any alternatives to the present GB proposals, such as local income tax. Thus the figures requested are not available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has evaluated the possible risks of pollution to Larne lough, from the proposal to create a rubbish tip at Magheramorne quarry, Larne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland has received an application for planning permission for a waste disposal facility at Magheramorne quarry, together with an application for consent under the Water Act (NI) 1972 for the disposal of leachate from the facility. Careful evaluation has been made of the possible effects of the leachate on the water quality of Larne lough and on ground water. Decisions will not be taken before the Department carries out its statutory planning consultation with Larne borough council and this will take place shortly.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will offer financial support to councils seeking alternative methods of waste disposal; and if he will conduct a feasibility study into recycling of domestic refuse.

Mr. Needham: There is much current research about methods of waste disposal and this is monitored on a regular basis by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. To date, this research has not indicated a method which, given the relatively small scale of waste in Northern Ireland, would be a realistic alternative to landfill. However, the Department intends to carry out a review of refuse disposal policy in Northern Ireland. Pending such a review, it would not be appropriate to offer financial support to councils seeking alternative methods of waste disposal.

Terrorism

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the persons regarded as supergrasses who have given information to the police which led to cases being prepared by the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland in the last 10 years; and if he will indicate in each case the terrorist organisation to whom such supergrasses belonged.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: The following cases have come to trial in the last 10 years in which a converted terrorist gave evidence against his former accomplices:

Black (Provisional IRA)
Bennett (Ulster Volunteer Force)
McGrady (Provisional IRA)
Grimley (Irish National Liberation Army)
Morgan (Provisional IRA)
Quigley (Provisional IRA)
Gilmour (Provisional IRA and Irish National Liberation Army)
Crockard (Ulster Volunteer Force)
Allen (Ulster Volunteer Force)
Kirkpatrick (Irish National Liberation Army)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether it is possible for him to determine the country and factory which manufactures the materials used by terrorists in Northern Ireland for home-made mixes of explosives.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: It would not be in the public interest to comment on such matters.

Salmon Farming

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which sea loughs in Northern Ireland meet the required standards for salmon farming.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: There are no standards required by the Government for salmon farming in Northern Ireland. Applications for licences for particular sites anywhere in Northern Ireland waters are considered on their merits, taking into account such matters as the characteristics of the proposed site, water quality, the protection of fisheries and public health, the preservation of amenity and conservation of flora and fauna. Standards required for economically successful salmon farming are a matter for the promoters.

Social Fund

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will announce the allocation of the social fund grants and loans budgets for 1988-89 to individual local offices in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: I expect to be able to make an announcement shortly.

Supergrass (Definition)

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what definition of the term supergrass is used by his Department.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: The term "supergrass" or "converted terrorist" is generally taken to apply to those witnesses from terrorist organisations who have decided to give evidence voluntarily in court which leads to a substantial number of their former accomplices being implicated in criminal offences.

Employment Equality

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he plans to bring forward to promote equality of employment through affirmative action; what is his definition of affirmative action; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Viggers *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on 15 July 1987 at columns *490-1*, we are preparing legislative and other measures to promote equality of opportunity. Affirmative action was defined in the guide to effective practice, published on 15 September by the Department of Economic Development, as

> "those special measures that an employer can take to promote more representative distribution of employment in the workforce in the event of the existing representation of either the Protestant or the Roman Catholic community being less than might reasonably be expected".

The guide, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House, provides examples of the kind of measures envisaged.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Timesharing Exhibition

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord Privy Seal who authorised the promotion of an exhibition on timesharing in the precincts of the House; and what fee was charged for the use of a Terrace marquee for the provision of free drinks.

Mr. Wakeham: The promotion was authorised by the Serjeant at Arms in accordance with established criteria and following the procedure agreed by the Services Committee. The fee charged for the use of the Terrace marquee in connection with this exhibition for short periods at lunch-time is £50 per day.

Private Dining Rooms

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will make it his policy to publish the names of hon. and right hon. Members who book private Dining Rooms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: No.

SCOTLAND

Labour Statistics

94. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the total number of unemployed people by age group for each year since 1979 in *(a)* Edinburgh and *(b)* Edinburgh, South constituency.

Mr. Lang: Unemployment statistics for local authority districts and parliamentary constituencies are available only as from June 1983. The number of unemployed claimants by age group in the city of Edinburgh district and Edinburgh, South parliamentary constituency in July of each year from 1983 to 1987 was as shown in the table.

Unemployed claimants (July)

	City of Edinburgh district					*Edinburgh, South constituency*				
Age	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Under 17	709	666	555	549	456	115	94	90	82	65
Aged 17	1,239	1,196	1,163	1,022	902	224	192	184	140	151
18	1,519	1,444	1,354	1,309	1,118	232	246	197	225	184
19	1,410	1,604	1,419	1,350	1,289	249	274	245	234	212
20-24	6,607	7,085	7,397	7,559	7,268	1,186	1,291	1,410	1,360	1,340
25-29	3,627	3,867	4,267	4,707	4,627	516	540	628	697	767
30-34	2,226	2,444	2,579	2,870	2,864	377	410	416	457	428
35-39	1,637	1,840	2,080	2,304	2,201	246	276	332	363	376
40-44	1,344	1,388	1,528	1,674	1,799	176	183	219	228	256
45-49	1,235	1,391	1,495	1,582	1,623	162	176	194	214	222
50-54	1,286	1,398	1,508	1,559	1,617	186	205	219	228	235
55-59	1,548	1,718	1,735	1,915	1,833	235	260	266	298	276
60 and over	687	559	484	486	485	111	62	60	61	55
Total	25,074	26,600	27,564	28,886	28,082	4,015	4,209	4,460	4,587	4,567

Drunkenness

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many criminal convictions were made for drunkenness for each of the years since 1964.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available is given in the table.

Year	*Persons with a charge proved of drunkenness*
1969	10,764
1970	10,729
1971	11,014
1972	11,867
1973	13,739
1974	14,911
1975	15,213
1976	14,306
1977	12,478
1978	12,738
1979	13,628
1980	13,796
1981	11,329
1982	9,730
1983	8,080
1984	6,618
1985	5,099
1986	3,660

The term "drunkenness" is taken to mean offences of being drunk and incapable, drunk and disorderly, drunk in or attempting to enter a designated sports ground and similar offences.

Information for the years prior to 1969 is not readily available.

Alcohol Expenditure

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has as to the total amount spent on alcohol for each of the years from 1972;

(2) what estimates are available to him as to the average total amount spent on alcohol per person in each of the years from 1972.

Mr. Lang: The table gives estimates, prepared by the Central Statistical Office, which are consistent with the United Kingdom figures for consumers' expenditure on alcoholic drink published in "United Kingdom National Accounts, 1986 edition" (the CSO Blue Book). These estimates are not comparable with those derived from the family expenditure survey.

Consumers' expenditure on alcoholic drink

Scotland	*£ million*	*£ per head of population*
1972	284	54
1973	374	71
1974	420	80
1975	520	99
1976	597	114
1977	703	134
1978	777	149
1979	889	171
1980	984	189

Scotland	*£ million*	*£ per head of population*
1981	1,089	210
1982	1,141	221
1983	1,263	245
1984	1,469	285
1985	1,674	326

Information for 1986 will be available shortly.

Blood Products

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when Scotland became self-sufficient in blood products.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Scotland has been virtually self-sufficient in blood products since the end of 1983. From time to time imported blood products are prescribed on clinical grounds.

Forestry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the proportion of broadleaves of the total planting in Scotland by *(a)* the Forestry Commission and *(b)* private sector companies in each year since 1979 and also the current proportion.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information, in the form of percentages of total planting, is set out in the following table:

Year to 31 March	*Forestry Commission*	*Private Sector*[1]
1979	0·6	3·2
1980	0·6	2·7
1981	0·6	1·7
1982	0·4	1·3
1983	0·6	1·4
1984	0·5	1·5
1985	0·8	1·6
1986	1·5	2·3
1987	5·2	3·8

[1] The figures in the third column of the table cover the private forestry sector as a whole. It is not possible to provide separate figures for companies.

It is too early to estimate percentages for the current year to 31 March 1988.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give the value of *(a)* planting grants and *(b)* the nature and value of tax concessions made to the private forestry sector in Caithness and Sutherland in each year from 1979; and if he will also reprice the figures for inflation;

(2) if he will give the value of *(a)* planting grants and *(b)* the nature and value of tax concessions made to the private forestry sector in Scotland in each year from 1979; and if he will also reprice the figures for inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information on planting grants is set out in the following tables:

Year to 31 March	*Planting grants paid (£ thousands)*	*Planting grants paid (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents)*
	Caithness and Sutherland	
1980	14	27
1981	34	48
1982	124	160
1983	137	165
1984	470	537
1985	338	369
1986	691	712
1987	808	808
	Scotland	
1980	1,481	2,441
1981	1,393	1,953
1982	2,475	3,193
1983	2,669	3,207
1984	3,607	4,126
1985	3,727	4,068
1986	4,476	4,614
1987	4,592	4,592

The value of tax concessions would have depended on the tax status at the time of a large number of individual investors and cannot be assessed with any accuracy.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the recreational and amenity benefits of the incentives provided to private sector forestry in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most planting by the private sector in Scotland is carried out under the Forestry Commission's forestry grant scheme. All applicants under this scheme must accept its stated objectives, which include the securing of environmental benefits and the provision of such opportunities for recreation, including provision for public access, as may be appropriate. Similar objectives apply to the commission's broadleaved woodland grant scheme.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the sums spent on *(a)* forest walks and *(b)* footpaths in each of the three conservancies, north Scotland, mid Scotland and south Scotland, in each year from 1979; and if he will also reprice the figures for inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is available only from 1981-82 onwards, and that in respect of expenditure on visitor facilities generally, of which spending on forest walks and footpaths is a substantial element. The information is set out in the following table:

Year to 31 March	*Conservancy (£ thousands)*				*Conservancy (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents)*			
	North	*[1]East*	*South*	*West*	*North*	*[1]East*	*South*	*West*
1982	34	15	19	28	44	20	24	36
1983	19	8	15	26	23	9	17	32
1984	42	16	16	30	47	18	19	34
1985	49	15	14	35	54	16	16	38

[1] The former East Scotland conservancy was assimilated into the Mid Scotland and North Scotland conservancies in 1985.

Year to 31 March	Conservancy (£ thousands) North	Mid	South	Conservancy (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents) North	Mid	South
1986	45	77	65	51	79	67
1987	52	52	52	52	52	52

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will calculate the impact on the Exchequer of switching planting from the public to the private forestry sector in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not possible to make such a calculation, since information about tax reliefs granted to private individuals in respect of their investments in forestry in Scotland is not available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amount of forest recreation and amenity subsidy made to the Forestry Commission in Scotland and in the United Kingdom in each year from 1979; and if he will also reprice the figures for inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Forestry Commission's statutory responsibilities do not extend to Northern Ireland. The information is otherwise set out in the following table:

Year to 31 March	Scotland (£ thousands)	Great Britain (£ thousands)	Scotland (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents)	Great Britain (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents)
1980	1,070	3,533	1,755	5,794
1981	1,036	3,385	1,440	4,705
1982	1,016	3,492	1,311	4,505
1983	1,143	3,792	1,372	4,550
1984	1,278	4,336	1,457	4,943
1985	1,374	4,586	1,498	4,999
1986	1,877	5,813	1,933	5,987
1987	1,905	6,636	1,905	6,636

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the division among the three conservancies, north Scotland, mid Scotland and south Scotland, of the forest recreation and amenity subsidy made to the Forestry Commission in Scotland in each year from 1979; and if he will also reprice the figures for inflation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Year to 31 March	Conservancy (£ thousands) North	East[1]	South	West	Conservancy (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents) North	East[1]	South	West
1980	263	214	312	281	431	351	512	461
1981	305	259	275	197	424	360	382	274
1982	238	273	274	231	307	352	354	298
1983	272	353	268	250	326	424	322	300
1984	318	337	344	279	363	384	392	318
1985	332	388	300	354	362	423	327	386

[1] The former East Scotland conservancy was assimilated into the Mid Scotland and North Scotland conservancies in 1985.

Year to 31 March	Conservancy (£ thousands) North	Mid	South	Conservancy (£ thousands revalued to 1987 equivalents) North	Mid	South
1986	542	784	551	558	808	567
1987	588	656	661	558	656	661

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cost of producing the magazine *Forest Life* and the numbers printed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cost was £1·09 per copy and 15,000 copies were printed.

Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to produce his response to the representations he has received following his consultative document on the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are examining over 2,000 individual comments which have been received in response to the consultative document, in the light of which my right hon. and learned Friend will next year consider what, if any, changes in the existing licensing law of Scotland might usefully be proposed.

Private Rented Accommodation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will provide the total number of persons in the private rented sector, excluding housing associations, by region and for Scotland as a whole, in the years from 1981 to 1986 inclusive;

(2) if he will provide the total number of dwellings in the private rented sector, excluding housing associations, by region and for Scotland as a whole, in the years from 1981 to 1986 inclusive;

(3) if he will provide the total number of households in the private rented sector, excluding housing associations, by region and for Scotland as a whole, in the years from 1981 to 1986 inclusive.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested on the number of persons and households in the private rented sector is not available; and the number of dwellings in the private sector is available only for Scotland as a whole. Estimates for 1981 to 1986 inclusive were published in table 9.3 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1976-1986", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Nurse/Patient Ratios

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the nurse-to-patient ratio for each year since 1979 in Lothian health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally, but the following table shows the ratio of the number of whole-time equivalent nurses (including qualified, unqualified and learner nurses) to average occupied beds in each year to 31 March.

	Ratio
1979	1·2:1
1980	1·3:1
1981	1·3:1
1982	1·4:1
1983	1·4:1
1984	1·4:1
1985	1·4:1
1986	1·4:1
1987	1·4:1

Nirex

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about public meetings organised by Nirex to be held in Scotland; and what information he has about meetings to be held between Nirex and *(a)* Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, *(b)* regional councils and *(c)* district councils.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that Nirex is arranging a seminar in Edinburgh on 14 December for Scottish local authorities. I have asked the chairman of Nirex to write to the hon. Member with the full information requested.

Hotels

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what results there are to date following the introduction of the crown hotel classification scheme in each category; how many hotels have failed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Scottish Tourist Board's scheme offers not only classification but grading of premises. The most recent results for hotels are as follows:

	Listed	*1 Crown*	*2 Crown*	*3 Crown*	*4 Crown*	*5 Crown*	*Total*
Classification only	11	4	16	16	5	—	52
Grading							
Approved	14	9	85	60	11	—	179
Commended	5	3	68	190	140	12	418
Highly commended	—	—	1	10	9	13	33
Total	30	16	170	276	165	25	682

The scheme, which is voluntary, also covers guest houses and bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation. A figure on the rate of failure among hotels is not available.

The scheme has been very well received and is proving to be highly successful. It should prove to be a most useful marketing tool and will also serve as a means of encouraging the provision of good quality accommodation.

NHS Staff

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many full-time doctors, nurses and ancillary staff have been employed by the National Health Service in Scotland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The information is as follows for full-time doctors, qualified nurses and ancillary staff (mainly porters and domestic staff) employed by the NHS in Scotland at 30 September in each year. Doctors holding maximum part-time appointments in hospitals are included. General medical practitioners are excluded.

	Doctors	*Nurses*	*Ancillary staff*
1979	4,677	20,391	17,390
1980	4,690	20,952	17,054
1981	4,699	22,274	16,998
1982	4,811	23,450	16,754
1983	4,878	24,584	16,210
1984	5,116	25,333	15,369
1985	5,090	25,843	14,551
1986	5,021	26,330	13,780

Spiers Wharf

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make funds available to assist the development of the Spiers wharf warehouses at Port Dundos.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: Applications have been made by a prospective developer to my right hon. and learned Friend for a historic buildings grant, and to the Scottish Development Agency. These applications are presently being considered.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* My right hon. and learned Friend meets the chairman and chief executive of the agency frequently on occasions of mutual interest. The last formal meeting to discuss matters concerning the agency was held on 20 February 1987, when the issues discussed included the review of the agency, its role in the Scottish economy and its budgeting and planning cycles.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much he expects the Scottish Development Agency to spend in the current year on management and computer consultancy.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 29 October 1987]:* The agency anticipates that spending on these activities will be as follows:

	1987-88 £ million
Management consultancy	0·86
Computer consultancy	1·22

Factories and Industrial Sites

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many factories and industrial sites are standing empty or unused in each district and islands area in Scotland.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 2 November]:* The available information is set out in the table.

Number of unoccupied completed factories in public ownership and sites allocated for industrial development, Scotland, 31 March 1986

Area	*Number of unoccupied factories (public sector) (1)*	*Number of sites allocated for industry (2)*
Scotland	[1] [2]1,462	800
Borders	25	41
Berwickshire	0	9
Ettrick and Lauderdale	18	15
Roxburgh	6	13
Tweeddale	1	4
Central	[1] [2]101	21
Clackmannan	[1] [2]6	3
Falkirk	[1] [2]*(a)*	12
Stirling	[1] [2]95*(f)*	6
Dumfries and Galloway	32	30
Annandale and Eskdale	*(c)*	6
Nithsdale	22 *(f)*	6
Stewartry	3	5
Wigtown	7	13
Fife	[2]143	52
Dunfermline	[2]*(c)*	18
Kirkcaldy	[1] [2]143	23
North East Fife	[1] [2]*(c)*	11
Grampian	31	97
Aberdeen City	9	15
Banff and Buchan	10 *(f)*	26
Gordon	5	21
Kincardine and Deeside	*(d)*	8
Moray	7	27
Highland	n/a	112
Badenoch and Strathspey	n/a	9
Caithness	n/a	9
Inverness	n/a	9
Lochaber	n/a	18
Nairn	n/a	1
Ross and Cromarty	n/a	30
Skye and Lochalsh	n/a	18
Sutherland	n/a	18
Lothian	[2]73	58
East Lothian	[2]6	10
Edinburgh City	[2]19	21
Midlothian	[2]2	9
West Lothian	[2]46	18
Strathclyde	[2]959	288
Argyll and Bute	[2]2	22
Bearsden and Milngavie	*(e)*	0
Clydebank	36	10
Clydesdale	8	5
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	63	12
Cumnock and Doon Valley	22	12
Cunninghame	[1] [2]110	17
Dumbarton	[1]0	8
East Kilbride	[2]95	4
Glasgow City	[1] [2]323 *(f)*	97
Hamilton	47	8
Inverclyde	[1] [2]22	16
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	[1] [2]17	18
Kyle and Carrick	18	11
Monklands	[1] [2]67	7
Motherwell	81	17
Renfrew	37	22
Strathkelvin	11	1
Eastwood	*(e)*	1
Tayside	88	65
Angus	[1]1	13
Dundee City	[1] [2]85	28
Perth and Kinross	[2]2	24
Islands Councils	n/a	36
Orkney Islands	n/a	4
Shetland Islands	n/a	31
Western Isles	n/a	1
Area not stated	10	0

Source:

Column (1) Factories record

Column (2) Register of industrial sites

Notes:

Column (1):

(1) Data relate to industrial premises owned by SDA, new town development corporations and local authorities; data on factories owned by the Highlands and Islands Development Board are not yet included in the record for this year.

(2) District figures are aggregated from local employment office areas.

(3) It has been necessary to group some districts, and this is noted in the table as follows:

(a) included with Stirling,
(b) included with Kirkcaldy,
(c) included with Nithsdale,
(d) included with Gordon,
(e) included with Glasgow,
(f) includes data from other Districts.

(4) [1] Data for at least part of area included for 1985 because 1986 not available.

(5)·[2] Districts where data are incomplete because of lack of information from one of the relevant authorities or Agencies.

(6) n/a no data available for district.

(7) Unoccupied factories will include some already leased, reserved or unavailable for some other reason.

Column 2:

(1) Both publicly and privately owned sites are included.

(2) Not all the sites for industrial development will be available immediately and some sites already contain factories.

Rating Reform

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the cost of compiling the new community charge register in Scotland for 1987-88 and of the annual costs of updating that register in subsequent years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* The community charges register will be compiled in 1988-89. My right hon. and learned Friend has estimated that expenditure of up to £9 million will be incurred in that year on the establishment of the register and preparation of new billing and collection systems, and that the additional cost of administering the new system in a full year thereafter will be in the range of £17 million to £22 million.

Mental Welfare Commission

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will authorise an emergency cash allocation in the light of the recent statement made on the effect of staff shortages on patient care by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* No. The Government have increased resources to the health service in Scotland generally by 26 per cent. since 1979 and services for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped have benefited substantially in real terms.

Staffing levels have also significantly improved since 1979: qualified staff up by 23 per cent. in mental illness and by 24 per cent. in mental handicap hospitals, unqualified staff by 8 per cent. and 10 per cent. respectively. The quality of staffing in terms of the ratio between qualified and unqualified staff has also improved with consequential benefits in the standard of care.

Since 1979 a number of new hospital units have been constructed and in most hospitals wards have been upgraded. In total 2,082 new mental health beds have been provided at a cost of £63·3 million. Substantial improvements have also been made to the main mental handicap hospitals, Lennox Castle and the Royal Scottish national hospital.

We will continue to urge health boards to give greater priority to services for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped and it is encouraging that many boards now have firm plans to this end.

Electricity

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the generating capacity of *(a)* the South of Scotland electricity board and *(b)* the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board on the latest available figures; how this compares with the level of domestic consumption in these areas; and what are the corresponding figures for each of the last eight years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* The information, provided by the Scottish electricity boards, is set out in the table. However, it should be noted that meaningful comparisons cannot readily be drawn between generating capacity and annual consumption by domestic electricity users. Although the capacity figures are given separately for each board, their generating plant is operated on a merit order basis under the joint generating agreement.

	SSEB		*NSHEB*	
	Maximum available sent-out capacity[1] (megawatts)	*Domestic users' consumption (gigawatt hrs.)*	*Maximum available sent-out capacity[1] (megawatts)*	*Domestic users' consumption (gigawatt hrs.)*
1979-80	7826	7761	2094	3128
1980-81	7826	7294	2104	3023
1981-82	6356	7398	2522	3034
1982-83	6301	7102	3128	2899
1983-84	6248	7305	3134	3003
1984-85	6300	7026	3211	2975
1985-86	6160	7676	2570	3191
1986-87	6160	7725	2572	3204

[1] Excludes oil-fired capacity held in reserve.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the profits of *(a)* the South of Scotland electricity board and *(b)* the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board for each of the last eight years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* The information is set out in the following table:

Year ended 31 March	*Current cost loss*		*Historic cost retained profit loss[1]*	
	SSEB £ million	*NSHEB £ million*	*SSEB £ million*	*NSHEB £ million*
1987	−73	−20	45	22
1986	−69	−18	44	17
1985	−141	−38	−12	5
1984	−52	−14	45	23
1983	−42	−7	44	29
1982	−51	−5	38	23
1981	−46	−16	35	17
1980	−82	−29	18	8

[1] Before appropriation of supplementary depreciation.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much the price of electricity for domestic consumers has increased for each of the last eight years in the areas covered by *(a)* the South of Scotland electricity board and *(b)* the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board: and what has been the increase in the retail price index for each of those years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* The information requested is set out in the table:

Increase in Domestic Electricity Prices in Scotland 1979-87

Financial year	*North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board Per cent.*	*South of Scotland Electricity Board Per cent.*	*Annual average increase in retail price index over previous year Per cent.*
1979-80	17·8	17·7	15·8
1980-81	28·8	30·5	16·3
1981-82	11·2	10·8	11·5
1982-83	8·9	9·4	7·1
1983-84	—	—	4·7

Financial year	North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board Per cent.	South of Scotland Electricity Board Per cent.	Annual average increase in retail price index over previous year Per cent.
1984-85	4·4	4·7	5·1
1985-86	4·3	4·3	5·9
1986-87	2·1	2·2	3·2

SCOTLAND

Equal Opportunities

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by the departmental equal opportunities officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget which is allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets equal opportunities officers from other Government Departments each year, *(e)* the guidelines issued to his departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act, and *(f)* the action taken to facilitate jobshare, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 30 October 1987]*:

(a) No fixed proportion of the equal opportunities officer's working time is allocated to equal opportunities duties. Many of the detailed duties are delegated to support staff. The total effort amounts to more than one full-time post.

(b) The head of the Department's personnel management division is equal opportunities officer; she is supported by a branch which has equal opportunities as one of its major duties.

(c) It is not possible to quantify accurately the cost of staff and other resources devoted to this issue because it fluctuates considerably over time.

(d) The equal opportunities officer or her deputy meets others responsible for equal opportunities on average once a year.

(e) None, but my Department is discussing with its trade union side the special training needs of women.

(f) Part-time working began some years ago and my Department is currently consulting its trade union side on arrangements for this and for job sharing.

A series of equal opportunities leaflets being produced for issue to staff will cover the leave arrangements which provide for parental leave in some circumstances.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 18 November 1987

WALES

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The spending in 1985-86 by advertising agencies on campaigns is as follows:

Agency	*Campaign*	*Expenditure*
The Yellowhammer Company Ltd.	Misuse of Drugs	£60,000
Davidson Pearce Ltd.	Road Safety	£11,000

The figures are in full cost terms, including VAT where applicable.

Pupil Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a breakdown of pupils in *(a)* nursery schools and *(b)* nursery classes in primary schools expressed in terms of full-time equivalents by local authority in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information in respect of January 1987 is as follows:

	Full-time equivalent pupil numbers in: *Maintained nursery schools*	*Nursery classes in maintained primary schools*
Clwyd	186	1,924
Dyfed	202	1,392
Gwent	707	1,560
Gwynedd	—	1,181
Mid Glamorgan	1,021	4,373
Powys	—	801
South Glamorgan	430	1,241
West Glamorgan	117	2,415

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pakistani Students (Visas)

97. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the number of applications made by Pakistan nationals for a visa to study in the United Kingdom in each year from 1983 to 1986 and *(b)* the number of applications granted in each of these years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The information available centrally is given in the following table.

Applications in Pakistan for a visa to enter the United Kingdom as a student

Number of persons

	Newly received[1]	*Applications Granted*[2,3]	*Refused initially*[3]
1983	200	140	20
1984	220	170	20
1985	210	210	10
[4]1986	290	270	20

[1] Including applications subsequently withdrawn or lapsed.

[2] Granted initially or on appeal.

[3] The application may have been received in a previous year.

[4] Visas were mandatory for Pakistani students from 15 October 1986.

Police Cells

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost of keeping a person on remand in police cells.

Mr. John Patten: The average cost per night of keeping a person on remand in police cells, based on the latest accounts submitted by police forces, is £163.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is responsible for payment of the costs involved in keeping a person on remand in police cells.

Mr. John Patten: The Home Office meets the full costs of keeping persons on remand in police cells. The costs are borne on the "Prisons, England and Wales, Vote" (class XI, vote 2).

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were being held in police cells in the United Kingdom on 31 October.

Mr. John Patten: On 31 October, 899 male and 11 female prisoners were held in police cells in England and Wales.

Prisons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the prisons in the United Kingdom which receive only prisoners who are on rule 43.

Mr. John Patten: No prisons in England and Wales receive only prisoners who are on rule 43.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who were being kept on rule 43 in prisons in the United Kingdom on 31 October.

Mr. John Patten: On 30 September 1987, the most recent date for which information is available, 1,595 male sentenced and unsentenced prisoners were segregated under rule 43 in prisons in England and Wales. Figures are not kept centrally for female prisoners.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the report of the chief constable of Bedfordshire on the effect of Luton Town football club's ban on visiting supporters on reducing crime in Luton, he will recommend the adoption of such a scheme to other chief constables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The membership card scheme introduced by Luton Town FC has been notably successful and we recommend that the football authorities, clubs and the police study the scheme to find out what lessons may be learned for wider application. The precise nature of a membership scheme to be adopted is a matter for the individual club, in close consultation with the local police and with the benefit of guidelines and advice from the Football League. The advice given by the police would be a matter for the appropriate chief officer in the light of his professional assessment of a wide variety of local circumstances. A scheme which involves a total ban on visiting supporters may not be as well suited to other clubs as it is to Luton Town. The Government will continue to seek wider adoption of membership schemes through the working group chaired by the Minister with responsibility for sport.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much of the Metropolitan police force's budget has been spent on crime prevention projects for each year since 1979; and how much it is proposed to spend in the next financial year.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that expenditure on publicity initiatives on crime prevention, neighbourhood watch and business watch schemes during the period is as follows:

	£
1981-82	106,000
1982-83	206,000
1983-84	369,000
1984-85	295,000
1985-86	327,000
1986-87	423,000
1987-88[1]	515,000

[1] Estimated

Information for 1979-80 and 1980-81 is not available and the level of expenditure for 1988-89 has not yet been decided.

In addition, it is expected that over £70,000 will be spent in 1987-88 on equipment for neighbourhood watch and business watch schemes, property marking, videos and films, on the mobile advice unit and on administrative support for some crime prevention panels. The equivalent figures for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Police Precepts

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the percentage change, in real terms, in the police precept levied on each London borough between 1985-86 and 1986-87 and 1987-88; what factors account for this change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It would not be meaningful to calculate increases in the precept in real terms, because of the annual change to the product of the penny rate. The ratepayers' contribution to Metropolitan police expenditure in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 was £227 million, £258 million and £284 million respectively. This represents a real terms increase of 10·3 per cent. between 1985-86 and 1986-87 and 5·6 per cent. between 1986-87 and 1987-88.

These increases were primarily to meet the cost of additional manpower, increases in policy pay, allowances and pensions and additional equipment.

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost of maintaining the Metropolitan police force in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88; and what was the precept levied on each London borough for those years.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Metropolitan police net revenue expenditure was £771 million in 1985-86 and £834 million in 1986-87. The estimate for 1987-88 is £929 million.

The precepts levied in each of these years was 12·62p 14·21p and 15·4p respectively.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: The advertising agencies, campaign subjects, and amounts spent by the Home Office during the financial year 1985-86 were as follows:

Agency	*Campaign Subject*	*Expenditure* £
Davidson Pearce	Magistrates Court Service	4,000
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership	Crime Prevention	1,688,000
Collett Dickenson Peare & Partners	TV Licence Evasion	1,573,000
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership	Police Recruitment	149,000
Davidson Pearce	Electoral Register	156,000
Davidson Pearce	Koestler Awards	1,500
Boase Massimi Pollitt Partnership	Fire Prevention	447,000
Charles Barker	Probation Officer Recruitment	28,000

Criminal Injuries Board

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average length of time between an application for compensation to the Criminal Injuries Board and the time of granting it.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available on the average length of time taken to deal with applications to the board. As stated in the board's latest annual report (Cm. 42, paragraph 5) copies of which are in the Library, 70 per cent. of cases resolved in the financial year 1985-86 were dealt with within a year of application.

Knives

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the reported number of offences in each of the last three years in which a knife has been used in the Greater London area.

Mr. John Patten: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Janner) on 21 October, at column 776.

Drunken Driving

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to set a mandatory sentence including *(a)* a term of imprisonment and *(b)* a ban from driving for life in cases where death has resulted from drunken driving; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Parliament has long taken the view that mandatory sentences would restrict the court's ability to take into account the individual circumstances of each case. The courts already have the power to imprison drink-drivers and to disqualify them for substantial periods. The penalties for road traffic offences are currently under consideration by the Road Traffic Law Review, and we shall study its recommendations carefully.

Firearms

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions for illegal possession of firearms have been obtained in each year since 1979; and how many of these cases involved illegal possession of *(a)* automatic and *(b)* semi-automatic weapons.

Mr. John Patten: The information held centrally, which may be incomplete and which relates to cases where unlawful possession of firearms was the principal offence, is given in the following table. It is not possible to identify separately offences involving the unlawful possession of semi-automatic weapons.

Persons found guilty of unlawful possession of firearms

England and Wales *Number of persons*

Year	*Total*	*of which, persons found guilty of unlawful possession of a fully automatic weapon*
1979	2,774	39
1980	2,532	48
1981	2,617	62
1982	2,104	62
1983	1,883	56
1984	1,559	77
1985	1,390	50
1986	1,251	62

Schools (Assaults)

Mr. Henderson To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the numbers of prosecutions taking place each year since 1978 for assaults on teachers and pupils in schools.

Mr. John Patten: It is not possible, from the results of court proceedings held centrally, to distinguish the occupation of victims of assault.

Citizenship

Mr. Livingstone To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the lack of printed forms R and W1 which are necessary for registration of British citizenship by certain Commonwealth citizens and citizens of the Republic of Ireland; and whether photocopied forms will be acceptable.

Mr. Renton: We are satisfied that supplies of these forms are sufficient to meet reasonable demands for them. However, applications on photocopied forms will be acceptable.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Management

Mr. Woodcock To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he is satisfied with the level of management development activity in British industry.

Mr. Butcher: We regard management development as a priority area. There is evidence that the United Kingdom is falling behind its competitors in this area. We welcome the CBI's management development initiative in setting up the Council for Management Education and Development, whereby industry will address itself to promoting higher standards of professionalism at all levels across the economy.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he has any plans to introduce new legislation to protect consumers.

Mr. Maude: The Government intend shortly to introduce regulations to implement the EC directive on doorstep selling; and regulations under the Consumer Protection Act 1987 on price displays at bureaux de change and in connection with the resale of electricity and gas by landlords. A number of safety regulations will be made, mainly to implement EC directives.

The Government are currently analysing the response to public consultation on proposals by the Law Commissions for amending the law on the sale and supply of goods.

My right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced the Government's intention to amend the Consumer Credit Act, when there is a suitable opportunity, to simplify and clarify its requirements. We also propose to make certain changes to the advertisements regulations under the Act, which will provide improved consumer protection, particularly in the area of secured lending.

Petrol

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has recently received concerning competition in the United Kingdom petrol market.

Mr. Maude: A small number of representations have recently been received from hon. Members and independent petrol retailers about the United Kingdom petrol market.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) whether he is satisfied with the level of competition in the United Kingdom petrol market;

(2) whether he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the question of competition in the petrol supply industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: Under the competition legislation it falls to the Director General of Fair Trading to keep competition in the United Kingdom market under review. The director general is continuing to monitor certain aspects of the competitive situation in the petrol supply market, but I understand that at present he sees no justification in developments in the petrol market for taking action under the legislation for which he is responsible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total number of petrol retail sites currently operating; and how this figure compares with the numbers for the previous 10 years.

Mr. Maude: The number of petrol retail sites operating over the period 1976-86 is as follows:

	Number
1976	30,383
1977	29,751
1978	28,295
1979	26,480
1980	25,527
1981	24,760
1982	24,108
1983	23,097
1984	22,032
1985	21,140
1986	20,641

Source: Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the total volume of retail petrol sales in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Maude: The figures, which are available in the *Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics*, are as follows:

Sales of motor spirit to the retail sector

Thousand tonnes

Grade	*Year*									
	1977	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
5-Star	694	161	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4-Star	12,117	14,101	14,872	15,393	15,041	15,656	16,107	16,990	17,361	18,621
3-Star	1,388	1,112	859	590	410	257	166	111	77	48
2-Star	2,220	2,052	2,023	2,181	2,486	2,431	2,431	2,331	2,188	2,052
Total	16,419	17,426	17,775	18,164	17,737	18,396	18,704	19,432	19,626	20,721

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what share of the United Kingdom retail petrol market is currently held by the three largest retailers; and how this figure compares with the share in each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Maude: The percentage share of the retail petrol market held by the three largest retailers is as follows:

	Per cent.
1976	53·1
1977	54·1
1978	53·4
1979	56·2
1980	55·2
1981	53·5
1982	50·7
1983	47·0
1984	49·7
1985	50·0
1986	50·4

Source: Office of Fair Trading.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has concerning the percentage of retail petrol sites in each of the last five years for which figures are available which are *(a)* independent, *(b)* tenants and licensees and *(c)* managed sites.

Mr. Maude: The percentage of retail petrol sites which are independent is as follows:

	per cent.
1982	68·6
1983	68·3
1984	68·6
1985	68·6
1986	68·7

Source: Office of Fair Trading.

I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible with the comparable percentage figures for tenants and licensees, and managed sites.

Timber

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he last met representatives of Timber Growers United Kingdom to discuss the future of the timber industry.

Mr. Atkins: I have not had the pleasure of meeting representatives of Timber Growers United Kingdom yet.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement regarding Her Majesty's Government's representation at the International Tropical Timber Organisation conference in Yokohama, Japan, from 9 to 20 November; whether Her Majesty's Government gave a commitment to continued funding to the organisation; whether Her Majesty's Government have committed themselves to the conservation and environmental recommendations of the International Tropical Timber Organisation conference report; and whether Her Majesty's Government have given a specific commitment to contribute to the project funds of the organisation.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom has ratified the international tropical timber agreement, and thereby accepts all the objectives arising from the United Nations conference on tropical timber which are set out in the agreement, including those relating to the sustainable utilisation and conservation of tropical forests, as well as the financial obligations due under the terms of the agreement. A representative of the Department of Trade and Industry is attending the current ITTO council session.

The United Kingdom will consider providing voluntary funding for particular projects put forward by ITTO on a case-by-case basis, and we hope that as the ITTO defines its role, its project work will be closely co-ordinated with other developments in the field, such as the FAO's tropical forest action plan, in which the United Kingdom is playing an active part.

Lloyd's

Mr. Knowles: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further progress has been made by Lloyd's in the implementation of the recommendations of the committee of inquiry into regulatory matters at Lloyd's.

Mr. Maude: The chairman of the Council of Lloyd's has recently submitted a memorandum recording the progress made to date. I have placed this memorandum in the Library. It shows that the Council of Lloyd's has now taken steps to implement 30 of the 70 recommendations in the committee's report, which was published in January this year. The memorandum also demonstrates that Lloyd's is heavily engaged in a programme of consultation on the remaining recommendations. As was the case when a report was last made to the House on this matter by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 8 April 1987, at column 273, implementation of the substantial part of the committee of inquiry's recommendations should be completed by the middle of 1989.

I look to Lloyd's to maintain the momentum generated so far, and I shall continue to follow Lloyd's progress closely and to keep the House informed.

SCOTLAND

Still Births

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the incidence of still births in each health board area in each month of 1985, 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

Stillbirths by Health Board Area and month, Scotland

Health Board Area	*All months*	*Jan.*	*Feb.*	*Mar.*	*Apr.*	*May*	*Jun.*	*Jul.*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*
1985													
Scotland	366	39	45	25	28	26	23	37	34	28	25	30	26
Borders	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1
Forth Valley	17	2	4	2	1	—	1	—	3	1	—	1	2
Dumfries & Galloway	13	2	3	2	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	3	—
Fife	29	5	4	1	2	2	4	3	1	1	4	1	1
Grampian	32	3	5	1	4	1	1	1	3	3	2	3	5
Highland	12	4	1	—	—	3	1	1	2	—	—	—	—
Lothian	45	4	8	1	4	2	3	6	1	4	2	7	3
Argyll & Clyde	40	5	3	2	2	3	3	4	4	5	3	3	3
Ayrshire & Arran	19	2	—	2	5	—	3	3	—	1	2	—	1
Greater Glasgow	86	4	7	10	6	8	3	12	10	9	9	4	4
Lanarkshire	40	5	6	2	3	4	3	3	5	2	1	3	3
Tayside	23	2	3	2	—	1	1	4	2	1	2	2	3
Orkney	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	—
Shetland	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	2	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1986													
Scotland	385	38	26	26	45	35	27	30	32	39	32	24	31
Borders	5	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	1	—
Forth Valley	14	2	—	—	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1
Dumfries and Galloway	4	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Fife	29	2	2	4	5	2	3	1	2	3	1	—	4
Grampian	36	5	1	3	3	3	2	3	1	3	4	2	6
Highland	11	—	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	—	—
Lothian	34	3	4	2	6	5	2	2	3	2	2	2	1
Argyll and Clyde	39	3	4	2	7	5	2	4	2	2	3	2	3
Ayrshire and Arran	35	4	3	5	5	2	3	3	3	2	3	1	1
Greater Glasgow	76	7	6	1	8	8	7	5	5	10	8	6	5
Lanarkshire	70	8	3	6	6	4	4	6	10	7	4	7	5
Tayside	29	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	7	3	2	4
Orkney	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Health Board Area	*All months*	*Jan.*	*Feb.*	*Mar.*	*Apr*	*May*	*Jun.*	*Jul.*	*Aug.*	*Sept.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*
1987[1]													
Scotland	252	31	24	29	26	27	28	31	25	31	—	—	—
Borders	3	—	1	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Valley	12	—	1	5	2	1	—	1	—	2	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	5	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
Fife	16	—	3	—	4	2	1	1	1	4	—	—	—
Grampian	32	4	4	6	5	3	1	3	4	2	—	—	—
Highland	5	—	1	1	1	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
Lothian	24	5	5	—	3	1	4	—	3	3	—	—	—
Argyll and Clyde	23	4	4	2	1	3	2	2	2	—	—	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	24	3	1	1	2	4	3	5	2	3	—	—	—
Greater Glasgow	57	6	3	6	2	8	10	10	7	5	—	—	—
Lanarkshire	31	5	1	4	5	2	3	4	3	4	—	—	—
Tayside	17	3	—	1	1	1	3	3	—	5	—	—	—
Orkney	2	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Shetland	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—
Western Isles	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—

[1] Provisional figures

Fish Farms

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to control the number and size of sea and fresh water fish farms in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Fish farms in inland waters and the land-based elements of marine fish farms are already subject to control under the Town and Country Planning Acts. The Government have no plans at present to legislate to extend planning controls to offshore fish farm developments.

Glasgow Royal Infirmary

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will visit phase 2 of the Glasgow royal infirmary in the near future.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to visit Glasgow royal infirmary. Any proposals to build a phase 2 of the redevelopment of the infirmary are for the Greater Glasgow health board in the first instance.

Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the replacement for the Glasgow royal maternity hospital will be sited within phase 2 of the Glasgow royal infirmary.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The question of a replacement for the Glasgow royal maternity hospital is currently the subject of an option appraisal being conducted by the Greater Glasgow health board. A decision about the site of that replacement building will be dependent on the outcome of the appraisal.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the procedures to be applied to proposals for preliminary investigations of a nuclear waste disposal facility have been amended in any way over the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There have been no changes to the planning procedures which would apply to such proposals.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about a seminar to be held in Edinburgh by Nirex in the near future; on what date that seminar will be held; and whether he intends to be present.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave her to a similar question yesterday. The Secretary of State would not expect to be present at a seminar.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what will be the nature of the public inquiry to which any proposal for nuclear waste disposal facilities in Scotland will be subject.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Any inquiry held would be an inquiry under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts. Its scope would be a matter for the Secretary of State to determine if and when a specific proposal was made.

Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of households in Scotland, with one pensioner living in them, has (*a*) no bath and (*b*) no inside lavatory.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The percentage of households in Scotland with one or more residents of pensionable age at the time of the 1981 census with (*a*) no bath was 3·4 per cent and (*b*) no inside WC was 1·3 per cent.

Health Services

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how the extra funds for hospitals and community services in Scotland announced in the Autumn Statement will be allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend will announce shortly his plans for financial allocations for all Scottish Office services, including health, for the years 1988-89 to 1990-91.

Prisons (Reform)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to introduce reform into Scottish prisons following the recent outbreaks of violence at Scottish prisons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1987]*: Implications of recent incidents in Scottish prisons are at present being assessed by my right hon. and learned Friend.

Hospital Beds

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of bed losses in the National Health Service hospitals in the Tayside area for each of the past eight years; and of these how many were acute beds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The average number of available staffed beds in NHS hospitals in Tayside health board are shown in the table for each of the past eight years together with the bed losses. Also relevant is the average percentage occupancy of these beds, details of which are also included in the table.

Year ending 30 September

	All specialties	*Bed losses*	*Percentage occupancy*	*Acute specialties*	*Bed losses*	*Percentage occupancy*
1980	5,522	—	80·7	1,791	—	70·5
1981	5,408	114	80·6	1,748	43	70·2
1982	5,377	31	80·2	1,754	(+6)	70·4
1983	5,354	23	80·2	1,740	14	72·0
1984	5,248	106	80·6	1,726	14	71·5
1985	5,158	90	80·0	1,688	38	70·9
1986[1]	5,137	21	79·1	1,678	10	71·5
1987[1],[2]	5,109	28	77·9	1,648	30	70·8

[1] Provisional.

[2] Year ending 31 March.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lords of Appeal in Ordinary

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General what has been the stipend paid to a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary in each of the past five years.

The Attorney-General: The salary of a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary and the dates on which it became payable has been as follows:

	£
1 April 1982	48,250
1 August 1983	51,750
1 January 1984	55,000
1 April 1984	56,650
1 November 1984	58,500
1 July 1985	63,750
1 March 1986	69,000
1 July 1986	71,400
1 April 1987	74,435
1 October 1987	74,750

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General what qualifications are required for appointment to the post of Lord of Appeal in Ordinary.

The Attorney-General: The qualifications required for appointment to the post of Lord of Appeal in Ordinary are set out in section 6 of the Appellate Jurisdiction Act 1876 which provides:

> "A person shall not be qualified to be appointed by Her Majesty a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary unless he has been at or before the time of his appointment the holder for a period of not less than two years of some one or more offices in this Act described as high judicial offices, or has been at or before such time as aforesaid, for not less than 15 years, a practising barrister in England or Ireland, or a practising advocate in Scotland".

High judicial office is defined in section 25 of the Act as any of the following offices:

> "The office of Lord Chancellor of Great Britain . . . or of Judge of one of Her Majesty's superior courts of Great Britain and Ireland".

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Buildings

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether information about the gross floor area of school buildings, capacity, areas of temporary accommodation and costs of improvement for individual local education authorities can be obtained from the data used to compile his Department's recently published survey of school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: No. The survey was designed to provide information only on a national basis. For representative coverage of the schools within each local education authority, a much larger sample would have been required, at greatly enhanced cost.

Schools (Assaults)

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what statistics are kept on the numbers of assaults taking place in schools in England and Wales as a whole and in Newcastle upon Tyne per year; and if he will give the number of assaults on *(a)* teachers and *(b)* pupils per year since 1978, in both geographical areas.

Mrs. Rumbold: No information is collected centrally on the number of assaults on teachers or pupils in schools in England and Wales.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details of any guidelines or circulars from his Department with regard to the handling of assaults on teachers or pupils in schools and the involvement of the police.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has issued no such guidelines or circulars.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourism

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on information available to young people concerning the opportunities for employment in tourism.

Mr. Lee: There is a wide range of frequently updated video and written material available for young people illustrating the many employment opportunities in tourism. Providers of relevant careers guidance material include the Manpower Services Commission's careers and occupational information centre, the English tourist board, the hotel and catering training board, trade organisations and individual employers in the industry, education foundations and professional associations, the trade press, commercial publishers, as well as my Department and the Department of Education and Science. The replies to a recent questionnaire my Department sent to all local authority principal careers officers showed how useful the existing material on careers in tourism is found to be.

Trade Unions (Accounting)

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the proposed changes in accounting requirements for trade unions.

Mr. Nicholls: Individual responses to the Green Paper "Trade Unions and their Members" are treated in confidence by my Department. Of 48 comments on the proposal to give trade union members and their professional advisers a statutory right of access to their union's detailed accounts, 32 were in favour.

Employment Schemes

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to merge the community programme and the job training scheme.

Mr. Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made in the House by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment today.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what specific changes he proposes to make in the administration of the enterprise allowance scheme and the small firms loan guarantee scheme to achieve his stated objective of giving more help through these schemes to people in the inner cities.

Mr. Cope: I am currently considering how the various measures to assist small businesses and encourage enterprise provided by this Department and the Manpower Services Commission can be operated to better effect in inner city areas.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Legislation

Mr. Lord: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what European Community measures on agriculture and fisheries were adopted during the recess before completion of parliamentary scrutiny; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: A number of Community measures were adopted during the recess. At the request of the Select Committee on European Legislation, I wish to explain the circumstances relating to four measures.

The first measure concerns the agreement with the United States on Community exports of pasta products. On 7 August the Council by written procedure endorsed the draft agreement reached by the Commission and the United States Government on a long-standing dispute over the Community's export regime for pasta products, pending a definitive solution in the GATT round negotiations. The settlement averted the escalation of the dispute into what seemed likely to be an unnecessarily damaging round of measures and counter-measures affecting EC/United States trade in agricultural products. The settlement involves a reduction in the level of export refunds paid on EC exports of pasta products to the United States, and agreement that in future half the total of EC pasta products exports to the United States should be made under the inward processing relief arrangement rather than with the benefit of export refunds. The Government supported the agreement (despite parliamentary scrutiny not having been completed) because it averted the threat of a damaging trade dispute at the outset of negotiations in the Uruguay GATT round and did not prejudice the Community's position on paying export refunds on processed products in general. The United Kingdom has valuable exports of processed food and drink: United Kingdom exports totalled £3 billion in 1986. Early endorsement of the agreement reached between the Commission and the United States Government was thus in the United Kingdom interest.

The second measure concerns the interim steps on the future financing of the common agricultural policy. On 19-20 October, the Agriculture Council adopted proposal 7690/87 introducing special rules relating to the financing of the common agricultural policy. This was an interim measure to deal with the expectation, which has now been borne out, that Community funds would last until about the end of October. The measure has the effect of delaying payment by two months, which is sufficient to ensure that there would be no overrun of the Budget provision in 1987. I therefore agreed to its adoption on this necessary time scale and in advance of scrutiny.

The third measure concerns an increase in the total allowable catch (TAC) for cod in ICES area VII (except VIIa), including cod in the English Channel. Following advice from the Commission's Scientific and Technical Committee on Fisheries that the 1987 TAC for this stock could safely be increased, the Fisheries Council on 29 September agreed a Commission proposal that the TAC should be increased from 16,000 to 19,000 tonnes. This cod stock is of importance to British fishermen and the fishery has been subject to restrictions for most of the year. I therefore judged it in the United Kingdom interest to see this proposal adopted without awaiting parliamentary scrutiny. Formal adoption took place at a Council meeting on 5 October.

The fourth measure concerns an interim autonomous scheme of control in respect of Community vessels fishing in the regulatory area of the North-West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO), which was also agreed at the Fisheries Council on 29 September. The introduction of an autonomous control scheme was necessary following the Community's withdrawal from the existing joint international enforcement scheme with effect from 26 June 1987 and in the absence of agreement so far on its renegotiation. Although there is at present little direct United Kingdom interest in the fisheries in these waters, I judged it to be in the United Kingdom interest for the Community to be seen to be meeting its control obligations with the minimum of delay and for the proposal to be adopted without awaiting parliamentary scrutiny. Formal adoption took place at a Council meeting on 19 October.

TRANSPORT

Transport Act 1985

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to amend section 36 of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. David Mitchell: We have no such plans. Where London Regional Transport proposes to provide, or secure the provision of, a new London bus service or vary an existing one it is required by the Transport Act 1985 to consult the police, the local authorities affected, the London Regional Passengers' Committee, and any other person it thinks fit. I am satisfied that the consultation arrangements adopted in practice work satisfactorily.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any representations from (1) any community health councils or;

(2) any body representing such councils concerning the amendment of the consultation obligations contained in section 36 of the Transport Act 1985;

(3) whether he had received any representations from *(a)* any districts health authorities or *(b)* any body representing such authorities concerning the amendments to the consultation obligation contained in section 36 of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received no such representations directly. Two of my hon. Friends have passed to me representations from Bexley health authority that there should be a statutory requirement for London Regional Transport to consult district health authorities and community health councils regarding proposals to alter local bus services.

Cyclist Awareness Campaign

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce a cyclist awareness campaign along the lines of the present think bike campaign for motor cyclists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As part of its road safety publicity programme the Department is distributing to local authority road safety officers a range of publicity material aimed both at making motorists more aware of cyclists and at encouraging cyclists to use lights and conspicuity aids to make themselves more visible.

Manchester International Airport

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is considering any applications for expanding air services into Manchester International airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since the beginning of 1986, 28 new scheduled services have been introduced to and from Manchester. There are no formal applications currently outstanding from foreign airlines or their Governments. In the case of United Kingdom airlines, it is for the Civil Aviation Authority to consider applications for licences in the first instance.

M1 (Repairs)

Mr. Greg Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the M1 motorway between London and junction 25 to be devoid of all carriageway closures and repair work for a continuous period of at least a month.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I do not.

Full carriageway closures are usually associated with major renewal works carried out under contraflow. These take place mostly between March and November. There is often then a break until the following year's programme.

Many minor works and repairs are still essential throughout the year if the motorway is to be kept in good condition. Most will require at least single lane closures to protect road users and working people.

Driving Tests

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his proposals for driving licence tests.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The review of the driver testing and training organisation that was announced on 5 March this year has been looking at ways of improving the provision of tests.

Demand for driving tests has risen by 10 per cent. over the past four years and is running at 2 million annually. The average waiting time for a test rose to 17 weeks in 1985-86. Recruitment and efficiency measures have brought this down to 14 weeks. We want to see this cut significantly.

One problem is that half those taking tests have insufficient skills to pass. They add to the queues when they book further tests.

The review has now been completed. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make an announcement shortly.

Tyres

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government as regards the European Economic Community directive on minimum tread depth for motor car tyres.

Mr. Iain Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take in discussion with fellow EEC Transport Ministers on the EEC directive No. COMS(87)407 to bring harmonisation of tyre tread depth to 1·6mm on certain categories of motor vehicles and of their trailers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our views are set out in the explanatory memorandum on the Commission's proposals (8714/87) sent to the Scrutiny Committee on 6 November. No discussion has yet taken place in the Council of Ministers. We shall be opposing the proposals on the grounds that the costs would be substantial — £70 million per year in Britain alone — and the benefits to road safety would not be significant.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make mandatory the installation and regular maintenance of gas and smoke detector systems in below-deck holds in cross-Channel ferries used for the transport of live farm animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection) Regulations 1984 require the provision of a fire detection system in all cargo spaces which are not reasonably accessible to the efficient patrol system required by the statutory regulations.

There is a requirement on the owner to ensure that any such equipment is maintained in good order at all times.

Gas detection systems are not required by international or United Kingdom regulations and there are no plans to introduce requirements for such systems.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what checks, and with what frequency, are carried out on behalf of his Department of systems of ventilation, smoke and gas detection in below-decks holds in cross-Channel ferries regularly used for the transport of live farm animals.

Mr. David Mitchell: Ventilation systems and fire detection systems, where fitted, are items of inspection both at initial and annual renewal surveys, and are part of the statutory requirements leading to the issue of a passenger certificate. They may also be checked at other general inspection visits as opportunities occur.

Fire detection and alarm systems are required in all cargo spaces which are not reasonably accessible to the efficient patrol system required by the statutory regulations.

Car Lifting Gear (Accidents)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many deaths and injuries have occurred to motorists using car lifting gear for repairs and maintenance in the last three years.

Mr. Maude: I have been asked to reply.

The home accident surveillance system collects details of non-fatal accidents in and around the home from the accident and emergency departments of 20 hospitals in England and Wales. The three most recent years for which data are available from HASS are 1984, 1985 and 1986; and in these years HASS reported respectively 88, 55 and 84 home accidents involving jacks, hoists and ramps which were being used for vehicle maintenance. While these figures are too small to make reliable estimates of national figures, they probably correspond to national totals of 1,700, 1,200 and 1,600 such accidents in England and Wales for the three successive years.

The most recent years for which data are available on fatal home accidents are 1982, 1983 and 1984. In these three years there were respectively 10, 13 and six fatal home accidents involving jacks, hoists and ramps which were being used for vehicle maintenance.

It should be noted that the definition of "home" used above includes the garage, driveway, garden and yard, but excludes the public highway. Victims who were in paid employment at somebody else's home at the time of the accidents are also excluded.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution

95. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what issues he will raise at the international North sea pollution conference to be held in London on 24 and 25 November.

Mr. Moynihan: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 30 October to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) at column *448*.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what volume of chemical waste has been dumped off the British coast in each year since 1970;

(2) what volume of waste material has been dumped off the British coast in each year since 1970.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answers 9 November 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

Statutory controls over the deposit of waste at sea were introduced in 1974. Information on the amounts of waste deposited off the British coast up to 1984 can be found in the annual reports of the Oslo commission, copies of which are in the Library of the House. The equivalent figures for 1985 and 1986 are given below:

	Tonnes	
	1985	*1986*
Dredgings	12,255,942	13,266,959
Sewage sludge	7,409,851	8,199,640
Solid industrial	1,657,618	1,872,704
Liquid industrial	305,623	282,991

These figures exclude deposits in internal waters behind baselines, which are outside the Oslo convention area, and deposits off the coast of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what volume of waste material has been dumped off the Yorkshire coast in each year since 1970;

(2) what volume of chemical waste material has been dumped off the Yorkshire coast in each year since 1970.

Mr. Gummer *(holding answers 9 November 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

Statutory controls over the deposit of waste at sea were introduced in 1974. The amount of waste deposited off the Yorkshire coast each year since then was as follows:

	Tonnes
1975	95,550
1976	95,670
1977	90,950

	Tonnes
1978	90,825
1979	94,475
1980	115,630
1981	117,440
1982	91,950
1983	76,050
1984	92,875
1985	77,100
1986	67,364

This material comprises dredged spoils from the ports of Scarborough and Whitby. No chemical waste was deposited off the Yorkshire coast in this period.

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 12 November, how his Department is to keep under review the evidence concerning the possible risk to health arising from bathing in sewage-contaminated water; and if his Department plans to produce a report as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Moynihan: I am keeping under review both the existing evidence from this country and abroad and the possible need for further epidemiological research. I have no plans at present to publish a report.

Mr. Allan Roberts To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions are available concerning the percentage reduction in emissions to the atmosphere of hydrocarbons which would be required in order to produce a 1 per cent. reduction in ambient concentrations of troposhpheric ozone, given current emission levels of nitrogen oxides, hydrocarbons and sulphur dioxide; what relationship exists between hydrocarbon emissions and ozone concentrations at higher percentage reductions in hydrocarbons; and if he will outline the source of this information.

Mr. Moynihan: The answer to this question depends on many factors, notably the species of hydrocarbon, the concentrations of other gases and the meterorological conditions. The recent report of the Department's photochemical oxidants review group (a copy of which is in the Library) concluded that the quantitative relationship between the concentrations of ozone and its precursors is not as yet well understood. Large reductions of hydrocarbon emissions in the United States of America have failed to bring about the scale of ozone reductions which were predicted.

Harwell laboratory has, however, recently undertaken studies for the Department using one of the most sophisticated computer models yet developed. They show that an across-the-board reduction in hydrocarbons of about 3 per cent. would be required to reduce by 1 per cent. peak hourly ozone concentrations downwind of London in a summertime episode. Reductions of about 75 per cent. would be needed to reduce peak ozone by 50 per cent. Further details may be found in two recent Harwell laboratory reports (R12408, R12859; HMSO) copies of which I have placed in the Library.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to promote a broader approach towards controlling release of the most dangerous substances into the aquatic environment.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government have been giving careful consideration to the proposals made in the 15th report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities (Session 1984/85), and in particular to the Committee's view that EC members states should work towards a unified approach to controlling discharges of dangerous substances, which would involve both meeting prescribed quality standards in the receiving waters and minimising discharges from individual sources. A similar view was expressed in the recent report on the pollution of rivers and estuaries by the House of Commons Select Committee on the Environment. Ministers from participating countries also agreed to work towards developing such an approach at the 1984 ministerial conference on the North sea at Bremen.

The Government agrees that EC member states should seek to develop a unified approach to the control of the most dangerous substances, whose long-term effects on the environment are uncertain. We propose to do so in the United Kingdom. The Government consider that the main elements of the unified approach in this country should be:

—to identify a limited range of the most dangerous substances, on the basis of strict scientific criteria, to be termed the "Red List".

—to set environmental quality standards, wherever scientifically possible, for all "Red List" substances:

—to set emission standards based on the best available technology not entailing excessive cost for industrial processes discharging significant quantities of these substances;

—to take further measures where necessary to control inputs of "Red List" substances from diffuse sources;

The new policy on point source emissions will directly affect the small number of industrial plants which discharge in their waste water heavy metals or organic chemicals of a particularly dangerous character. The initial focus will be on new and refurbished plants; this will allow any increases in industrial costs to be phased in over a number of years and planned for. The policy is not expected to impose significant additional costs on water authorities, or other sewage undertakings.

In relation to those "Red Lists" substances which enter the aquatic environment from indirect and diffuse sources, the Government recognise the need for effective controls over the supply, storage and use of these substances.

The new approach will require legislation, including amendments to part II of the Control of Pollution Act 1974.

We shall be publishing detailed proposals and consulting industry and others on these in due course. The Government will also be outlining this more precautionary approach to Environment Ministers attending the second international conference on the North sea in London on 24 and 25 November.

Forth and Clyde Canal

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to make the stretch of the Forth and Clyde canal from Port Dundas to Kirkintilloch navigable.

Mr. Moynihan: The Forth and Clyde canal is the responsibility of the British Waterways Board. We are currently considering the board's proposals to restore the canal to navigation through central Glasgow in conjunction with other agencies. The scheme involves a total public investment of £2·6 million and a capital contribution from the board of £350,000. We expect to let the board have a final decision very shortly.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why the independent accountants who were commissioned to review the Ordnance Survey trading accounts did not investigate any specific Ordnance Survey commercial products to prove or disprove unfair trading.

Mr. Moynihan: The study was commissioned to review the format and design of the Ordnance Survey trading accounts and did not attempt to conduct an audit of the accounts, which is the responsibility of the National Audit Office.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the costings for the Temple Press/Ordnance Survey "Motoring Atlas of Great Britain" included the cost of drawing the maps which were used in the atlas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Ordnance Survey follow the guidelines for OS commercial activities published in July 1984, and all appropriate costs are taken into account.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the publisher Newnes Books was required to pay any category A royalty for the "ABC London Street Atlas" which it published jointly with the Ordnance Survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: In line with other co-publication projects, the appropriate copyright royalty for maps in the product are charged in full as a cost against the revenue which OS and the co-publisher derive from sales. This cost is taken into account when assessing the viability of any co-publication proposal prior to proceeding.

The "ABC London Street Atlas" published in 1984 was compiled from a variety of base mapping at small and large scales to a new specification. Accordingly, in line with copyright practice at that time, category B rates were applied when assessing the product for royalty. This is the rate usually charged to such products and that which applies to the majority of competitors' publications in this field which are based on OS map material.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the cost of advertising Ordnance Survey commercial publication, in particular when the commercial publications is advertised together with Ordnance Survey public funded publications, is paid from public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Ordnance Survey's advertising campaigns are almost all related to its range of small scales and related products which have a broad market appeal that warrant national promotion. The cost of these campaigns is allocated to the relevant product series including core products whether advertised individually or alongside commercial ones, and recovered in accordance with agreed financial targets.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payment is made to the Exchequer by those publishing houses who are allowed to use the name Ordnance Survey and to use the Ordnance Survey logo on products which they publish jointly with the Ordnance Survey.

Mr. Moynihan: The goodwill associated with the Ordnance Survey name and logo is recognised in any negotiation with a publishing house on a joint venture proposal. When considering partnership Ordnance Survey is looking not only at the financial soundness of the project but also at unquantified benefits in editorial design, marketing and selling skills that the proposed partner will bring to the venture.

Rural Sewerage Schemes

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what annual sums his department has disbursed as grant to rural sewerage schemes from 1978 to the present time *(a)* in current prices and *(b)* in 1979 prices.

Mr. Moynihan: The information is as follows:

The figures (for England) in respect of schemes approved since October 1978[1] are:

Year	*Grant paid on sewerage schemes*	[2]*Value at current prices*	[2]*Value at 1978-79 prices*
1978-79	54,062	109,651	54,062
1979-80	258,184	448,050	220,904
1980-81	726,220	1,063,007	524,101
1981-82	1,961,853	2,615,352	1,289,463
1982-83	2,524,695	3,139,681	1,547,975
1983-84	1,597,468	1,899,253	936,400
1984-85	2,596,059	2,956,318	1,457,571
1985-86	1,829,301	1,964,508	968,573
1986-87	1,840,496	1,918,717	945,996
1987-88[3]	334,092	334,092	164,719

[1] Grant on schemes approved since October 1978 has been paid as a lump sum. On schemes approved before then it has been paid in the form of half-yearly instalments. The amount disbursed annually in this form over the last 10 years has remained steady at £6-7 million in cash terms. Capitalisation of these grants will be completed in 1987-88.

[2] Revalued using the Treasury GDP deflator index (November 1987).

[3] To 30 September 1987.

Nirex

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* any information his Department has on financial contracts that exist between Nirex and the company Consolidated Environmental Technologies.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that UK Nirex Ltd. has no contractual arrangements with the company Consolidated Environmental Technologies.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about a seminar to be held in Edinburgh by Nirex in the near future; on what date that seminar will be held; and whether he intends to be present.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand that UK Nirex Ltd. has invited all Scottish local authorities to a seminar in Edinburgh on 14 December. The seminar is intended to consider Nirex's discussion document "The Way Forward", which was launched on 12 November. The Secretary of State has no plans to attend.

Derelict Land

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many acres of vacant, dormant, derelict or underutilised land are in public ownership or in the ownership of nationalised industry, statutory undertaking, or non-governmental organisations in the city of Plymouth.

Mr. Trippier: The register of unused and underused land owned by public bodies, compiled under part X of the Local Government Act 1980 for the area of the city of Plymouth, contains details of the following areas:

Owner	*Area (acres)*
Plymouth City Council	408
Ministry of Defence	44
Devon County Council	36
British Railways Board	5
Central Electricity Generating Board	3
Manpower Services Commission	2
South West Water Authority	1

The derelict land survey carried out in 1982 disclosed no derelict land in public ownership in this area.

Storm Damage

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he took of the experience gained following the 1982 gales in the Sheffield area in formulating his proposals for dealing with the aftermath of the storm of 16 October.

Mr. Chope: The arrangements announced by the Government in my right hon. Friend's statement on 21 October at columns *731-2* were drawn up after consultation with the local authority associations, and took into account wide experience both in central and local government.

Local Authority Publicity

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has made any further progress with the code of recommended practice on local authority publicity, to be issued under section 4 of the Local Government Act 1987.

Mr. Howard: In the light of the consultation carried out by my Department earlier this year, we have made some changes to the draft code of recommended practice which reflect comments made by the local authority associations and other interested parties. The draft also now incorporates the minor changes that would be necessary if Parliament approves clause 26(2) of the Local Government Bill. Copies of the revised draft code have been placed in the Library of the House and the Vote Office.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will update annex D of Cmnd. 9714, to show the impact of the proposed changes in non-domestic taxation using 1987-88 figures.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 17 November 1987]*: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 29 June at column *44* for an assessment of the impact of a national non-domestic rate set at the 1987/88 average poundage. I have no reason at present to change the assessment of the impact of the revaluation contained in annex D of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714).

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, (1) pursuant to his reply of 12 November, where and how the 42,000 tonnes of hazardous waste of the 52,000 tonnes imported during 1986 was treated;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 12 November, where the incineration of 8,000 tonnes of hazardous waste of the 53,000 tonnes imported during 1986 has taken place;

(3) pursuant to the reply of 12 November, where the 3,000 tonnes of hazardous waste was land-filled.

Mr. Moynihan: The details requested by the hon. Member could not be provided without disproportionate cost, since to obtain them it would be necessary to examine all individual consignment notes held by waste disposal authorities. Most special wastes which are treated undergo chemical fixation by patented processes.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled households in the Wakefield metropolitan district were in receipt of at least one of the following benefits during 1979, 1983 and 1986 *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility allowance, *(c)* severe disablement allowance, *(d)* invalidity pension and *(e)* invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott: I regret that information is not available in the precise form requested. No information is available concerning the numbers of claimants who are themselves, or who have within their household someone who is, disabled. Nor are details available of the numbers of attendance allowance, mobility allowance or invalid care allowance beneficiaries in the Wakefield metropolitan district.

The Wakefield metropolitan district is served by the Department's local office at Wakefield but its boundaries are not conterminous. The table shows the numbers of sickness-invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance claimants at the Wakefield local office on the dates listed:

	27 November 1979	*6 December 1983*	*10 December 1986*
Sickness-invalidity benefit[1]	n/a	3,347[2]	2,861
Severe disablement allowance	[3]—	[3]—	857

n/a—No longer held.

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

[1] Separate records are not kept of sickness-invalidity benefit claimants.

[2] Includes non-contributory invalidity pension claimants.

[3] Severe disablement allowance replaced non-contributory invalidity pension from 29 November 1984.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many disabled households were in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Wakefield metropolitan district during the years 1979, 1983 and 1986;

(2) how many disabled households are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit within the Wakefield metropolitan district;

(3) how many disabled households within the Wakefield metropolitan district are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit;

(4) how many elderly householders in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Wakefield metropolitan district during 1979, 1983 and 1986 were owner-occupiers;

(5) how many elderly households were in receipt of supplementary benefit within the Wakefield metropolitan district for the years 1979, 1983 and 1986;

(6) how many elderly householders in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Wakefield metropolitan district during 1979, 1983 and 1986 were aged 80 years or over;

(7) how many children were living in families receiving supplementary benefit within the Wakefield metropolitan district for 1979, 1983 and 1986;

(8) how many households were in receipt of supplementary benefit within the Wakefield metropolitan district for the years 1979, 1983 and 1986;

(9) how many householders aged 80 or over were in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Wakefield metropolitan district for the years 1979, 1983 and 1986;

(10) how many elderly householders in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Wakefield metropolitan district during 1979, 1983 and 1986 were owner-occupiers.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information is not available in precisely the form requested. No information is available concerning the number of claimants who are themselves, or who have within their household someone who is, over 80 or disabled or an owner-occupier. Nor are details available concerning the number of children living in families receiving supplementary benefit.

The Wakefield metropolitan district is served by Wakefield local office but the boundaries are not conterminous.

The table sets out the live load of cases in Wakefield local office for the dates requested, broken down into those required to register for work; those under pension age not required to register for work; and those over pension age.

The count of cases in action includes some cases where benefit has ceased to be paid but other action is still proceeding. The data include non-householders.

Wakefield ILO	*27 November 1979*	*6 December 1983*	*10 December 1986*	*5 May 1987*
Those required to register for work	1,017	3,596	4,103	4,003
Those not required to register for work	2,585	2,546	3,458	3,481
Those over pension age	3,955	4,008	3,786	3,988
Total	7,557	10,150	11,347	11,472

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of claimants in receipt of supplementary benefit who were *(a)* required to register as being available for work, *(b)* not so required and *(c)* pensioners as at both 10 February and 27 July at each individual office.

Mr. Portillo: This information will take some time to collect and collate. I am arranging for the information to be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each individual office the number of single payments made in 1986-87 to claimants in receipt of supplementary benefit who were *(a)* required to register as being available for employment, *(b)* not so required to register and *(c)* pensioners and if he will further indicate in each of *(a)*, *(b)* and *(c)* above (i) the amount claimed, (ii) the amount awarded, (iii) the number of successful claims, (iv) the number of unsuccessful claims, (v) the number of partially successful claims and (vi) the number of claimants receiving single payments.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information on the amount of single payments claimed is not available. However, the remainder of the information requested will be placed in the Library shortly.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many elderly persons were admitted to private residential-homes with his Department's financial support in local authority areas other than that of their ordinary residence during the years ended 31 March 1984, 31 March 1985, 31 March 1986 and 31 March 1987.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Health Education Authority

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which members of the Health Education Authority were nominated by trade unions.

Mrs. Currie: There are no Trades Union Congress-nominated members on the authority. All members are nominated by the Secretary of State apart from one, who is nominated by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and are chosen not to be representative of any particular group but for their personal contribution to the work of the authority.

Renal Patients

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many renal patients there are in the West Midlands regional health authority, and in the North Staffordshire district health authority; and, in each case, how many of these currently qualify for supplementary benefit and are in receipt of a heating, diet and bathing allowance, how many are in receipt of mobility allowance and how many in receipt of an attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: As at 31 December 1986, there were 1,209 patients in the west midlands region receiving some form of renal therapy. Information on the number in the North Staffordshire district is not held centrally, and the hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of North Staffordshire health authority for this information. The remainder of the information requested is available. However, those renal patients who dialyse at home or in self-care hospital units are deemed to satisfy the medical conditions for entitlement to attendance allowance at the lower rate.

Mr. Heddle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *802*, he will indicate when the discussions now urgently proceeding between British Telecom and the Government Departments concerned on the future of the telephone exchange system for the deaf will be concluded; and on what date he anticipates making a further announcement.

Mr. Scott: The latest position was set out in my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 9 November at columns *95-96*. I shall make an announcement as soon as a decision has been reached.

Maternity Services

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give details of the annual cost of operating the maternity unit at North Walsham hospital, and if he will give a breakdown of how this figure is calculated;

(2) what was the cost of *(a)* a delivery at North Walsham maternity unit compared with the cost of a delivery at the Norfolk and Norwich maternity unit and *(b)* cost of transporting a patient from North Walsham to Norwich.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that this information is not held centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to approach the acting chairman of Norwich district health authority.

Colposcopy

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out for each of the inner London district health authorities how many people are waiting for colposcopy treatment; how this compares with the national average; and what are his plans for improving the service.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information on the number of cases awaiting colposcopies is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairmen of the Thames regional health authorities. Health authorities are expected to ensure that they have adequate facilities for the prompt investigation and treatment of women whose gynaecological condition requires it.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure confidentiality for people with haemophilia and HIV when claiming benefits from his Department.

Mr. Scott: All personal information supplied in connection with social security claims is treated as confidential. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, I shall be happy to look into it.

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what impact the social fund will have on people with haemophilia and HIV, particularly with reference to extra heating and laundry facilities.

Mr. Scott: People with haemophilia and HIV will be among those receiving income support who are regarded as a priority group for community care grants from the social fund and will also be able to apply for interest-free loans. Guidance on the circumstances in which discretionary grants and loans will be made is found in the social fund manual, a copy of which is in the Library.

Fraud Prevention

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish any available statistics correlating the arrival of fraud prevention officers in an office of his Department and the subsequent change in numbers of claimants for that office.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that statistics in the form requested are not maintained.

Advertising Agents

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Portillo: The table details the spending on health and social security campaigns and the advertising agents involved.

Health

Agency and Campaign	*Expenditure £*
TBWA	
Adverse Reaction to Drugs	26,000
Blood Donor Recruitment	188,064
Limited Drugs List Campaign	2,740
Nursing Recruitment	828,000
Health Equipment Appraisal	9,080
Health Equipment Information	8,030
Aids Advertising	392,800
Yellowhammer Co Ltd.	
Misuse of Drugs	1,390,000
FCO Ltd.	
Anti Teenage Smoking	567,000

Social Security

Agency and Campaign	*Expenditure £*
Doyle, Dane Bernbach Ltd.	
National Insurance Direct Debit	3,050
Social Security Reform	185,150
Severe Disablement Allowance	189,670
Occupational Pensions Campaign	206,410

Agency and Campaign	*Expenditure* £
Severe Weather Allowance	260,710
Dorland Advertising Ltd	
Abolition of Married Women's Half-Test	33,240
Doyle, Dane, Bernbach Ltd	
NI Number Cards	93,760
NI Contributions—Changes	195,510
NI Uprating	243,000

Departmental Information

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent decision he has taken in respect of sending information, including press releases, to voluntary and other organisations.

Mr. Portillo: The Department's information division reviewed its distribution of the large number of press releases, many of which go to recipients who are concerned with local or other matters not specifically involved with the National Health Service or social security. Accordingly, press release distribution is generally limited to journalists. However, an exception is made for headquarters of voluntary and other charitable organisations which continue to receive press releases. Private individuals and others may obtain details of press releases issued from the daily index subscription service of the Central Office of Information.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received any representations from Devon county council seeking to amend part III, section 21, (1)(*a*) and (1)(*b*) of the National Assistance Act 1948 which places an obligation on local authorities to provide sheltered accommodation for the elderly within their administrative boundaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: No. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 16 November.

Medical Education

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to bring about closer working between health and education interests in the field of medical education.

Mr. Newton: The Croham report on the review of the University Grants Committee, (Cmnd. 81), published earlier this year, recommended that the Department of Education and Science and the Health Departments should take steps to improve joint working in the field of medical education. A programme of action in response to the report included the issue of joint guidance to both health authorities and universities in March. The permanent secretaries of the Departments of Health and Social Security (DHSS) and Education and Science (DES) and the chief medical officers of DHSS and the Scottish Home and Health Department held a meeting on medical education on 12 November with, among others, the chairman of the University Grants Committee, the president of the General Medical Council, the chairman of the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals and a chairman representing regional health authorities. The meeting agreed that a steering group should be established under the chairmanship of Mr. Michael Partridge, second permanent secretary of the DHSS, to bring together the national agencies with an interest in medical education and to consider how the current arrangements for undergraduate medical education can be improved to ensure that the policies and programmes of the bodies concerned are properly co-ordinated and directed. The group will report as necessary on the issues considered to the relevant national agencies.

Vaccine Damage

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the first payment of £10,000 was made under the vaccine damage proposals; what is the current level of payment and if he will give the value in real terms of the current payment compared with its original value.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: At September 1987, the value in real terms of the first £10,000 vaccine damage payment, made in December 1978, was £19,785. The current level of payment, for successful claims made on or after 18 June 1985, is £20,000.

DEFENCE

Arms Control

96. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government will stop deployments of cruise missiles at RAF Molesworth *(a)* when an intermediate nuclear forces agreement is signed or *(b)* when it is ratified.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This is a matter which is currently under consideration within NATO.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations has he received supporting the inclusion of the British deterrent in future strategic arms talks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a number of representations from hon. Members and members of the public supporting the inclusion of the British independent deterrent in arms control negotiations. The conditions which must be met before we could consider associating our deterrent with the arms control process were re-affirmed in the reply by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 3 November 1987, at column 625.

Subsistence Claims

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons he has failed to discipline staff in his Department who have been found to have falsified travel and subsistence claims.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is departmental policy to discipline staff who are found guilty by criminal conviction or internal procedure of falsifying travel and subsistence claims. However, if the information available is judged to be insufficient to sustain criminal charges, in some cases it is likely that disciplinary action will not be pursued.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why his Department's police have not prosecuted staff in his Department who have been found to have falsified travel and subsistence claims.

Mr. Sainsbury: Because in England and Wales the decision whether or not to prosecute in such cases is the responsibility of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Plutonium

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many kilograms of plutonium have gone missing from military nuclear facilities in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what accounting procedures are in operation to ensure that all plutonium held for military purposes is at all times fully accounted for; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Defence plutonium is subjected to the most stringent security and accountancy control, but in common with the long-standing practice of successive Governments with regard to the defence nuclear programme I am not able to disclose further details.

Low-flying Aircraft

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Air Force low-flying aircraft have flown over the Rugby and Kenilworth constituency during the current year; and how many representations he has received from members of the public.

Mr. Freeman: The distribution of low-flying military aircraft within the United Kingdom low-flying system is recorded by low-flying administrative areas, which do not correspond with regional or constituency boundaries. It is therefore not possible to say how many low-flying aircraft have flown over the Rugby and Kenilworth constituency during the current year. Since 1 January 1987 no representations to my Department have been received from this constituency.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the results of exercises held by the Royal Air Force since 1980 to measure the perceived noise on the ground generated by overflying low-level military jet aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: There has been no exercise since 1980 specifically to measure noise from low-flying military aircraft. However an exercise know as Bedlam was monitored and the results were published in 1983 in a report called "External noise of MOD military aircraft". A copy of this will be placed in the Library shortly.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why pilots are permitted to set their radar altimeters to 90 ft when flying in areas where the minimum permitted height is 100 ft above ground level.

Mr. Freeman: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the equipment known as the low-height warner, which operates in conjunction with the radar altimeter on some military aircraft. The purpose of this equipment is to give warning that an aircraft is lower than it is intended to be, and that urgent corrective action should be taken. It is primarily a safety device and the various heights at which it can be set are determined by safety considerations.

Devonport Dockyard

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many acres of vacant, dormant, derelict or underutilised land there are in Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Sainsbury: Apart from those areas needed for use by the Ministry of Defence (which are specified in the term contract for management of the dockyard) the majority of the sites, buildings and facilities in Devonport naval base are licensed to Devonport Management Limited. It is for it to decide the extent to which it needs to use these assets in order to fulfil its commitments to the Ministry of Defence. Land requirements are kept under review.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received confirming the storage of chemical weapons in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a number of representations from hon. Members and members of the public on this subject. The United Kingdom gave up its chemical weapons capability in the late 1950s. We have received no requests to store other countries' chemical weapons here. If any such request were ever to be received, it would be a matter for decision by the Government of the day in the light of all the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Lance Missiles

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to replace existing Lance missiles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on 24 March 1987, at colunm *162*.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has commissioned any research into the development of air-launched nuclear weapons for the Tornado aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is normal practice to keep under review the need to replace all the United Kingdom's in-service weapons systems. The free-fall nuclear bomb, which has provided our sub-strategic capability for some years now, is no exeption. Some technical studies in this area have been and are being carried out. However, no decisions on a replacement have yet been taken.

Foxhunter Radar

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when a new contract for the Tornado F3's Foxhunter radar will be complete.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is hoped to place a revised contract shortly after the conclusion of current negotiations.

NORTHERN IRELAND

School Days (Duration)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information his Department has as to the average length of the school day in Northern Ireland in *(a)* maintained schools and *(b)* independent schools in 1957, 1967, 1977 and 1987.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Lay Assessors

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he first mentioned the possibility of lay assessors; who would choose such assessors; what their duties would be; what qualifications they would need; where they would carry out their duties; to whom they would report; and to whom they would be responsible.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* The possibility of appointing lay assessors to sit with the judge in Diplock courts was considered by the right honourable Sir George Baker in his "Review of the Operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978" (Command 9222). He concluded that their appointment would not be an improvement on the present mode of trial.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what recommendations on cross-border security co-operation were presented to the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 17 June 1986;

(2) if he will publish the reports on further studies carried out by three separate joint working parties established by the two police forces, as mentioned in the joint statement of 6 October 1986;

(3) what proposals the Irish side put forward relating to the advantages of a Bill of Rights and what difficulties the British side saw with these proposals, as stated in the joint statement of 6 October 1986; what comments they made on the consultative paper on equality of opportunity at the meeting on 6 October 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the progress reports of the groups of officials set up under article 8 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which are mentioned in the joint statement of 9 May 1986; and what advantages and disadvantages of a Bill of Rights in Northern Ireland have been set out by the officials as mentioned in paragraph 5 of the joint statement;

(5) what views and proposals were put forward by Mr. Peter Barry designed to give substantial expression to the aim of ensuring public confidence in the administration of justice, as mentioned in the joint statement of 31 December 1985, and if he will make a statement;

(6) what possible areas of harmonisation of areas of the criminal law were discussed at the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 13 February 1986; and if he will make a statement;

(7) if he will make a statement on the work of the sub-group of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; what views and proposals have been put forward by the Irish side; and what has been the response of his Department.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]:* As I explained to the hon. Gentleman on 29 June it has not been our practice to make public details of discussions in the Intergovernmental Conference, nor of papers passed through the secretariat, beyond the summaries contained in the joint statements issued after each meeting, copies of which are placed in the Library. Such confidentiality is usual in discussions between Governments. But I remain ready, as I said in my earlier reply, to discuss with the hon. Gentleman, or with any other representatives of the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland, the Government's policies on any subject, including those discussed or to be discussed at meetings of the conference.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Bank of England (Equity Capital)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the companies in which the Bank of England purchased equity capital since 1970; and if he will list the sums expended on each of such purchases.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* Prior to the recent share purchase arrangements in relation to partly paid shares in British Petroleum Company plc, the only occasion when the issue department of the Bank of England has purchased equity capital since 1970 was in January 1975 when the issue department bought 77,817,507 British Petroleum ordinary stock units from the Burmah Oil Company Ltd. for a consideration of some £179 million as part of financial support arrangements for Burmah.

Purchases of equity capital by the banking department of the Bank of England over the same period are a matter for the Bank of England. Principal holdings of equity share capital and investments in subsidiary companies are, however, set out in the bank's annual reports and accounts which have been laid before the House.

Bank of England (Underwriting)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions since 1975 the Bank of England has underwritten the issue of equity by public companies; and if he will list the companies involved.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* The Bank of England confirms that since 1975 the bank has underwritten the issue of equity by public companies on one occasion only. This was in 1984 when the Bank of England agreed to purchase any of the 415 million shares in British Telecommunications plc provisionally allocated for offerings in the United States, Canada and Japan that were not sold. The bank's 1985 report noted that in the event the overseas offerings were fully taken up and the bank was not required to purchase shares.

CIVIL SERVICE

Employment Bill

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what representations he has received on the personnel management implications for the Civil Service of the Employment Bill.

Mr. Luce: None.

THE ARTS

Business Sponsorship

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister for the Arts what estimates he has of the total amounts of private business sponsorship of the arts in each of the English regions and Wales and Scotland during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Luce: Total United Kingdom sponsorship in 1986-87 was about £25 million. A regional breakdown is not available.

Wales (Expenditure)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister for the Arts what effect he expects recently announced increases in arts funding to have on expenditure on the arts in Wales.

Mr. Luce: The three-year settlement that I announced on 5 November demonstrates the Government's continuing commitment to the arts. I am also encouraging arts bodies throughout Great Britain to strengthen their financial base and increase their income from all sources. I am sure that the consequences in Wales as elsewhere will be beneficial.

British Library

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is the capital cost of the new British Library at St. Pancras; and what proportion of the total spending by his Department the new British Library has represented in each year, including 1987-88, since its inception.

Mr. Luce: The estimated cost of that stage of the new British library building at St. Pancras which has been approved and is currently being constructed is £242·5 million at second quarter 1987 prices. Expenditure on this project has been from the votes of the Property Services Agency.

As a proportion of the total central Government arts budget, expenditure on this project is as follows:

	Per cent.
1982-83	1·7
1983-84	2·2
1984-85	2·3
1985-86	2·4
1986-87	3·3
1987-88[1]	6·9

[1] Estimate.

Note: Earlier years: less than 1 per cent.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list the grants made by him to the existing British Library at Bloomsbury in each year from 1979-80 to 1987-88; and if he will break the figures down into their revenue and capital components.

Mr. Luce: Grant-in-aid for the British Library from 1979-80 to 1987-88 is as follows:

	£000
1979-80	32,052
1980-81	35,397
1981-82	38,463
1982-83	42,950
1983-84	44,843
1984-85	46,850
1985-86	48,254
1986-87	49,800
1987-88	51,000

Grant-in-aid covers all the British Library's functions and activities at Bloomsbury and elsewhere, excluding expenditure on the new building at St. Pancras. Details of the breakdown of expenditure are published in the British Library's annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library.

Objects in Lieu of Tax

Mr. Anderson: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many works of art accepted in lieu of taxation have been allocated to Welsh galleries or museums; and if he will give details.

Mr. Luce: Since the passing of the National Heritage Act 1980, when responsibility for the acceptance of works of art in lieu of tax passed from Her Majesty's Treasury to the Office of Arts and Libraries and the Department of the Environment, the following items have been accepted and allocated to Welsh galleries and museums.

1982-83—"Flint Castle" by J. M. W. Turner—National Museum of Wales.

1987-88—"Deux Pierreuses" by Henri Toulouse Lautrec—National Museum of Wales.

Both of these offers were unconditional as to their allocation.

Thomas Webb Museum

Dr. Blackburn: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will take steps to prevent the sale to the United States of 23 items of glass currently exhibited in the Thomas Webb museum, Stourbridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 12 November 1987]:* Privately-owned property such as this glass may be sold to an overseas buyer; I have no powers to restrict such a sale. However, under our export licensing regulations, each item would require a licence from the Department of Trade and Industry if it were over £16,000 in value, and over 50 years of age. Otherwise, those valued individually at less than £16,000 may be exported under an open general export licence which requires a declaration to Her Majesty's Customs and Excise at the port.

ENERGY

Fuel Prices

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* the price increases for coal, gas and electricity industries for each of the years since 1974 compared with the changes in the retail price index.

Mr. Parkinson: The table shows movements in the average price of each fuel for the domestic and industrial sectors in each year. The figures are derived from indices of actual fuel prices which are published in *Energy Trends* and the *Annual Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics*. They accordingly reflect, where appropriate, factors such as the time taken for tariff changes to feed through into bills; regional differences in the structure of tariffs and the weighting of their components; and the number of consumers on each tariff and their pattern of consumption. They show the percentage movement in the average price of each fuel, compared with the preceding year, from 1974 to the latest available date; and the average movement in the retail prices index, excluding fuels.

Year on year percentage changes in average prices of coal, gas-and electricity consumed; 1974 to 1987

Percentage

	Retail Prices Index[1]	*Coal*		*Gas*		*Electricity*	
		Domestic sector[2]	*Industrial sector*[3]	*Domestic sector*	*Industrial sector*	*Domestic sector*	*Industrial sector*
1974	15	11	9	5	15	21	37
1975	23	34	52	16	39	46	33
1976	17	24	23	22	45	24	16
1977	16	16	24	17	37	14	15
1978	9	11	10	3	23	10	10
1979	13	17	22	4	14	9	11
1980	17	28	29	17	36	27	23
1981	11	18	16	26	22	20	16
1982	8	7	9	25	6	10	10
1983	4	6	4	12	2	4	—
1984	5	8	1	4	3	1	—
1985	6	6	6	4	7	3	4
1986	5	3	−4	2	−13	2	1
1987[4]	4	—	−5	—	[5]−4	−1	−3

[1] Excluding fuels.

[2] Includes coke.

[3] Excluding coal for electricity generation.

[4] Average of Q1, Q2 and Q3 1987 for the domestic sector and the RPI. Average of Q1 and Q2 for the industrial sector.

[5] Estimated.

Source: Price indices published in *Energy Trends* and the *Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics*.

Wind Power

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from wind power developers who wish to generate electricity for use on the national grid concerning private purchase tariff arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have received no specific representations from wind power developers concerning private purchase tariff arrangements. However, I am fully aware of the views of private generators in general on tariffs for the purchase of electricity.

International Atomic Energy Agency Convention

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to provide for requests for aid under the International Atomic Energy Agency conventions on assistance in the case of a nuclear accident or radiological emergency.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Yes. This IAEA convention, which was agreed following the Chernobyl accident, provides for bilateral or multilateral co-operation, in the case of a nuclear accident or a radiological emergency, to minimise any consequences and to protect life, property and the environment from the effects of radioactive releases. The signing of the convention was announced to the House on 20 January 1987, at column 478.

Following the recent incident in Goiania in Brazil involving a medical radiation source, my Department has received through the IAEA a request from the Brazilian Government for a gift of radiation monitoring equipment. I propose to meet this request. Parliamentary approval for this new service will be sought in a Supplementary Supply Estimate for the Department of Energy's class VI, vote 2. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure for the required equipment, which will not exceed £10,000, will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Commission

15. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the President of the European Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My most recent meeting with the president of the European Commission was at the Foreign Affairs Council in Luxembourg on 19 and 20 October, when we discussed a number of issues concerning the future development of the Community, notably the negotiations on future financing.

Iran-Iraq War

16. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the United Nations attempt to achieve a ceasefire between Iraq and Iran.

54. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress on the United Nations initiative toward a ceasefire in the Gulf.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Secretary General has presented a detailed plan of implementation of Security Council resolution 598 to Iran and Iraq, and is continuing to seek an immediate ceasefire as a first step towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict. We are also trying to move ahead with parallel work on enforcement measures, as agreed by the Foreign Ministers of the permanent members on 25 September.

African National Congress

18. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what formal relations the Government have with the African National Congress; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: None; the African National Congress is not a government.

47. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British policy towards the African National Congress.

78. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British policy towards the African National Congress.

Mrs. Chalker: We have called on the South African Government to take the steps necessary to create a climate in which genuine national dialogue can begin in South Africa. In keeping with this, we have urged them to unban the African National Congress and other political parties and to release Mr. Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. At the same time, we have made clear to the ANC our view that its espousal of violence does not advance the cause of fundamental change in South Africa.

89. **Mr. Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government with regard to future meetings with the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain a wide range of contacts with representatives of all communities in South Africa.

Single European Market

19. **Sir Anthony Meyer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to seek to achieve a single European market by 1992.

Mrs. Chalker: We shall continue to work for rapid progress in dismantling barriers to trade within Europe, including opening up public purchasing, approximation of standards, further liberalisation of air transport and of capital movements and the creation of an open market in financial services.

83. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have for the creation of a wider market in Europe outside the European Community.

Mrs. Chalker: The European Community and members of the European Free Trade Association are discussing a wide range of issues with a view to removing trade barriers and strengthening co-operation. We fully support this process and hope it will continue as progress is made towards the completion of the Community's single market.

Egypt

20. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Egypt.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My visit to Egypt from 29 October to 1 November strengthened the already close relations between our two countries. I discussed a wide range of regional and bilateral issues with President Mubarak and his Ministers and signed a £10 million programme aid agreement.

Arms Control

21. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on future developments in arms control following the intermediate nuclear forces agreement.

Mr. Mellor: We welcome the intermediate nuclear forces agreement now in prospect, but it has yet to be finalised. In particular, the crucial question of verification remains outstanding. Following an INF agreement, NATO's priorities are for 50 per cent. cuts in the strategic arms of the United States and Soviet Union, a worldwide ban on chemical weapons and the elimination of conventional disparities between NATO and the Warsaw pact in Europe.

44. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to propose any further initiative to encourage negotiations for the agreement of a comphrehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Mellor: I have nothing to add to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 3 November, at column *625*.

60. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on progress at the talks in Vienna to agree the framework for negotiations on conventional stability in Europe.

Mr. Mellor: Informal contacts have been taking place in Vienna since February aimed at agreeing a mandate for negotiations on conventional stability covering the Atlantic to the Urals. Reasonable progress has been made. It is hoped that agreement can be reached to allow negotiations proper to begin in the spring or summer of 1988.

South Africa

22. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will review the effectiveness of sanctions made against South Africa; and whether any further measures are being considered.

Mrs. Chalker: As I told my hon. Friend on 21 January, the restrictive measures we have adopted are designed to bring home to the South African Government the urgent need for fundamental, peaceful change. Regrettably there is no sign at present that they are prepared to take steps needed to bring about such change. No new measures are under consideration.

33. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a British Government representative to observe the trial in South Africa of Mr. Moses Mayekios and others.

Mrs. Chalker: Her Majesty's embassy at Pretoria has already been present at the trial of Mr. Mayekios and his co-defendants. We shall continue to follow closely the progress of the trial.

43. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the South African ambassador to the Court of St. James; and what matters were discussed.

Mrs. Chalker: The South African ambassador paid a courtesy call on my right hon. and learned Friend on 3 July, shortly after his appointment to the Court of St. James.

46. **Mr. John Townend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the effect that the sanctions imposed by the United Kingdom have had upon the employment of black people in South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: Precise information is not available. However, the limited restrictive measures introduced against South Africa were designed to send a signal to the South African Government of our strong opposition to apartheid, but without destroying large numbers of black jobs in the process.

49. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will consider reviewing British policy towards South Africa in the light of the United Democratic Front's decision to suspend relations with Her Majesty's Government in response to current British policy.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

57. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will review British policy towards South Africa in the light of the United Democratic Front's decision to suspend relations with the British Government in response to current British policy.

Mrs. Chalker: No.

86. **Mr. George Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he or one of his Ministers last met Chief Buthelezi and President Mangope.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend met Chief Buthelezi in South Africa on 28 July 1986, during the course of his European Community Presidency mission. Neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor any other Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister has met Mr. Mangope.

Sri Lanka

23. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Eggar: We believe that implementation of the agreement signed on 29 July by India and Sri Lanka offers the only route to a lasting settlement of the conflict. The Tamil militants have not accepted Sri Lankan and Indian offers of amnesty in return for surrender of weapons and support for the agreement.

Angola

24. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with the People's Republic of Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain normal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of Angola.

69. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with the People's Republic of Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We maintain normal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of Angola.

40. **Ms. Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on South Africa's recent acts of aggression against the People's Republic of Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We condemn all cross-border incursions in the region, from whatever quarter. The South African Government are well aware of our views on this.

UNESCO

25. **Miss Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about Government policy towards UNESCO.

73. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received asking him to reconsider the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from UNESCO.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no formal representations.

Nicaragua

26. **Mr. MacDonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States administration about the implications of continued funding of the Contras for the Arias peace initiative.

87. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the American State Department about the implications of continued funding of the contras for the Arias peace initiative and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have regular discussions with the United States Administration, who are well aware of our support for the Guatemala peace agreement.

USA/USSR (Summit)

27. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implication for Her Majesty's Government's policy of the United States-Soviet summit.

Mr. Mellor: It would be premature to make such a statement pending the outcome of the summit.

Mutual Balanced Force Reduction Negotiations

28. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the mutual balanced force reduction negotiations.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) on 21 October at column *766*.

United States of America

29. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about United Kingdom relations with the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: Relations between the United Kingdom and the United States of America continue to be warm, close and constructive.

Afghanistan

30. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has made to the Soviet Government about its policy towards Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: We believe that the Soviet Union should withdraw its army of occupation from Afghanistan and let the Afghan people determine their own future. My right hon. and learned Friend raised the issue of Afghanistan most recently when he spoke to the Soviet ambassador on 1 September. My noble Friend the Minister of State set out our position in a statement to the United Nations General Assembly on 10 November, when the UNGA voted 123-19-11 in favour of a resolution calling for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan.

Middle East

31. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his visit to the middle east on 31 October.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Egypt from 29 October to 1 November and Jordan from 1 to 3 November. He held useful and friendly talks in both countries on international and bilateral issues. Our relations with both Egypt and Jordan are excellent.

65. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Government policy towards resolution of the middle east conflict.

Mr. Mellor: An international conference remains the most practical way forward to a negotiated settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute. We shall continue to work with others concerned for agreement on modalities for a conference.

88. **Mr. Denis Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the prospects of a resolution of the Arab/Israel dispute following his recent visit to the region.

Mr. Mellor: Egypt and Jordan share our view that an international conference remains the most practical way forward. We shall continue to work with others concerned for agreement on modalities for a conference.

Western European Union

32. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards participation in the Western European Union.

Mr. Mellor: We participate fully in all aspects of Western European Union work. Foreign and Defence Ministers regularly attend the biannual ministerial councils and a British Minister usually addresses WEU assembly sessions.

51. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the future of the Western European Union.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) on 2 November at column *548*.

Namibia

34. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of what action he will be taking to assist the United Nations Secretary-General in his efforts to secure the implementation of Security Council resolution 601 (1981) calling for a ceasefire in Namibia as a prerequisite for the implementation of the United Nations plan for the independence of Namibia.

Mrs. Chalker: The Secretary General has our full support. We are in regular consultation with the United Nations secretariat, and shall consider any requests for assistance in the light of the circumstances at the time.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting between the President of the South West Africa People's Organisation of Namibia, Mr. Sam Nujoma, and the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker).

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 2 November at column *547*.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representation he has received about the meeting between the President of the South West Africa People's Organisation of Namibia, Mr. Sam Nujoma, and the Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker).

Mrs. Chalker: None.

Chile

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the

Chilean authorities on behalf of the 15 political detainees who have been either sentenced to death or recommended for the death penalty by military courts.

Mr. Eggar: Four of these detainees, sentenced to death for various murders and other terrorist activities, have their sentences under appeal. The remaining 11 have yet to be sentenced. With our European partners, we continue to monitor these cases closely, but consider it would not be helpful to intervene at this stage in the judicial process.

63. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chilean authorities about the disappearance during September of five opposition activists.

Mr. Eggar: No specific representations on this case have yet been made. The facts remain unclear. But we have repeatedly expressed to the Chilean Government our belief that an orderly and peaceful transition to democracy in Chile is the best guarantee of respect for human rights in that country.

82. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the content of his recent meeting with the Chilean Minister of the Exterior, Señor Ricardo Garcia, during the latter's visit to London on 23 October.

Mr. Eggar: At meetings which I and my right hon. and learned Friend held on 23 October with Señor Garcia, we expressed our strong concern over continuing violations of human rights in Chile, and discussed the transition to democracy in Chile, developments in the economy and regional matters.

93. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chilean authorities over the alleged torture following detention on 3 September, of Señor Luis Tricot, a returned Chilean refugee who was, for a time, resident in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: We have made representations on behalf of the government of the Republic of Ireland where Señor Tricot had refugee status before he returned to Chile.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding proposals by Her Majesty's Government to encourage the Government of Chile to comply with the United Nations convention against torture.

Mr. Eggar: We have on repeated occasions expressed our concern over human rights violations in Chile, most recently at the meetings on 23 October 1987 which I and my right hon. and learned Friend had with the Chilean Foreign Minister. We welcome Chile's signature of the United Nations convention against torture and the Inter-American convention on the prevention of torture, and look forward to Chile's ratification of these instruments and to their full application there.

Italy

36. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet Signor Cossiga, President of the Italian Republic, to discuss Anglo-Italian relations.

38. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the visit of Signor Cossiga, the President of Italy to London.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to meet President Cossiga, following the cancellation of the President's state visit.

Africa

37. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether there are any plans for a ministerial visit to Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: I shall be visiting Mozambique and Malawi between 28 November and 3 December.

Gulf (Ceasefire)

54. **Mr. Douglas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on progress on the United Nations initiative toward a ceasefire in the Gulf.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Secretary General has presented a detailed plan of implementation of Security Council resolution 598 to Iran and Iraq, and is continuing to seek an immediate ceasefire as a first step towards a negotiated settlement of the conflict. We are also trying to move ahead with parallel work on enforcement measures, as agreed by the Foreign Ministers of the Permanent Members on 25 September.

Human Rights

39. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about violations of human rights in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: Widespread violations of human rights in Afghanistan have been documented in the interim report by Dr. Ermacora, special rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on human rights, presented recently to the General Assembly.

53. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's response to the Soviet proposal to hold a conference on human rights in Moscow within the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe process.

Mr. Mellor: We believe that the ambitious proposal on the human dimension tabled by the Western countries offers the best means of maintaining the CSCE dialogue on human rights and contacts after Vienna. We are carefully monitoring Soviet willingness to negotiate seriously on humanitarian issues in Vienna and their human rights record. We doubt whether in current circumstances it would be appropriate to hold a humanitarian conference in Moscow.

41. **Mr. Haynes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chilean authorities since August over the continuing abuses of human rights in that country.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassador repeatedly expresses our concern over human rights abuses in Chile.

Both at the General Assembly in New York on 25 September, and again in London on 23 October when my right hon. and learned Friend saw the Chilean Foreign Minister, he took the opportunity to re-emphasise our concerns, which I also discussed in detail with Senor Garcia.

70. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on human rights in Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: Widespread violations of human rights in Afghanistan have been documented in the interim report by Dr. Ermacora, special rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, presented recently to the General Assembly.

IRA (Arms Supplies)

42. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold urgent talks with the Irish Government on the evidence that Irish nationals are obtaining arms for the Irish Republican Army from Libya, disclosed by the recent capture of the coaster Eksund off France, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We are naturally in close touch with the Irish and French authorities through normal channels. This incident demonstrates the importance of international co-operation against terrorism.

Canada

45. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to seek to visit Canada.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has no immediate plans to visit Canada.

German Democratic Republic

48. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to seek to visit the German Democratic Republic.

Mrs. Chalker: The Foreign Minister of the German Democratic Republic, Herr Oskar Fischer, visited the United Kingdom in November 1986, reciprocating my right hon. and learned Friend's visit to East Berlin and the German Democratic Republic in April 1985. He hopes to take up Herr Fischer's invitation to make a second visit to the German Democratic Republic in due course.

Afghan Guerrillas

50. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any evidence of collaboration between the Government of Iran and Afghan guerrillas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Iran has consistently supported elements of the Afghan resistance, and given refuge to over 1 million Afghan refugees.

Inter-Parliamentary Union

52. **Mr. Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department affords to the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Eggar: We fully support the activities of the British group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. For example, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides written and oral background briefing in connection with inward and outward visits; and our posts overseas provide whatever support may be required by IPU delegations. An FCO official attends the IPU spring and autumn conferences as an adviser to the British group.

We value the contribution of the IPU to the improvement of international and bilateral relations.

EC Budget

55. **Mr. Forth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Foreign Affairs Council's most recent consideration of the European Community budget deficit.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) on 21 October at columns *705-8*.

Spain

56. **Mr. Sackville:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he intends to visit Spain.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend intends to visit Spain on 27-28 November for further discussions with the Spanish Foreign Minister in accordance with the pattern established under the Brussels agreement of 1984.

British Council

58. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the work and future funding of the British Council.

Mr. Eggar: As our response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's recent report makes clear, we attach importance to our continuing work in the field of cultural diplomacy. The British Council plays a particular role in this, as do, notably, the BBC external services. We also recognise and welcome the very great contribution of the private sector. We shall continue to allocate funds to work in the cultural field in the light of our overall foreign policy priorities and public expenditure objectives. Details of planned funding for the British Council for the period from 1988-89 to 1990-91 will be published in the public expenditure White Paper early next year.

80. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the British Council to reopen in Malta; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The British Council has no immediate plans to re-open in Malta.

East-West Relations

59. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the future of East-West relations.

Mr. Mellor: We welcome the prospect of the United States-Soviet summit beginning on 7 December. We hope that it will bring not only agreement on intermediate nuclear forces but further progress on measures of arms control, human rights and regional conflicts. We will continue to work for better East-West relations from our position as a stalwart European member of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Council of Ministers

62. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about matters to be discussed at the next Council of Ministers' meeting.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon) on 30 October at column *479*. Since this statement, the proposal on permitted radioactivity levels in foodstuffs has been added to the agenda.

Refuseniks

66. **Mr. Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek a further opportunity of raising with the Soviet Foreign Minister the plight of those long-term refuseniks, such as Professor Alexander Lerner, who are still waiting for exit visas.

Mr. Mellor: We continue to press the Soviet authorities to allow all refuseniks to leave. We have welcomed the recent resolution of some longstanding cases, including those of Vladimir Slepak and Ida Nudel, and hope that others like Professor Lerner will be similarly successful in obtaining exit visas soon. My right hon. and learned Friend will, of course, have such cases much in mind when he next meets Mr. Shevardnadze.

China (Prime Minister's Visit)

67. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will invite Prime Minister Zhao Ziyan of China to visit Britain.

Mr. Eggar: Premier Zhao last visited Britain in 1985. We have no plans at present to invite him to make a further visit.

Cyprus

68. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last made an official visit to Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. and learned Friend has not visited the Republic of Cyprus. The last visit by a British Minister was in 1983, before the Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence.

South Africa (Detentions)

71. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations have been made to the Government of the Republic of South Africa concerning the detention of children and young people in South Africa; and what response has been received from the Botha Government.

Mrs. Chalker: We have made frequent representations to the South African Government, who can be in no doubt as to our opposition to detentions without charge and our particular concern about children and young people in detention. The number of both children and adults now held in detention has declined in recent months.

Mr. Douglas Forsyth

72. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, pursuant to his reply of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *770*, relating to the failure of Her Majesty's Government's efforts through diplomatic means to restore Mr. Douglas Forsyth property in Cairo, Her Majesty's Government will now assume responsibility for regaining vacant possession of Mr. Forsyth's property, taken over by the Egyptian Government in 1956; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. Following desequestration of the villa in 1960, Mr. Forsyth's late father accepted compensation from the Foreign Compensation Commission for the depreciation in the value of his property attributable to its being returned to him with a sitting tenant. Other British citizens in a similar position subsequently sold their properties without vacant possession. This option remains open to Mr. Forsyth should he fail in his current action before the Egyptian courts.

BBC External Services

74. **Mr. Temple-Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to be able to announce a decision concerning the application of the BBC external services to commence a service of satellite television broadcasting.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stated in her reply of 3 November to my hon. Friend, examination of the complex issues raised by the BBC proposal is not yet completed. It is, however, being given considerable attention and priority.

South Africa (Sanctions)

75. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received calling for additional sanctions by Her Majesty' Government against South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: We receive representations on South African issues from a wide spectrum of opinion, including advocates and opponents of economic sanctions.

South Africa (Death Sentences)

76. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of representations received about South Africans under sentence of death in South Africa; and what responses he is making.

Mrs. Chalker: We have received various representations about South Africans under sentence of death. We are ready to consider making appeals for clemency in cases where the crime is clearly political and there are extenuating circumstances, or where there are strong humanitarian grounds for doing so.

Settlers (Interviews)

77. **Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the interviews of potential settlers to the United Kingdom are conducted in the same manner regardless of their country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Entry clearance officers carry out interviews of all categories of applicants without regard to the applicant's race, colour or religion.

Postal Communications

79. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on progress made at the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe review conference in Vienna in respect of proposals tabled by the United Kingdom delegation aimed at ensuring freedom of transit of postal communications.

Mr. Mellor: We, together with a number of Western countries, tabled a proposal promoting respect for the privacy and integrity of postal and telephonic communications at the Vienna CSCE meeting on 18 February. There appears to be broad agreement that a provision on these general lines is desirable and we are optimistic that it will feature in any final document agreed in Vienna.

In putting forward the proposal, our CSCE delegation has repeatedly drawn attention to the need for closer observation of the spirit of the convention of the Universal Postal Union and the international telecommunication conventions in the Soviet Union and other Eastern countries.

China (Ministerial Visit)

81. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when next he intends to visit the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend last visited the People's Republic of China during the state visit in October last year. He has no plans at present for a further visit.

Gulf War

84. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement about the Government's role in attempting to bring about a ceasefire between Iraq and Iran.

91. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives Her Majesty's Government has taken towards a resolution of the Iran-Iraq war.

Mr. Mellor: We played a leading role in the adoption of Security Council resolution 598 which provides a solid foundation for a lasting peace between Iran and Iraq. As permanent members of the Security Council we continue to support wholeheartedly the secretary general's efforts to obtain implementation of the resolution, including an immediate ceasefire. We are also seeking to make progress on parallel work on enforcement measures, as agreed by the Foreign Ministers of the Five on 25 September.

90. **Sir John Farr:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: The situation in the Gulf remains very tense. The Iraqis continue to attack Iranian shuttle tankers and oil installations, and the Iranians to retaliate against third-country shipping. We constantly urge the utmost restraint on all parties. We believe that the only effective way to reduce the tension is through the immediate and total implementation of Security Council resolution 598 by Iran and Iraq.

Gulf (Ministerial Visit)

85. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when he next intends to visit the Gulf.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit the Gulf. However, I will be leaving tomorrow to visit Oman and the United Arab Emirates.

Soviet Union (Divided Families)

92. **Dr. Blackburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will raise again with the Soviet Foreign Minister the question of the reunification of divided families and of particular cases of hardship, including that of the Kholmiansky family.

Mr. Mellor: We regularly make representations to the Soviet authorities on behalf of divided Soviet families and continue to raise cases like that of the Kholmianskys at every suitable opportunity. My right hon. and learned Friend will have such issues much in mind when he next meets Mr. Shevardnadze.

Arms Sales

94. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action he proposes to take to discourage those sales of armaments which are likely to be directed to either Iran or Iraq.

Mr. Mellor: Our policy on defence sales to Iran and Iraq is already one of the strictest of any country, and there are no plans at the present time to introduce further measures. Exports of defence-related equipment are subject to stringent export licensing procedures to ensure they do not contravene the special ministerial guidelines announced in the House on 25 October 1985. We would take a very serious view of any activities in breach of those guidelines.

Consular Services

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost to the Exchequer of all consular services supplied by the United Kingdom to Bermuda.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has incurred no consular expenses in recent years on behalf of the Government of Bermuda.

Locally Engaged Staff

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is the difference in annual pay between locally engaged staff of the same grade, in Her Majesty's embassy in the United States of America and the high commission in Guyana; and how the salaries are arrived at;

(2) what is the difference in annual pay between locally engaged staff of the same grade, in Her Majesty's United States of America embassy and the high commission in India; and how the salaries are arrived at;

(3) what is the difference in annual pay between locally engaged staff of the same grade, in Her Majesty's embassy in the United States of America and in Ethiopia; how the salaries are arrived at;

(4) what is the difference in annual pay between locally engaged staff of the same grade employed by Her Majesty's embassies in the United States of America and Somalia; how the salaries are arrived at;

(5) what is the difference in annual salary between locally engaged staff of the same grade employed by Her Majesty's embassy in the United States of America and the high commission in Australia; and how the salaries are arrived at;

(6) what is the difference in annual salary between locally engaged staff of the same grade employed by Her Majesty's embassies in the United States of America and Sweden; and how the salaries are arrived at;

(7) what is the difference in annual salary between locally engaged staff of the same grade employed by Her Majesty's embassies in the United States of America and Brazil; and how the salaries are arrived at.

Mr. Eggar: We operate a standard policy for setting salaries and conditions of service for locally-engaged staff at all British diplomatic missions overseas. Their terms of employment are set on the basis of comparison with jobs of similar responsibility among a range of selected local employers. Suitable employers for this purpose are chosen from the host Government, other diplomatic missions (including American embassies), international and local companies. Salaries and conditions are reviewed annually in London, or more often if they are subject to high inflation.

By basing salaries and conditions of service on local practice we ensure that we pay the market rate for the job. It would not be realistic to pay locally-engaged staff standard rates throughout the world because these would inevitably bear no relation to the cost of living in the country concerned or to the market rate for the job.

Not all of Her Majesty's embassies and high commissions listed in the hon. Member's questions employ staff in the same range of grades. The table shows, therefore, the range of grades represented in each mission, their rates of pay, and the equivalent rates for the same range of grades paid at Her Majesty's British embassy in Washington.

		Local Salary		*Equivalent salary at British embassy Washington*	
Country	*Range of grades*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*	*Maximum*	*Minimum*
Guyana	III-Vc	1,892	527	13,739	5,277
India	I-Vc	4,465	726	26,222	5,277
Ethiopia	I-Vb	7,522	808	26,222	6,086
Somalia	II-Vc	2,789	284	16,789	5,277
Australia	I-Vb	12,935	7,808	26,222	6,086
Sweden	I(S)-Vc	16,379	6,257	30,780	5,277
Brazil	I-Vc	9,896	1,228	26,222	5,277

All salaries are shown gross before tax, and are exclusive of any allowances (e.g. family, rent etc.). They are expressed in sterling converted at the latest available exchange rate, but they are paid locally in local currency.

Torture

Mr. Coleman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government intend signing the European convention for the prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment on 27 November at the opening of the convention for signature by member states; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) on 28 October at column *270*.

Terrorist Organisations

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether officials of his Department have ever met representatives of terrorist organisations.

Mr. Mellor: Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials meet a wide range of people during their daily work. Full details of those contacts must remain confidential. However, our policy is well known and has been made clear repeatedly. No cause can justify resorting to terrorism.

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those organisations which are treated by his Department as being terrorist organisations.

Mr. Mellor: No.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Interests

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, the hon. Member for Wealden, how many hon. and right hon. Members have failed to return registration forms for the Register of Members' Interests; and if he will publish a list of those Members.

Mr. Wakeham: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that the total number of Members who have taken their seats but have not yet registered is now four. I understand from the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests that he has written to the Members concerned, reminding them of their obligation to register, and it is hoped it will shortly be possible for a complete Register to be laid before the House.

Press Gallery

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord Privy Seal (1) if he will list the press office staff of each Government Department who have a pass for the parliamentary Press Gallery;

(2) if he will list all those persons, other than civil servants, who have a pass to the parliamentary Press Gallery, indicating the name of their employing organisation in each case.

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that it is not possible to provide this information, since it is not the practice, on security grounds, to make public the names of individual Palace of Westminster photo-identity passholders.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 19 November 1987

HOME DEPARTMENT

Dangerous Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the sale of weapons of war and other lethal or dangerous implements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The sale of firearms generally is governed by the provisions of the Firearms Act 1968, and imitation firearms by the Firearms Act 1982. Firearms legislation is currently under review and we will make an announcement about further controls shortly. We also propose in the Criminal Justice Bill to take powers to prohibit the sale of specified weapons (other than firearms) for which there is no legitimate use and to make it an offence to be in possession of a bladed or sharply pointed article in public without good reason.

Fireworks

Mr. Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of known injuries or damage to property caused by the illegal use of fireworks over the last 12 months.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not available centrally on injuries or damage to property caused by the illegal use of fireworks. The only available information is that collected annually by the Department of Trade and Industry from hospitals in Great Britain on all injuries caused by fireworks during a four-week period in October and November. Eight hundred and forty-six such injuries were reported in the relevant period in 1986. Corresponding information for 1987 is not yet available.

Replica Firearms

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he will take to stop the selling of replica firearms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the Firearms Act 1982, imitation firearms capable of ready conversion to fire live ammunition are already subject to the same stringent controls imposed on actual firearms by the Firearms Act 1968. We do not think that it would be sensible to restrict or try to control the sale or possession of toy or imitation guns which are not capable of being converted to fire live ammunition. There are already many such imitations or toys in circulation, and realistic imitations can easily be constructed by those intent on a criminal act.

Animal Welfare

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to increase the penalties available to the courts in cases of organised dog fighting and badger baiting, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government entirely share the public abhorrence of the barbaric practices of dog fighting and badger baiting. The maximum penalties for such activities, provided under the Protection of Animals Act 1911, were recently doubled, to a fine not exceeding level 6 on the standard scale (£2,000) or six months' imprisonment, or both. In the case of badgers, additional protection against cruelty is provided by the Badgers Act 1975, as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985. We believe that the maximum penalties available under these Acts are substantial and appropriate to the gravity of the offences. We shall however be giving support to the proposals by my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) to increase substantially the maximum penalties for attendance at animal fights or baiting.

Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer of 12 November, he will provide the information requested in relation to exclusion orders involving persons living in the west midlands for the period from the coming into force of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 until the end of 1975.

Mr. Hurd: Two people known to have been living in the west midlands were made the subject of exclusion orders under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 between November 1974 and the end of 1975.

Dog Excrement

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the weight of dog excrement deposited on the streets of Britain each year; and if he will increase the penalties on dog owners who allow their pets to foul pavements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have made no such estimate. Under existing legislation the maximum penalty which local authorities may prescribe in their byelaws for offences of this nature is a fine at level 2 on the standard scale (currently £100), and we have no plans to increase the level.

Nottinghamshire Police

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has yet decided upon the Nottinghamshire constabulary's appeal for additional police officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend will in due course decide on the application by the Nottinghamshire police authority for 63 additional police posts, in the light of the advice received from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. He will at the same time be considering the applications outstanding from other police authorities for increases in establishments. Since May 1979, a total of 114 additional police posts has been approved for the Nottinghamshire constabulary, and the existing establishment is 2,259.

Citizenship

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's estimate of the number of residents in the United Kingdom who are eligible to apply for registration as British citizens on or before 31 December, the proportion of these who are mentally ill and the number of mentally ill people eligible to apply who are wholly dependent on benefits or assistance.

Mr. Renton: It is not possible to give any such estimates as the necessary statistical data is not available.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* arrests, *(b)* prosecutions and *(c)* convictions there have been under the Sexual Offences Act 1985 in each identifiable area of England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: The Act came into force in September 1985. 21 prosecutions were recorded in England and Wales in 1985.

The information held centrally for 1986, which may be incomplete, is given in the table. There is no power of arrest under this Act.

Males proceeded against or found guilty under the Sexual Offences Act 1985

England and Wales 1986

Police force area[1]	*Proceeded against*	*Found guilty*
Avon and Somerset	2	2
Bedfordshire	4	1
Cleveland	2	2
Gloucester	1	1
Greater Manchester	73	66
Leicestershire	10	10
Lincolnshire	1	—
Merseyside	7	7
Metropolitan police	10	8
Norfolk	13	13
Northamptonshire	1	1
Nottinghamshire	1	1
South Yorkshire	2	1
Staffordshire	11	3
West Midlands	68	63
West Yorkshire	13	9
South Wales	1	1
England and Wales	220	189

[1] No prosecutions were recorded in the other 26 police force areas.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes there are in north Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that there are currently 1,135 neighbourhood watch schemes in the north Wales police area covering approximately 22,500 households, almost double the number a year ago. We are encouraged by the involvement of the community in crime prevention indicated by the increase in the number of schemes during the last 12 months.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take in the light of the recommendations in the report by Dr. Trevor Bennett relating to difficulties with neighbourhood watch schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The research carried out by the Cambridge Institute of Criminology provided some useful lessons on the design and implementation of schemes which have been studied by the Metropolitan police and the Home Office. The Metropolitan police is revising its policy guidelines on the operation of neighbourhood watch in the Metropolitan police district. The Home Office is producing a good practice guidance note for the police and members of the public taking account of Dr. Bennett's research and of the experience of other police forces and communities throughout England and Wales.

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes operate according to his Department's guidelines and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Neighbourhood watch is essentially a locally based voluntary activity and it is for individual local communities and the police to develop schemes tailored to meet particular local needs and requirements. The guidelines on implementation issued by the Home Office in 1984 simply set out the basic broad concept of neighbourhood watch in order to assist this process. Information on how individual schemes operate is not held centrally.

Industrial Espionage

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been for industrial espionage and related offences in the years, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985 and 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available. It is not possible to identify separately offences involving industrial espionage.

Firearms

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the circular letter he sent to all chief officers of police, dated 8 September and signed J. H. Chilcot; and if he will make a statement on his reasons for sending the instructions contained in the letter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library. Its purpose was to ask each chief officer to review his criteria under the law as it stands in respect of applications to acquire, or to continue to possess full bore self-loading rifles and carbines; and to ensure that each application was carefully scrutinised so that the chief officer could be satisfied that a good reason, commensurate with the weapon, existed for its possession and that such possession did not constitute a danger to the public safety or to the peace, as required under the Firearms Act 1968.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research has been undertaken by his Department to identify the particular areas of concern in his proposals to amend the Firearms Act 1968; and when that research was conducted.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In studying firearms controls we have drawn on experience of the operation of the existing legislation and considered the views of the police, shooting interests and a number of other bodies. We have also taken fully into account concerns expressed in Parliament and by members of the public.

DEFENCE

Aircraft Losses

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *600*, if he is now in a position to supply the information previously asked for relating to aircraft losses.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1 January 1979, 156 British service personnel have lost their lives in military aircraft accidents during routine operations. In these accidents, 242 aircraft suffered irreparable damage. The costs of these aircraft, at the time of their purchase, is estimated to have been some £580 million.

NAVSTAR Guidance Satellite

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what charge is to be paid by Her Majesty's Government for the use of the NAVSTAR guidance satellite; what are the implications of this for the independence of Trident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: We do not anticipate that any charges will be imposed for the use of NAVSTAR. As Trident will not be dependent in any way on this system, there are no implications for the independence of the United Kingdom Trident force.

Chemical and Biological Research

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all the contracts for chemical and biological research which his Department has placed directly or indirectly with United Kingdom universities and polytechnics; what is their total value; and if he will indicate which of these were initiated by the chemical defence establishment at Porton.

Mr. Sainsbury: The MOD currently has 77 contracts or agreements for research into chemical or biological defence with United Kingdom universities and polytechnics. The total value of these agreements and contracts is £7·8 million and all were originated by the chemical defence establishment, Porton Down. It is not our policy to give details of these contracts and agreements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Stock Exchange, Tokyo

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to what criteria will be used in determining which four British institutions take up the Japanese offer of four seats on the Tokyo stock exchange.

Mr. Maude: The Tokyo stock exchange announced on 19 October the criteria for vetting candidates for the 22 new seats. These include the applicant's scale of business, its financial standing, its past business performance, the length of time it has engaged in securities business in Japan and its operational capability as a potential member of the exchange. A special admission fee of 500 million yen is payable, plus some additional costs. Determination of new members is subject to the approval of the exchange's ad hoc committee on membership structure and the board of governors of the exchange. The number and names of successful British candidates will not be known until next month.

Expenditure

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will provide estimates of his allocations for *(a)* regional, *(b)* inner city aid and *(c)* nationalised industries finance for 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: Information on the allocation of the total amounts provided for regional assistance and inner city aid for the three years 1988-89 to 1990-91 will be included in the public expenditure White Paper to be published in January.

The 1988-89 external financing limits for the nationalised industries sponsored by the Department were published recently in the Autumn Statement and show a total negative external financing requirement of £125 million. The Autumn Statement also gives the aggregated plans for all nationalised industries in 1989-90 and 1990-91, but I am unable at this stage to publish separate details for those nationalised industries sponsored by my Department. These will also be included in the public expenditure White Paper next January.

World Recession (Contingency Plans)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if his Department is making contingency plans to help British industry in the event of a world recession.

Mr. Atkins: My Department's policies are designed to help industry strengthen its competitiveness and ability to adapt to changes in the market, so that it can respond effectively to whatever contingencies arise.

Lonrho

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will refer the failure of the directors of Lonrho plc to comply with paragraph 43 of schedule 4 to the Companies Act 1985 in respect of the company's 1985-86 accounts to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Maude: I have given careful consideration to the issues raised in connection with Lonrho's accounts for 1985-86 and have concluded that no further action is called for.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the average sum spent per employee on education training by British manufacturing industry; and what information he has about the equivalent sums in France, West Germany and Italy.

Mr. Cope: It is estimated that roughly £160 per employee per year was spent on training by British manufacturing industry in 1984. Direct comparison of this figure with spending by companies overseas is not possible. Better estimates of costs and volumes of training in Britain are expected to be available in 1988 as part of the study of funding of vocational education and training currently being undertaken by the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps Her Majesty's Government propose to take, in particular using tax incentives, to impress training expenditure in British manufacturing industry.

Mr. Cope: Employers have the chief responsibility for meeting their own skill needs. The Government have already given a lead by their own investment in training unemployed people and school leavers.

Special tax arrangements to encourage employers to provide training for their staff already exist. To make these more widely known the Manpower Services Commission plans to publish a booklet in December entitled "Tax, Training and Education: A Guide for Employers, Education and Training Providers".

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Capital Development Loans

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what environmental considerations are taken into account when capital development loans are agreed either directly or through multilateral agencies.

Mr. Chris Patten: The environmental factors needing consideration vary depending on the nature of the project being supported and its proposed location. In our bilateral programmes project managers are required to operate in accordance with written guidance and a checklist, which I shall send to the hon. Member. The guidance is currently being reviewed.

Multilateral agencies are responsible for appraising their own proposed investments. Her Majesty's Government have made it clear to the management of those to which we belong that we expect them to take full account of environmental factors, and to have operational guidelines for their staff and consultants. We will continue to monitor their practices in this regard.

Grande Carajas Project

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what attitude Her Majesty's Government's representatives on the World Bank took on the question of the loan to Brazil for the Grande Carajas project.

Mr. Chris Patten: It is not the policy of Her Majesty's Government to disclose the line taken by our executive director in discussions in the World Bank's board.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Veterinary Schools

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply of 2 July, *Official Report*, column 140, whether, in the light of progress made by the veterinary departments of the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh in their plans for closer co-operation, the University Grants Committee's review will now be confined to the four English universities with veterinary schools.

Mr. Jackson: I understand the University Grants Committee will shortly be deciding the coverage of the review of veterinary education in the light of the proposals recently submitted by the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Education Act 1980 (Appeals)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list, by local authority, the number of appeals under the Education Act 1980, for each year since 1983, together with the school population for each authority listed.

Mr. Dunn: Information is not available in the form requested.

The appeal arrangements set out in the Education Act 1980 applied for the first time to school admissions for September 1982. From informal inquiries made of local education authorities in England at the time, I understand that in 1983 about 10,000 parental appeals were heard against a decision not to offer a place at the school of their choice. Similar inquiries in 1985 suggested a figure of 9,000 appeals.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the distribution of the special additional allocations of £9·4 million for education capital expenditure in 1987-88 which he announced on 3 November.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Local education authorities have today been informed of their supplementary allocations of prescribed capital expenditure for 1987-88. These are as follows:

Capital expenditure at county and controlled schools and further education establishments

Local Education Authority	*Supplementary allocation for 1987-88 (£000's)*
Greater London	
Barking	12
Barnet	35
Bexley	23
Brent	18
Bromley	19
Croydon	29
Ealing	20
Enfield	55
Haringey	98
Harrow	14
Havering	27
Hillingdon	19
Hounslow	23
Kingston-upon-Thames	10
Merton	36
Newham	124
Redbridge	35
Richmond-upon-Thames	11
Sutton	12
Waltham Forest	84
Inner London	893
Metropolitan Districts	
West Midlands	
Birmingham	265
Coventry	51
Dudley	83
Sandwell	87
Solihull	18
Walsall	86
Wolverhampton	51
Merseyside	
Knowsley	15
Liverpool	115
St. Helens	25
Sefton	41
Wirral	55
Greater Manchester	
Bolton	69
Bury	34
Manchester	71
Oldham	51
Rochdale	23
Salford	26
Stockport	44
Tameside	87
Trafford	17
Wigan	42
South Yorkshire	
Barnsley	22
Doncaster	47
Rotherham	56
Sheffield	108
West Yorkshire	
Bradford	330
Calderdale	89
Kirklees	50
Leeds	191
Wakefield	68
Tyne and Wear	
Gateshead	52
Newcastle upon Tyne	30
North Tyneside	22
South Tyneside	27
Sunderland	50
Non-Metropolitan Counties	
Isles of Scilly	—
Avon	326
Bedfordshire	64
Berkshire	101
Buckinghamshire	54
Cambridgeshire	127
Cheshire	126
Cleveland	78
Cornwall	205
Cumbria	100
Derbyshire	359
Devon	158
Dorset	112
Durham	88
East Sussex	74
Essex	204
Gloucestershire	130
Hampshire	319
Hereford and Worcester	137
Hertfordshire	80
Humberside	129
Isle of Wight	22
Kent	327
Lancashire	343
Leicestershire	228
Lincolnshire	81
Norfolk	109
North Yorkshire	116
Northamptonshire	65
Northumberland	71
Nottinghamshire	151
Oxfordshire	43
Salop	67
Somerset	100
Staffordshire	126
Suffolk	104
Surrey	103
Warwickshire	61
West Sussex	59
Wiltshire	108

PRIME MINISTER

Corfe Mullen

Q19. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Corfe Mullen in the constituency of Dorset, North.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Greenock and Port Glasgow (Enterprise Zone)

Q32. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Prime Minister whether she will take steps in the near future to facilitate the creation of an enterprise zone in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 5 November, at column *805*.

Education Bill

Q40. **Sir John Biggs-Davison:** To ask the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply to a supplementary question asked by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on 29 October, *Official Report*, column 449, Her Majesty's Government propose to include provisions for Northern Ireland in the Education Bill and in any other forthcoming United Kingdom legislation.

The Prime Minister: The forthcoming Education Bill will not generally extend to Northern Ireland, though legislation enacted for Great Britain, normally sets the pattern for Northern Ireland. Such comparable legislation, like most other legislation for Northern Ireland, would be enacted by Order in Council.

Pulloxhill

Q60. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Pulloxhill in the county of Bedfordshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Wales

Q74. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit Wales.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Leith

Q82. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Leith.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Inner-city Areas

Q87. **Mr. Heffer:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her programme for visits to all inner-city areas.

The Prime Minister: In September I undertook a number of such visits, including to Glasgow, Teesside and the west midlands. I visited factories, housing projects, enterprise zones, and urban development corporations, and met many local people and their representatives.

Warwickshire

Q102. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she has any plans to make an official visit to Warwickshire.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Sir Phillip Woodfield

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Prime Minister whether she will amend the terms of reference of the staff counsellor for the security and intelligence services, Sir Phillip Woodfield, so as to allow him to act retrospectively and counsel past employees of the service.

The Prime Minister: The staff counsellor is not precluded from counselling former members of the security and intelligence services, where appropriate.

Richmond Yard

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister how many Ministers have rooms in the Richmond yard development; and what is the total office space allocated to them.

The Prime Minister: The six Ministers at the Department of Health and Social Security are to move to Richmond House and will occupy rooms in the restored Georgian building. The total office space to be occupied by Ministers is 3,127 sq ft.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the numbers of civil servants in each grade, together with the average space allocated to them, in the Department of Health and Social Security, Welsh Office, Cabinet Office and Inland Revenue, respectively, in the Richmond yard development.

The Prime Minister: Department of Health and Social Security staff are moving in two phases. The first group, which is due to move by the end of 1987, will total about 174, and the details are as follows. The exact number who will take up occupancy by the end of the second phase, due in March 1988, is not yet decided.

Grade	*Number*	*Total space for grade (sq ft)*	*Average (sq ft)*
Grades 1-3 and equivalents	11	4,785	435
Grade 4	1	400	400
Grade 5	4	950	237
Grade 6	—	—	—
Grade 7	9	1,450	161
Senior Executive Officer	9	1,157	128
Higher Executive Officer	14	1,728	123
Executive Officer	21	2,626	125
Administrative Officer	37	3,435	93
Administrative Assistant	13	1,348	103
Senior Personal Secretary/ Personal Secretary/Typist	25	1,930	77
Non clerical	30	3,897	130
	174	23,706	

The Cabinet Office has been allocated 4,500 sq ft, the Welsh Office 3,000 sq ft, and the Inland Revenue 2,000 sq ft. Details of their occupancy are not yet available.

European Council

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the proposals she intends to submit to the December meeting of the European Council on budgetary control and the common agricultural policy.

The Prime Minister: At the European Council I shall continue to make clear the need for agreement on effective and binding control over Community spending, in particular agricultural spending, through the strenghtening of budgetary discipline and the introduction of stabilisers on agricultural commodities.

State Visit (Cancellation)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of the preparations for the cancelled state visit of the President of Italy; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: President Cossiga, to his very great regret, was obliged to cancel his visit because of domestic political circumstances.

The cost to British Government funds of the preparations was about £112,000.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. I later visited the scene of last night's terrible fire at King's Cross, where I met representatives of the emergency services. I also visited some of the injured at University College hospital, as well as members of the hospital staff. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

ENERGY

Coal Industry (Investment)

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what amount of capital investment and capital repayment charges are being paid currently by British Coal in respect of collieries which closed (*a*) since 1960, (*b*) since 1985 and (*c*) at any time.

Mr. Michael Spicer: £415 million and £450 million of the British Coal Corporation's debt was written off in the capital reconstructions under the Coal Industry Acts of 1965 and 1973 respectively. In more recent years, the book value of closed collieries has been written off at the time of closure by means of a terminal depreciation charge. Government deficit grant has been made available to cover these charges, interest on borrowing, and other costs where they have not been met from the corporation's revenues. It follows that the corporation has been carrying no continuing financial burdens in respect of such collieries.

CEGB

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Parkinson: I meet Lord Marshall regularly. A wide range of topics relating to the industry are discussed.

Alternative Sources of Electricity

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of his Department's research and development expenditure was devoted to alternative sources of electricity generation during the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department's expenditure on non-nuclear research development and demonstration in 1986-87 was £45·4 million of which £7·6 million supported projects concerning alternative energy sources capable of electricity generation.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Parkinson: Advertising agencies appointed during 1985-86 to handle advertising for my Department by agency, campaign and expenditure are shown in the table. The totals may include some promotional expenditure besides advertising such as seminars, exhibitions and leaflets. The figures provided are in full cost terms including VAT where applicable. Expenditure in 1985-86 was higher than usual because of my Department's promotion of Energy Efficiency Year 1986.

Advertising Agency and Campaign	*Amount spent with Agency* £
Saatchi & Saatchi Compton—Energy Efficiency	4,267,000
Golly Slater & Partners—Cardiff Energy Action	109,900
Charles Barker—Offshore Supplies Office	96,000
Doyle Dane Bernbach—Energy Saver Shows	12,255

CEGB (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total capital expenditure by the Central Electricity Generating Board in each financial year since 1975-76 in constant prices (using implied GDP deflator at factor costs) taking 1986-87 as the base.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The capital expenditure figures requested by the hon. Member at 1986-87 prices using implied GDP deflator at factor cost are as follows:

	£ million
1975-76	1,217
1976-77	1,248
1977-78	1,045
1978-79	967
1979-80	985
1980-81	954
1981-82	1,070
1982-83	1,086
1983-84	1,098
1984-85	953
1985-86	764
1986-87	616

Oil Exploration Licences

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy for what purpose he has granted an exploration licence to Seismograph Services (England) Ltd. on behalf of the licence holder Fina Explorations Ltd. in respect of the parishes of Whitmore, Swynnerton, Keele, Astbury cum Morton, Alsager and the boroughs of Newcastle, Congleton and Stoke City; and what precise consultation he has had with the county councils on this matter.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The parishes and boroughs listed by the hon. Member are covered by petroleum exploration licence EXL 067, operated by Fina Petroleum. The choice of seismic contractor is a commercial matter for the licensee. Prior to carrying out any seismic surveys under the licence the licensee is required to consult with the relevant mineral planning authorities, who are the Staffordshire and Cheshire county councils.

Continental Shelf (Orders)

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will explain the basis upon which his Department calculates the figures for the United Kingdom share of orders placed on the United Kingdom continental shelf.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The figures for the United Kingdom share of orders placed on the United Kingdom continental shelf are based on data collated from returns supplied by each operator under a voluntary arrangement agreed with the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association.

The United Kingdom share represents the value of the contracts and main sub-contracts placed with United Kingdom-based companies which through employment, manufacturing or sub-contracting make a substantial contribution to the United Kingdom economy.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to his written answer of 5 November to his hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest, *Official Report*, column *794*, he will state what further meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council are planned; and what dates and agenda have been fixed.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No meeting of the Council is planned at the moment. The co-ordinating committee is due to meet shortly, although the date and agenda have not yet been fixed.

Plutonium

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will initiate at the next meeting of the Council of European Foreign Ministers a task force of experts to investigate recent evidence that weapons grade nuclear materials from facilities under safeguards in the European Community have been illicitly sold on the black market in the Sudan; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has about alleged illegal attempts by the Governments of (i) Israel, (ii) Libya, (iii) Iran, (iv) Iraq, (v) India, (vi) Argentina, (vii) South Africa, and (viii) Pakistan to obtain unsafeguarded plutonium and enriched uranium on the black market, particularly in Khartoum, which have been diverted from facilities in the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no evidence to support allegations that weapons grade nuclear material has been on sale in the Sudan or indeed elsewhere. We also have full confidence in the stringent security precautions and accounting systems that exist at United Kingdom and other Community nuclear installations.

South Africa

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British nationals have been *(a)* arrested, *(b)* tried and *(c)* imprisoned in South Africa for each year since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Waste Disposal

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is willing to hold a public inquiry regarding the proposal to dump domestic waste at Magheramorne quarry, Larne.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland will consult Larne borough council shortly on the planning application for the proposed waste disposal facility at Magheramorne quarry. The Department does not consider that, at this late stage in the processing of this application, a public inquiry would be warranted. Matters relating to leachate, etc., may be dealt with under any water act consent, and the operation of the waste disposal site and measures to prevent public health nuisance would be controlled by licence issued by Larne borough council.

Divis Flats

Mr. James Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place a copy of the "Divis Biannual Review", presented to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive board in April, in the Library.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Housing Executive who has advised me that no biannual or other review of the decision to replace the Divis complex has been carried out. The document presented to the Housing Executive board in April 1987 was an internal planning report.

WALES

Listed Buildings

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many listed buildings in Wales have been downgraded by Cadw in the years 1984, 1985 and 1986, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend downgraded one listed building in 1984, seven in 1985 and four in 1986.

Craig y Nôs Castle

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will authorise an independent inspection and valuation of the painting of Dame Adelina Patti in Craig y Nôs castle, to establish whether the painting was painted by either Friedrich Karl Steinhardt or Jakob Steinhardt.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: A valuation of the portrait has been made by Messrs. Phillips, Fine Art Auctioneers, who have reported that the painting is by Friedrich Karl Steinhardt.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were self-employed in Wales in 1981; how many are self-employed at the latest recorded date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: It is estimated that there were 115,000 self-employed people in Wales at June 1981; the figure for June 1987 is provisionally estimated to be 162,000.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were in full-time employment in Clwyd in May 1979; how many are in full-time employment now; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The number of people in full-time employment in Clwyd in May 1979 and now is not available. The nearest available figures, for June 1978 and September 1984, show that the number of full-time employees in employment (which excludes the self-employed) in Clwyd was 103,942 and 90,618 respectively.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many haemophiliacs in Wales are known to be infected with HIV; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Grist: The most recent information available indicates that 49 haemophiliacs in Wales have been identified as being HIV positive.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many haemophiliacs in Wales have developed *(a)* full-blown AIDS, *(b)* prodromal symptoms of AIDS and *(c)* HIV positivity;

(2) what information he has regarding the number of haemophiliacs treated in Wales who have received blood products contaminated with the AIDS virus.

Mr. Grist *[holding answers 12 November 1987]*: Haemophiliacs are treated at a number of centres throughout Wales and information on those who have received blood products contaminated with the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV) or who have developed prodromal symptoms is not held centrally.

The most recent information available indicates that 49 persons in Wales with haemophilia have been identified as being HIV positive. It is not possible to estimate the number who will go on to develop AIDS. I understand that fewer than 10 haemophiliacs in Wales have been identified as having developed AIDS.

Rating Reform

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of poorer households in Wales with an income of less than £75 per week, after taxes, referred to in the document "Paying for Local Government—The Need For Change"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The estimated number of households in Wales with an income after taxes of less than £75 a week is 187,000.

GEC Ltd., Treforest

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further attempts he proposes to make to avert the closure of the GEC factory at Treforest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The decision to close the Treforest operation is one for the commercial judgment of the company. None the less, the company is aware of the regional assistance which may be available towards a project which can meet the relevant criteria and safeguard the jobs at risk.

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the meetings he, other Ministers or officials in his Department have had with officials of GEC Ltd. regarding its intended closure of its Treforest factory; what information he has recived from the company as to the likely number of job losses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Neither I nor other Ministers have met the company since the announcement of the closure, but officials of our Department have spoken to representatives of the company about the intended closure.

The Welsh Office stands ready to discuss with the company, or any other party, proposals which may lead to the safeguarding of the 233 jobs that may be lost.

Education Act 1980

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will list by local authority the number of appeals under the Education Act 1980 for each year since 1983, together with the school population for each authority listed beside it.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information on appeals by parents who fail to obtain their first choice of school for their children is not collected centrally.

Welsh Sports Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what remuneration the current chairman of the Welsh Sports Council receives; and how many days per month he is expected to devote to the business of the Welsh Sports Council.

Mr. Grist: The chairman of the Sports Council for Wales receives £7,572 per annum for a time commitment of one and a half days per week.

EMPLOYMENT

Hotels (Classification)

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his reply of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *349*, what is the latest information on the numbers of establishments accepted for Crown hotel classification in each category; how many hotels have failed to meet the specification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: According to the English Tourist Board, the information as at 20 October 1987 is as follows:

Category	*Number*
Listed	2,042
1 Crown	580
2 Crowns	2,802
3 Crowns	1,709
4 Crowns	1,134
5 Crowns	236
Total	8,503

Of those establishments which have applied, 105 have failed to meet the criteria for registration.

The English Tourist Board, in conjunction with the Wales Tourist Board, proposes to consult the industry about improvements to the scheme, including the introduction of an element of qualitative assessment.

A consultation document outlining a range of options for the future development of the scheme is being prepared.

Career Development Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many applications for loans under the career development scheme have been made to date in each pilot area and in total; and in each case how many were rejected.

Mr. Cope: As at 16 November 1987 the total numbers of applications and formal rejections notified to my department by participating banks for each of the four pilot areas and in total was as follows:

	Number of career development loan applications	*Number of formal rejections*
Aberdeen	159	91
Bristol and Bath	202	62
Greater Manchester	385	245
Reading and Slough	170	35
Total of four areas	916	433

The participating banks receive a greater number of additional inquiries about the scheme which are withdrawn before being formally rejected. Detailed statistics are not kept on these.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many loans between *(a)* £500 to £1,000, *(b)* £1,000 to £2,000, *(c)* £2,000 to £3,000, *(d)* £3,000 to £4,000 and *(e)* £4,000 to £5,000 have been made under the career development scheme to date in each of the pilot areas and in total;

(2) how many loans have been made under the career development scheme in each pilot area and in total to date, the value of which are *(a)* between £300 and £500 and *(b)* less than £300, respectively.

Mr. Cope: At 16 November 1987, the number of career development loans notified to my Department by the participating banks was as follows:

£	*Aberdeen*	*Bristol/Bath*	*Greater Manchester*	*Reading/Slough*	*Total*
300-499	2	15	12	1	30
500-1,000	20	40	69	36	165
1,001-2,000	6	22	22	30	80
2,001-3,000	13	26	21	24	84
3,001-4,000	14	14	8	11	47
4,001-5,000	13	23	8	33	77
All values	68	140	140	135	483

£500 was the minimum level for career development loans from the start of the scheme on 15 April 1986. This was reduced to £300 in November 1986.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the career development scheme to date in each of the pilot areas.

Mr. Cope: The career development loan scheme has made an encouraging start in all the pilot areas. Greater Manchester, with the largest population, continues to attract most applications but the level of interest has steadily grown in the three other areas.

A wide variety of training has been made possible by the scheme, including post-graduate courses in management, personnel and marketing; courses to gain professional qualifications in law and accountancy; secretarial, driver training, hairdressing, and hotel and catering courses. Over three quarters of trainees completing their courses are already in employment and over half of these were unemployed when they made their applications.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many loans have been made under the career development scheme to date in each pilot area and in total;

(2) what is the total value of loans made under the career development scheme to date in each pilot area and in total.

Mr. Lee: At 16 November 1987 the number and value of career development loans notified to my Department by participating banks for each of the four pilot areas and in total was as follows:

	Number of loans	*Value of loans £*
Aberdeen	68	175,604
Bristol and Bath	140	301,555
Greater Manchester	140	210,503
Reading and Slough	135	332,020
TOTAL	483	1,019,682

Sweatshops (Leicester)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will investigate alleged sweatshop conditions in Leicester.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is investigating and will continue to investigate alleged sweatshop conditions in the city of Leicester.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the youth training schemes provided at the latest available date, together with the number of places each is offering, for the area of the parliamentary constituency of Chelmsford.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The YTS managing agents, and the places offered by each, at October 1987 in the Chelmsford local authority district, which includes the Chelmsford parliamentary constituency, are as follows:

Provider	*Places offered*
British Horse Society	28
Cramphorns plc	47
Chelmsford Post Office Letter District	64
Chelmsford Youth Training, Essex County Council	194
Eastern National Bus Company	17
Elim Church	78
English Electrical Valves	127
Essex County Council Clerical Scheme	103
Essex Training Ltd.	148
Fellowship Afloat	24
Maldon YTS	217
Marconi Communications Ltd.	110
Marconi Radar Ltd.	33
Marconi Research Ltd.	31
RHP Group plc	29
Martin Retail Group plc	49
Writtle Agricultural College	113
Total	1,412

The following list shows providers whose schemes in Essex are administered by the Manpower Services Commission large companies unit. It is not possible to separately identify places offered in the Chelmsford local authority district.

Provider	*Places offered*
Abbey National Building Society	17
Association of British Travel Agents	31
Alliance and Leicester Building Society	2
Anglian Water Authority	8
Argyll Stores	8
Arrow Training	6
B & Q	19
Boots	12
British Association of Professional Hairdressing Employers	46
British Federation of Care Home Providers	2
British Office Systems and Stationery Federation	8
British Home Stores plc	11
British Insurance Brokers Association	24
British Printing Industry Federation	22
British Rail	13
British Holiday Homes and Parks	7
British Retail Florists	3
Builders Merchants Federation	19
Burtons Group plc	22
Clothing and Allied Products Industry Training Board	30
C & A Modes	2
Central Electricity Generating Board	13
Construction Industry Training Board	288
Co-Operative Retail Society	7
Comet plc	5
DER	12
Debenhams	35
Dewhurst/Baxters	12
Eagle Star Insurance	2
Dixons	5
Edmund Walkers Holdings	3
Electrical Rental	11
Electricity Council	34
Essex Leisure Ltd	4
Federation of London Clearing Banks	30
Footballers' Association Further Education and Vocational Training Society Ltd	16
Ford Motor Company	101
Fosters Menswear	4
Glass Training Ltd	4
Habitat	2
Halifax Building Society	6
Granada Television Rentals	1
Home Charm Group plc	6
Home Insulation	2
Hotel and Catering Training Board	112
J.A.S. Smith (Cleaners) Ltd	3
K Shoes	2
Kwikfit Euro	3
Littlewoods plc	2
Lunn Poly Travel	6
London Industrial Training	5
Marks and Spencer plc	20
Midland Bank plc	16
Midland Group Training Services Ltd	12
Ministry of Defence	6
Mothercare Ltd	12
Motor Agents Association	85
Marine Training and Development	43
Meat East Anglian Traders	30
National Computer Centre	9
National Institute of Hardware	6
Newey and Eyre Ltd	3
National Pony Society	10
National Supervisory Council for Intruder Alarms	2
Nationwide Anglia Building Society	9
Partco Ltd	7
Plastics Processing Industry Training Board	10
Post Office Engineering	2
Quarry Products Training Council	3
Oxford Forestry Group	4
Property Services Agency	1
Rumbelows	20
Safeway	8
J. Sainsbury plc	4
Scaffolding GB Ltd.	3
Shoe Repair Industry Training Association	7
Standard Motorist Ltd.	6
Sutcliffe Catering	4
Southampton Engineering Training Group	3
Sperrings	3
Timber Trades Training Association	6
Timpson Shoe Repairs	2
Trust House Forte	1
W. H. Smith & Son	3
Wolseley Plumb Centres	3
F. W. Woolworth plc	11
Woolwich Building Society	3
Tesco Stores plc	12
Waitrose Ltd.	8

Labour Statistics

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people aged 16 and 17 years were unemployed in October 1987 in the area of the parliamentary constituency of Chelmsford.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library. On 8 October 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the Chelmsford parliamentary constituency aged 16 was 47. Those aged 17 similarly numbered 47.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will tabulate in full such research findings as may be available to him showing what proportion of the reduction in unemployment quarterly since June 1986 comes from (i) increased employment in service industries, (ii) a slower rate of job loss in manufacturing, (iii) the expansion of special measures, and within that (iv) the higher availability for work rules and (v) the application of the restart programme.

Mr. Cope: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to the hon. Member on Wednesday 28 October at column *289*.

Health and Safety Inspectors

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors' hours are spent each week on average, inspecting or monitoring premises and conditions of work for *(a)* YTS trainees, *(b)* community programme workers and *(c)* JTS workers in the Dundee area.

Mr. Nicholls: The information as requested is not available. When carrying out inspections health and safety inspectors examine the health and safety conditions of all persons, regardless of whether they are engaged in Government schemes or not. No distinction is therefore made between those premises at which people are engaged on YTS, community programme schemes and the job training scheme, and those where they are not.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many health and safety inspectors were employed in Dundee during each year since 1974.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of factory and agricultural inspectors in the Dundee local office of the HSE's Scotland east area office at 1 April are as follows:

	Factory inspectors	*Agricultural inspectors*
1 April 1985	3	1
1 April 1986	3	1
1 April 1987	3	1
1 November 1987	3	1

Figures for earlier years are not available.

Training Schemes

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library his study of the effect on unemployment levels of Government schemes.

Mr. Cope: We have carried out a number of evaluations of our various employment, enterprise and training measures. If the hon. Member could specify precisely which study he is referring to, I will look into the matter.

THE ARTS

Museums and Galleries

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many people visited museums and galleries, outside London, in each of the past three years.

Mr. Luce: Information held on the Museums Association database indicates that some 38 million visits were made to museums and galleries outside Greater London in 1985 and 39·7 million visits in 1986. Information for 1984 is not available.

Regional Expenditure

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Arts what proportion of his Department's expenditure, during the last year for which figures are available, was spent in each of the standard regions in England and Wales.

Mr. Luce: The total subsidies made available by the Arts Council to the English RAA's and by the Welsh Arts Council to the Welsh RAA's in the financial year 1986-87 is as follows:

	£	*Per cent. (of £135·6 million) ACGB Grant for 1986-87*
England		
Eastern Arts	1,715,344	1·265
East Midlands	1,809,737	1·335
Greater London	8,427,313	6·215
Lincolnshire and Humberside	904,490	0·667
Merseyside	1,096,830	0·809
Northern	3,543,845	2·613
North West	1,982,320	1·462
Southern	1,298,559	0·958
South East	1,231,962	0·909
South West	1,555,765	1·148
West Midlands	2,291,310	1·690
Yorkshire	2,084,900	1·538
	£	*Per cent. of WAC grant for 1986-87 of £7,610,000*
Wales		
North Wales	218,094	2·866
South East Wales	320,226	4·208
West Wales	210,952	2·77

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will list in the *Official Report* the members of the board of the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

Mr. Luce: The current trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund are:

The Right Hon. Lord Charteris of Amisfield *(Chairman)*
The Baroness Airey of Abingdon
The Most Hon. Marquess of Anglesey
Professor F. G. T. Holliday
Sir Martin Jacomb
Clive Jenkins, Esq.
Charles Kinahan, Esq.
Michael McCrum, Esq.
Sir Norman Macfarlane
Professor B. R. Morris
Commander L. M. M. Saunders-Watson

SCOTLAND

Abortions

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many abortions were performed on resident and non-resident women during 1986 at each of the following gestational ages: 18 weeks, 19 weeks, 20 weeks, 21 weeks, 22 weeks, 23 weeks, 24 weeks and 25 weeks and over, respectively; on what grounds these were performed; what were the ages of the women; and what was the number performed in National Health Service establishments and the number performed in approved places.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There were no abortions performed in approved places at these gestational ages in

1986. Of the 160 performed in NHS establishments, one was for a non-resident woman. The numbers by gestational age and grounds and by age group are set out in the tables.

Table 1

Terminations after 18 weeks in Scottish hospitals by age of mother, 1986

Age	*Number*
<16	9
16-19	39
20-24	45
25-29	36
30-34	18
35-39	9
40-44	4
45+	—
Total	160

Table 2

Terminations in Scottish hospitals by gestation and statutory grounds, 1986

Gestation (weeks)	*One ground recorded*						*More than one ground*	*Total*
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*		
18	—	52	—	13	—	—	5	70
19	—	20	—	11	—	—	3	34
20	—	12	—	18	—	—	1	31
21	—	3	—	5	—	—	—	8
22	—	5	—	2	—	—	1	8
23	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	4
24	—	—	—	2	—	—	1	3
25 and over	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	2
Total	—	90	—	59	1	—	10	160

Key to statutory grounds:

1. Risk to life of pregnant woman.
2. Risk to physical or mental health of pregnant woman.
3. Risk to physical or mental health of existing children.
4. Risk of abnormality to foetus.

Emergency:

5. To save life of pregnant woman.
6. To prevent permanent injury to physical or mental health of pregnant woman.

Nurse-Patient Ratios

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the nurse-patient ratio for each year since 1979 in the Argyll and Clyde health board area.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is not available centrally, but the table shows the average number of whole-time equivalent nurses (including qualified, unqualified and learner nurses) per occupied bed in each year to 31 March:

	Number
1979	1·0
1980	1·0
1981	1·1
1982	1·1
1983	1·1
1984	1·1
1985	1·2
1986	1·2
1987	1·3

Dial-a-ride

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many people are being served by dial-a-ride operations *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in Greater Glasgow;

(2) how many dial-a-ride services are at present operating *(a)* in Scotland and *(b)* in Greater Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not held centrally about Dial-a-Ride services or the number of people using them. Two such services, however — Paisley-Pollok and Easterhouse — are known to be operating with support from Strathclyde regional council.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average of National Health Service beds daily available in the hospitals of Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 3 November to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) at column *684*.

Rates and Water

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons in *(a)* each district and islands council area, *(b)* each regional authority area and *(c)* Scotland receive (i) rates rebates and (ii) water rates rebates; and if he will estimate (iii) the total amount paid on rebates and (iv) the total number of rebate recipients for each of the above.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table. Figures at district level are not readily available.

	Total amount of rate rebates 1985-86 £000	*Number of rate rebate recipients 1985-86*	*Total amount of water rate rebates £000*	*Number of water rate rebate recipients*
Borders	1,792	12,100	73	4,150
Central	7,678	37,042	229	16,035
Dumfries and Galloway	2,635	18,187	135	7,725
Fife	10,133	44,222	344	16,558
Grampian	7,074	48,118	421	15,617
Highland	3,445	20,460	208	7,263
Lothian	23,638	96,247	788	35,074
Strathclyde	106,913	431,741	4,055	196,231
Tayside	12,125	60,111	467	22,542
Orkney	127	1,307	16	665
Shetland	175	1,511	6	620
Western Isles	422	4,685	59	3,514
Scotland	176,159	775,731	6,799	325,994

Note: Columns do not all add owing to rounding.

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Fife and *(c)* Dunfermline district currently receive rebates in respect of water rates; and if he will estimate (i) the total amount paid in rebates and (ii) the total number of people on full rebates.

Mr. Lang: In 1985-86, the latest year for which final figures are available 325,994 households in Scotland including 16,558 households in Fife, were in receipt of water rate rebates. The total sum involved was £6,799,000 for Scotland of which £344,000 went to householders in Fife. Figures for Dunfermline district and for the number of people on full rebates are not available.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the current *(a)* water rate figure and *(b)* general domestic rate figure for all Scottish regional and island council areas; and if he will give the average figure for Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table below.

Domestic Rates 1987-88

	Water rate *p*	*Regional rate poundage* *p*	*Average district rate poundage* *p*	*Domestic rate relief* *p*	*General domestic rate poundage* *p*
Borders	5·7	50	10·5	7	59·2
Central	4·7	53·5	17·5	7	68·7
Dumfries and Galloway	4	49	10·1	7	56·1
Fife	4	58	13·3	7	68·3
Grampian	6·5	44	12	7	55·5
Highland	5·5	60	10·8	7	69·3
Lothian	6·1	57·5	16·1	7	72·7
Strathclyde	4	64	20·4	7	81·4
Tayside	4·5	54	17	7	68·5
Orkney	11	53		7	57
Shetland	3	59		7	55
Western Isles	11·5	74		7	78·5
Scotland average ∗					73

Note: Average poundages have been calculated using domestic rateable values to weight rate poundages.

Rating Reform

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate, based on figures for the current financial year, the amount of community charge payable by senior citizens in Edinburgh liable for 20 per cent. of the community charge.

Mr. Lang: The estimated total level of personal community charge, including community water charge, required in Edinburgh to replace domestic rate income in 1987-88 would be £289.

A person on the maximum level of rebate would have to pay a contribution of some £53 towards his personal community charge liability, plus in appropriate cases the community water charge of £26. Under the reformed social security system to be introduced on 1 April 1988 the minimum contribution towards rates payments, and the overall amount made available through supplementary benefit towards water charges, will be taken into account in setting income support levels. Similar principles will apply from April 1989 in respect of the community charge system.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now list the estimated community charge figure based on returns for the current financial year for all regional and islands authority areas; and if he will give the estimated average community charge figure for Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 13 July 1987 to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar).

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy towards the possession of *(a)* identity numbers and *(b)* identity cards by those liable to pay the community charge.

Mr. Lang: The administration of the community charge system will not require individuals to use identity numbers or identity cards.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is Her Majesty's Government's contribution to the Scottish Development Agency budget in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 at *(a)* current prices and *(b)* constant 1987 prices.

Mr. Lang: The information for 1986-87 and 1987-88 is set out in the table:

	Current prices £ million	*1987-88 prices £ million*
1986-87	89·2	93·0
1987-88	94·9	94·9

As is usual, the information about the industry programme for 1988-89 will be published in the public expenditure White Paper. Further details will be given in the Scottish commentary and in the annual Supply Estimates.

Industry (Aid)

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will itemise his allocation for aid to industry for 1988-89.

Mr. Lang: Information on the public expenditure plans for industry will be contained, as usual, in the annual public expenditure White Paper. As in previous years, my right hon. and learned Friend will supplement this information with greater detail in his annual commentary on the Scotland public expenditure programme. Full details will, of course, be contained in the annual Supply Estimates.

Health Service (Rates)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total amount of rates or payments in lieu of rates, paid *(a)* by each health board in the most recent financial year and *(b)* in respect of other National Health Service property not attributable to any particular health board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Total payments in lieu of rates made by each health board in 1986-87 are shown in the table below. Other significant NHS property in Scotland comprises that of the Common Services Agency, the National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland, and the State hospital Carstairs. Amounts paid in 1986-87 were £1·310 million, £0·020 million and £0·272 million respectively.

Health Board	*Payments in lieu of rates in 1986-87 £ million*
Argyll and Clyde	4·406
Ayrshire and Arran	2·601
Borders	0·455
Dumfries and Galloway	1·049
Fife	2·886
Forth Valley	2·038
Grampian	4·176
Greater Glasgow	14.316
Highland	1·870
Lanarkshire	3·434
Lothian	6·613
Orkney	0·068
Shetland	0·172
Tayside	5·345
Western Isles	0·202
Total	49·631

Fish Farms

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to bringing the location and control of marine fish farms within the planning system.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Government have no plans at present to legislate to extend planning controls to offshore fish farm developments. My right hon. and learned Friend is considering representations he has received about the need for control from Highland regional council and others. A response will be sent to the regional council, and to the hon. Members who have supported its representations, as soon as possible.

Manufacturing (Electricity Prices)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact on manufacturing industries in the Greater Glasgow area of the proposed increases in the price of electricity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The recently announced proposals to increase electricity prices in England and Wales next year do not apply to Scotland. The setting of electricity tariffs in Scotland is a matter for the commercial judgement of the electricity boards and it will be for them to announce decisions about any revisions when these have been reached.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many homes in Scotland are *(a)* amenity houses and *(b)* sheltered houses; and what percentage of households in Scotland with at least one pensioner living in them are owner-occupiers, compared with the percentage figure in England and Wales.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is provided by local authorities to the Scottish Development Department on the numbers of amenity and sheltered houses in their areas at 31 March each year. The totals of 1987 figures received, and the most up-to-date information submitted for nine authorities who have yet to supply 1987 figures, are as follows:

Type of Housing	*Provision (dwellings)*
Amenity	9,486
Sheltered	24,398

The corresponding figures for 1979 were 3,363 and 7,031 respectively.

Other sources of statistical information suggest that the numbers of dwellings provided by the private sector are understated in these figures. The information requested on households with at least one pensioner living in them is not available.

Dundee

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, at 1987 prices, spending on *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* regional selective assistance in the Dundee district authority area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Total payments of Regional Selective Assistance (RSA) and new Regional Development Grant (RDG), at estimated 1987 prices, to firms in Dundee District between 1979-80 and 1986-87 are set out in the table:

Year	*RSA (£ million)*	*New RDG (£ million)*
1979-80	1·1	—
1980-81	1·7	—
1981-82	1·8	—
1982-83	1·5	—
1983-84	2·5	—
1984-85	2·8	—
1985-86	2·2	0·4
1986-87	2·8	2·3

Information under the old regional development grant scheme is only available in respect of payments of over £25,000 to individual businesses in the Dundee local employment office area. These are given in the table:

Payments of old RDG at estimated 1987 prices

Year	*(£ million)*
1979-80	2·0
1980-81	2·0
1981-82	2·4
1982-83	3·4
1983-84	5·3
1984-85	6·6
1985-86	3·7
1986-87	4·6

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the rate support grant paid to Dundee district council in each of the financial years since 1978 expressed in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* real terms expressed at 1986-87 prices; and what percentage of total spending in each year this represents.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is set out in the table:

Dundee	*R.S.G. cash £000*	*R.S.G. 1986-87 cost terms £000*	*Percentage of relevant expenditure Per cent.*
1978-79	4,534	8,822	48
1979-80	4,795	7,982	42
1980-81	4,941	6,938	35
1981-82	4,595	5,876	29
1982-83	5,314	6,339	31
1983-84	5,805	6,621	32
1984-85	5,550	6,063	27
1985-86	6,504	6,700	30
1986-87	6,522	6,522	28
1987-88	7,086	6,781	25

Notes:

1. The figures for the years 1978-79 to 1983-84 are final. Those for 1984-85 to 1987-88 will be varied following the next rate support grant order. The figures reflect selective and general abatement of grant, except that for 1987-88 no adjustment has been made for grant penalties since they will be restored for authorities which bring their expenditure down to guidelines on outturn.

2. The G.D.P. deflator has been used to convert R.S.G. to 1986-87 prices. The expenditure figures used in the final column are those for relevant expenditure including loan charges.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what capital allocation was authorised for housing purposes to the Dundee district council in each year since 1978, expressed in cash terms and real terms at 1986-87 prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Gross housing capital allocations[1] to the City of Dundee district council have been as follows:

	Cash Prices £ million	[2] *1986-87 prices £ million*
1978-79	5·575	10·847
1979-80	8·650	14·400
1980-81	9·410	13·213
1981-82	9·065	11·593
1982-83	13·177	15·720
1983-84	13·247	15·108
1984-85	14·042	15·340
1985-86	14·128	14·555
1986-87	16·402	16·402
1987-88	21·500	20·574

[1] ie the aggregate of Housing Revenue Account and Non-Housing Revenue Account allocations.

[2] Using GDP deflators.

Accident Statistics

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the lastest notified number of accidents to *(a)* YTS trainees, *(b)* community programme workers and *(c)* JTS workers in the Dundee area.

Mr. Lang: Since the beginning of January 1987 notified accidents in Dundee number 43 among YTS trainees and two among community programme workers. There have been no notified accidents among new JTS workers.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the percentage of employers in Dundee who are paying YTS trainees *(a)* the basic rate, *(b)* topping-up payments by less than £5 per week and *(c)* topping-up payments by more than £5 per week.

Mr. Lang: This information is not collected.

Job Training Scheme

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many places are currently available on the job training scheme in the Dundee area; and how many of these were occupied in the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: In Dundee 600 new JTS contracted places are currently available, of which 130 places were filled at 12 November 1987.

Low Pay

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of workers in Dundee who earn less than £3 per hour and the percentage which they constitute of the total work force; and if he will estimate the corresponding figures for each of the last eight years.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing, for each year since 1979, *(a)* the number of National Health Service in-patient beds in Royal Edinburgh infirmary and *(b)* the number of National Health Service staff, in terms of full-time equivalents.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* The information for the Edinburgh royal infirmary is as follows:

Year	*Average available staffed beds*	*Staff in post*[1]
1979	974	[2]2,076·4
1980	961	2,373·6
1981	975	2,494·2
1982	982	2,573·7
1983	987	2,592·9
1984	971	2,513·5
1985	962	2,554·1
1986	962	2,529·3

[1] The conditioned hours for nurses changed from 40 in 1979 to 37·5 hours thereafter. Nurses in training are excluded.

[2] Medical and dental staff figures for 1979 are not readily available centrally. There were 358·6 such staff in post in 1980.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients, excluding deceased patients, who were in-patients for over one year, were discharged in each year since 1982; what were the destinations of these patients; and what arrangements have been made to maintain contact with them.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 10 November 1987]:* The type of information held centrally about discharges differs between general hospitals and psychiatric hospitals in the NHS in Scotland.

The available information relating to discharges and destinations of patients discharged from general hospitals after a stay of more than one year is as follows:

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Discharge home	157	159	214	144
Discharge to convalescent hospital/home	43	36	34	37
Discharge to another hospital	500	747	588	638
Discharge to local authority care	71	44	82	50
Transfer to other specialty in same hospital	61	49	69	61
Other	28	22	32	31
Total	860	1,057	1,019	961

Information relating to discharges, destinations and after-care arrangements of patients discharged after a stay of more than one year in a mental illness or mental handicap hospital is set out in the tables. Columns 1-10 in each table refer to after-care arrangements as follows:

1. general practitioner
2. out-patient clinic
3. local authority mental health services
4. community mental health services
5. day hospital
6. other form of after-care
7. statutory guardianship
8. more than one after-care arrangement
9. no after-care arrangement
10. not known.

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Total*
1982											
Discharged home—living with relative(s) or friend(s)	88	17	1	2	6	6	—	217	24	—	361
Discharged home—living alone	17	6	—	2	2	2	—	27	4	—	60
Discharged to a hostel for ex-patients	6	6	1	—	—	2	—	38	1	—	54
Discharged to other hostel/home	24	3	4	—	—	15	—	57	5	—	108
Transferred to another hospital (mental illness)	3	1	2	2	—	54	—	9	26	—	97
Transferred to another hospital (mental handicap)	—	—	1	—	—	42	—	—	11	—	54
Transferred to a psychiatric unit in a general hospital	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	4	4	—	12
Transferred to geriatric in-patient care	4	—	—	—	—	9	—	11	1	—	25
Transferred to other in-patient care	4	—	1	—	1	28	—	21	19	—	74
Discharged to a penal institution	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	3
Discharged to other type of residence	2	—	1	1	—	6	—	22	1	—	33
Not known	5	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	13	—	21

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Total*
Total	153	33	11	7	10	169	—	409	110	—	902
1983											
Discharged home—living with relative(s) or friend(s)	73	22	1	5	3	12	—	229	25	—	370
Discharged home—living alone	19	3	—	2	2	2	—	56	2	—	86
Discharged to a hostel for ex-patients	14	2	3	2	4	6	—	36	—	—	67
Discharged to other hostel/home	14	—	3	1	1	15	—	78	26	—	138
Transferred to another hospital (mental illness)	6	—	3	3	—	69	—	10	35	—	126
Transferred to another hospital (mental handicap)	—	—	4	1	1	22	—	3	82	—	113
Transferred to a psychiatric unit in a general hospital	—	—	—	1	—	41	—	4	49	—	95
Transferred to geriatric in-patient care	10	—	—	—	—	15	—	7	6	—	38
Transferred to other in-patient care	3	1	—	1	—	39	—	11	15	—	70
Discharged to a penal institution	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	2	—	8
Discharged to other type of residence	11	—	—	1	—	3	—	39	2	—	56
Not known	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	12
Total	154	31	14	17	11	230	—	473	249	—	1,179
1984											
Discharged home—living with relative(s) or friend(s)	74	17	1	3	6	4	—	227	17	—	349
Discharged home—living alone	10	9	—	—	2	1	—	38	—	—	60
Discharged to a hostel for ex-patients	8	—	—	1	2	4	—	36	—	—	51
Discharged to other hostel/home	37	6	3	3	1	13	—	66	9	—	138
Transferred to another hospital (mental illness)	4	—	3	8	—	40	—	16	38	—	109
Transferred to another hospital (mental handicap)	—	—	—	1	—	23	—	5	18	—	47
Transferred to a psychiatric unit in a general hospital	1	—	—	—	—	8	—	3	4	—	16
Transferred to geriatric in-patient care	5	—	—	1	1	11	—	1	5	—	24
Transferred to other in-patient care	2	—	—	—	—	42	—	7	22	—	73
Discharged to a penal institution	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	3
Discharged to other type of residence	51	1	1	1	—	3	—	58	3	—	118
Not known	4	3	—	—	—	—	—	3	8	—	18
Total	196	36	8	18	12	152	—	460	124	—	1,006
1985											
Discharged home—living with relative(s) or friend(s)	86	20	2	2	9	6	—	286	24	—	435
Discharged home—living alone	9	6	—	2	4	1	—	36	1	—	59
Discharged to a hostel for ex-patients	6	—	1	—	—	1	—	54	3	—	65
Discharged to other hostel/home	28	3	1	4	—	22	—	67	10	—	135
Transferred to another hospital (mental illness)	2	—	3	2	—	94	—	9	90	—	200
Transferred to another hospital (mental handicap)	5	—	1	1	—	133	—	2	10	—	152
Transferred to a psychiatric unit in a general hospital	3	—	—	—	—	50	—	13	6	—	72
Transferred to geriatric in-patient care	3	—	—	2	1	10	—	16	3	—	35
Transferred to other in-patient care	3	—	—	9	—	43	—	15	31	—	101
Discharged to a penal institution	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	4	—	6
Discharged to other type of residence	16	2	—	—	1	5	—	44	4	—	72
Not known	4	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	4	—	12
Total	165	31	8	24	15	367	—	544	190	—	1,344
1986											
Discharged home—living with relative(s) or friend(s)	57	20	—	7	4	2	—	154	8	—	252
Discharged home—living alone	10	4	1	—	5	—	—	30	—	—	50
Discharged to a hostel for ex-patients	3	2	—	—	1	1	—	49	—	—	56
Discharged to other hostel/home	45	1	1	1	—	8	—	125	8	—	189
Transferred to another hospital (mental illness)	—	—	2	—	—	77	—	4	20	—	103
Transferred to another hospital (mental handicap)	4	—	1	—	—	51	—	7	4	—	67
Transferred to a psychiatric unit in a general hospital	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	2	1	—	13
Transferred to geriatric in-patient care	6	—	—	—	—	12	—	16	26	—	60
Transferred to other in-patient care	3	—	1	—	—	52	—	13	22	—	91
Discharged to a penal institution	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	2

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*Total*
Discharged to other type of residence	5	1	1	—	—	5	—	58	1	—	71
Not known	8	1	1	—	—	—	—	3	2	—	15
Total	141	29	8	8	10	219	—	462	92	—	969

Equal Opportunities

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the proportion of working time allocated to his departmental equal opportunities officer for equal opportunities duties, *(b)* the other duties carried out by that officer, *(c)* the proportion, and the amount, of the departmental budget allocated to equal opportunities work, *(d)* the number of occasions when the departmental equal opportunities officer meets similar officers from other Governmental Departments and *(e)* the guidelines issued to departmental training officers and equal opportunities officers to promote the use of section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act; and what action has been taken to facilitate job-share, part-time working and parental leave.

Mr. Rifkind *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) on 17 November.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions the Scottish Development Agency has employed consultants; and what were the levels of fees paid to these consultants in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 11 November 1987]*: The precise number of occasions cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate costs, but the amounts of fees in the years in question were:

	Capital	*Revenue*	*Total*
1982-83	9,308,420	4,265,553	13,574,473
1983-84	8,329,566	5,086,337	13,415,903
1984-85	10,167,582	4,953,324	15,120,906
1985-86	10,816,582	8,568,179	19,384,767
1986-87	12,568,022	6,851,863	19,419,885

Notes:

A. The capital column includes fees to civil engineers, architects, surveyors, heating and electrical consultants.

B. The revenue column includes fees on research and development, advisory services, appraisal and administration (ie tax and accountancy advice, pension and legal consultancies).

NATIONAL FINANCE

Lord Chancellor

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the minimum tenure of the post of Lord Chancellor which entitles the occupant to the full pension entitlement which accompanies that post.

Mr. Brooke: The holder of the office of Lord Chancellor is entitled to draw his pension after one day's service: this entitlement was established before 1830.

Treasury Indemnity Certificates

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will itemise the insurance benefits of and risks covered by the treasury indemnity certificate provided for employees of the Arts Council and other non-departmental public bodies; and in respect of the Arts Council, if the treasury certificate covers *(a)* claims for death or injury of persons visiting the South Bank centre, *(b)* sickness or injury of employees when abroad on official business and *(c)* fidelity cover for employees who handle cash or programme computers.

Mr. Brooke: The issue of exemption certificates to individual non-departmental public bodies under the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) (Amendment) Regulations 1974 is the responsibility of their sponsoring Departments. A certificate provides exemption from the statutory requirement for an employer to insure against liabilities for employees' injury or disease arising out of their employment in Great Britain. Other risks, including those mentioned in relation to the Arts Council, are subject to the rule that Government do not normally insure against the risk of any loss which would fall directly or indirectly on the Consolidated Fund.

Industrial Production

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the level of industrial production; and how this compares with June 1979.

Mr. Major: The index of output of the production industries was 113·8 in September 1987. In June 1979 it stood at 111·1.

World Economy

Mr. Yeo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the major industrialised countries to discuss prospects for the world economy.

Mr. Lilley: The Finance Ministers of the major industrialised nations meet from time to time to discuss a range of international economic issues.

Public Borrowing

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the main factors currently influencing the level of public borrowing in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: Buoyant tax revenues from a healthy growing economy and success in containing public expenditure within plans mean that the public sector borrowing requirement for 1987-88 is now forecast to be over £2 billion lower than in 1986-87.

International Financial Situation

Mr. Janner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next intends to meet the United States Treasury Secretary to discuss the international financial situation.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the United States Treasury Secretary from time to time to discuss a range of international economic issues.

Central Unit for Purchasing

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost and the present staff complement of the Government central unit for purchasing.

Mr. Brooke: The budget for the central unit on purchasing for the current financial year is £461,000 and the present staff complement is 12.

Bank of England

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss its banking activities.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor regularly meets the Governor to discuss a wide range of matters.

Unit Labour Costs

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the latest figures for the growth of unit labour costs in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Major: In the second quarter of 1987 unit labour costs for the whole economy were 4 per cent. higher than a year earlier. Manufacturing unit wage costs were 1·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier in the third quarter of 1987.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representation he has received regarding the maintenance of zero rating of value added tax on food, books, periodicals and children's clothes.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has received a number of representations in favour of maintaining zero rating of VAT on food, books, periodicals and young children's clothing.

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received against the extension of value added tax to goods which are at present exempt.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend has received a few representations principally in connection with the European Court of Justice proceedings against the United Kingdom's VAT exemption for spectacles.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any proposals to extend the scope of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 17 November 1987]:* Decisions on changes in value added tax are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's Budget judgment.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the revenue raised by Customs and Excise has been accounted for by value added tax in each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* The information is as follows:

VAT as a percentage of total Customs and Excise revenue

Year	*Percentage*
1984-85	52·2
1985-86	51·7
1986-87	52·0

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of total central Government tax revenue has been accounted for by value added tax in each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* Following is the information:

VAT as a percentage of total central Government taxes, royalties and national insurance contributions[1]

Year	*Percentage*
1984-85	15·2
1985-86	16·1
1986-87	16·6

[1] Both numerator and denominator are on an accruals basis.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total net yield from value added tax in each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*Net receipts (£ million)*
1984-85	18,535·3
1985-86	19,331·4
1986-87	21,422·8

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total net yield from value added tax on cinema admissions in the United Kingdom in each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* Businesses registered for value added tax are not required to make returns of the tax charged on particular supplies of goods and services, and information of this kind is therefore not directly available. The figures are based on estimates of consumers' expenditure.

Year	*Net VAT yield (£ million)*
1984-85	14
1985-86	17
1986-87	19

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value added tax was due, deductible and payable or repayable in each financial year for which figures are available since 1984-85 in the United Kingdom on *(a)* museums and galleries, *(b)* public libraries, *(c)* cinemas, *(d)* artists, *(e)* authors, *(f)* theatres and music halls, *(g)* radio and television services, *(h)* films, *(i)* recording studios, and *(j)* all the above combined.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]:* I regret that information is not available at this level of detail. Figures based on the most detailed information available are as follows:

Year	Tax due (£ million)	Tax deductible (£ million)	Net tax payable (£ million)
(i) Public museums, libraries and galleries			
1984-85	3·9	4·3	[1]−0·4
1985-86	5·2	6·0	[1]−0·8
1986-87	5·8	7·2	[1]−1·4
(ii) Cinemas			
1984-85	9·9	7·4	2·5
1985-86	11·3	7·6	3·7
1986-87	11·2	8·0	3·2
(iii) Artists, sculptors, designers, authors, journalists (freelance) and composers			
1984-85	85·1	38·3	46·8
1985-86	110·5	52·0	58·5
1986-87	142·4	67·9	74·5
(iv) Theatres, music halls etc.; radio and television services (excluding relay services), film and recording studios etc.			
1984-85	309·4	249·1	60·8
1985-86	362·3	307·0	65·3
1986-87	412·8	328·0	84·8
(v) Total of (i) to (iv) above			
1984-85	408·3	299·1	109·2
1985-86	489·3	372·6	116·7
1986-87	572·2	411·1	161·1

[1] Tax repayable.

Notes:

1. The figures only reflect details of the VAT returns rendered by those registered persons for whom the particular activity is their principal business.

2. As a result of a change in November 1984 in the procedure for accounting for VAT on imports the tax due figures may slightly understate the full tax liability.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total net yield from value added tax on admissions to theatres, concerts and similar live entertainment in the United Kingdom in each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]*: Businesses registered for value added tax are not required to make returns of the tax charged on particular supplies of goods and services, and information of this kind is therefore not directly available. The figures are based on estimates of consumers' expenditure.

Year	Net VAT yield (£ million)
1984-85	35
1985-86	40
1986-87	50

SOCIAL SERVICES

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards equal opportunities in the National Health Service in the light of the documentation produced by voluntary organisations, research groups and statutory bodies pointing to the exclusion of skilled black professionals from permanent positions in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Government are committed to equal opportunity in the National Health Service, both in employment and in service delivery. We therefore fully supported the establishment by King Edward's Hospital Fund for London of a task force on racial equality to identify methods of promoting equal opportunities for ethnic minorities. When the task force's model policy was published in July, we urged all health authorities to use it constructively. On 4 November I chaired a seminar for health authority chairmen and general managers to consider how to improve the effectiveness of services for ethnic minorities and I shall be sending a report of the seminar to all health authorities.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what statistical records are kept of disallowed claims for unemployment benefit; if these records identify the reasons given for the disallowance; and if they allow a calculation of the number of claims refused each year under the full extent normal rule.

Mr. Portillo: Records of disallowed claims for unemployment benefit are kept locally by Adjudication officers. These records show the reasons for disallowance, including disallowance under the full extent normal rule. The total number of claims disallowed together with the reasons for disallowance are summarised in an annual analysis of decisions of adjudication officers. In 1986, there were 35,997 disallowances imposed under the full extent normal rule.

Haemophiliacs

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how introduction of the new Social Security Act in April 1988 will affect the position of people with haemophilia who contracted HIV from blood products prescribed by the National Health Service.

Mr. Scott: People who have AIDS or who are HIV-infected will qualify for benefits under the Social Security Act 1986 in the same way as other people. Under the income support scheme, such people will be entitled to the disability premium if they are receiving invalidity benefit or severe disablement allowance or have been submitting medical evidence of incapacity for 28 weeks.

Abortion

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many residents, who presented to their general practitioner at the ninth week, 10th week, 11th week and 12th week, respectively, of gestation, subsequently obtained an abortion at 19 weeks and above in 1986; and what proportion of the total number of abortions performed at 19 weeks and above, in 1986, this number represents.

Mr. Newton: Information on the date of the presentation of a woman to her general practitioner is not collected on the abortion notification form. There were 2,971 notifications of abortions to resident women at 19 weeks and over gestation in England and Wales in 1986.

Salazopyrin

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why his Department has asked all importers of the medicine, Salazopyrin, from Italy, to cease trading in the product and to instigate the immediate recall of all stocks; and if he will name the importers involved.

Mr. Newton: On 26 August 1987 all licence holders were advised that their product licences (parallel import) for Salazopyrin 500mg tablets imported from Italy ceased to ahve effect as a result of the suspension of the Italian marketing authorisation for the Italian product. We were later advised that the Italian health authorities had recalled unsold stocks and corresponding action was therefore taken by the United Kingdom licensing authority on 13 October.

Information about particular importers or licences affected is treated as confidential.

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients in the United Kingdom have received supplies of the medicine Salazopyrin, which have been imported from Italy.

Mr. Newton: I regret this information is not available.

Mr. Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many product licences (parallel imports) have been granted in respect of Italian supplies of the medicine, Salazopyrin; and if he will name the importers who have been granted such licences.

Mr. Newton: Six product licences (parallel importing) have been granted in respect of the product Salazopyrin imported from Italy. Some of these licences also cover Salazopyrin imported from other sources. Information about particular importers or licences affected is treated as confidential.

Family Credit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the weekly amount incorporated into the proposed family credit figures which reflects compensation for loss of entitlement to free school meals.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 6 November at columns *866-67*.

Birmingham Health Authorities

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 4 November, *Official Report*, column *785-6*, regarding Birmingham health authorities, if the figure given in column five of the table takes full account of inflation and technical and demographic changes; and how it compares with the real terms percentage change for the three years 1982-83 to 1985-86 for (*a*) the west midlands and (*b*) England.

Mrs. Currie: As explained in my earlier replies to the hon. Member, allocations made to the five Birmingham district health authorities are the responsibility of the West Midlands regional health authority. Information about the precise basis of those allocations is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to pursue my earlier suggestion and write to the chairman of the regional health authority for this information.

The real terms percentage change in gross revenue expenditure between 1982-83 and 1985-86, as measured by the gross domestic product deflator, for the West Midlands regional health authority and for England is 3·9 per cent. which compares with 1·9 per cent. for England as a whole (ie regional health authorities and special health authorities).

NHS (Emergency Planning)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when the emergency planning document for the National Health Service in England is to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: Following consultation with the Home Office, officials are working on draft revised guidance which will go to the National Health Service Management Board for approval before being referred to Ministers. The final document, when published, will form part of the emergency planning guidance to local authorities issued by the Home Office.

Housing Benefits

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many disabled people in Scotland now receiving benefits will have a lower entitlement under the new housing benefits.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information is not available.

Benefits (Dundee)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate what proportion of those eligible for housing benefit in the Dundee district authority area do not claim their entitlement to this benefit.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that information is not available on which to base a reliable estimate.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total amount paid in social security payments to claimants of all benefits at the Dundee, East and Dundee, West offices of his Department in each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of social security appeal tribunals which took place in Dundee on the latest available figures; in what proportion of those tribunals the claimant was successful; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Portillo: The national administrative statistics for social security appeal tribunals, which are the source for average durations between the lodging of appeals and hearing, are not disaggregated geographically below social security regions and are not available prior to the second quarter of 1984. The available information for Scotland is in the table.

The number of social security appeals heard in Scotland and the proportion of decisions made in the appellant's favour

Period	*Number of appeals heard*	*In appellant's favour*	
		number	*percentage*
Nine months ending 31 December 1984	11,252	2,906	25·8
Twelve months ending 31 December 1985	19,003	5,320	28·0
Twelve months ending 31 December 1986	22,561	6,162	27·3
Three months ending 31 March 1987	7,167	1,965	27·4

Kidney Stones

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *473*, he will give details of the locations outside the west midlands where shock wave treatment is available or planned for patients with kidney stones.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 16 November.

Blood Products

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when self-sufficiency in blood products will be achieved in the new blood products laboratory at Elstree.

Mr. Newton: Production is expected from this facility within the next few months, leading to very substantial output next year and self-sufficiency in 1989.

Tax Rates and Benefits

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for the numbers of lower-paid families, with and without children, whose marginal tax rates including benefit withdrawal will be *(a)* 90 to 100 per cent., *(b)* 80 to 90 per cent., *(c)* 70 to 80 per cent., *(d)* 60 to 70 per cent., *(e)* 50 to 60 per cent. and *(f)* 40 to 50 per cent. after the implementation of the Social Security Act 1986 in April 1988, assuming that in 1988-89 personal tax allowances are raised in line with inflation and the basic rate of tax is maintained at 27 per cent.

Mr. Scott: The estimated numbers of families with children, and of couples and single people without children, affected by the various marginal tax rates quoted are shown in the table. The main assumptions are similar to those used in the tables on the "Impact of the Reformed Structure of Income-Related Benefits", published at the time of the uprating statement on 27 October. The marginal tax rates are calculated on the sum of extra income tax and employee's national insurance—assumed as 9 per cent. — and the amounts by which income-related benefits are reduced for every extra £1 of gross earnings. To the extent that no allowance has been made for those employees who pay national insurance either at the lower contracted-in rates of 5 per cent. and seven per cent. or at contracted-out rates, the estimates are overstated. The figures should therefore only be taken as illustrating likely broad orders of magnitude.

Thousands—Great Britain

Total marginal rate of deduction (per cent.) per £1 of extra gross earnings	*Families with children*[1]	*Couples and single people without children*[1]
Above 90	60	10
80 but less than 90	370	10
70 but less than 80	75	20
60 but less than 70	[3]—	0
50 but less than 60	0	0
40 but less than 50[2]	n.a.	n.a.

[1] Heads of tax units only.

[2] Estimates not readily available.

[3] Fewer than 5,000.

Smoking and Health (Conference)

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the total cost to public funds of Her Majesty's Government's participation in the sixth world conference on smoking and health in Tokyo between 9 and 12 November;

(2) what was the cost to public funds of the civil servants Mr. Neville Teller and Mr. Jeffrey Graham for their attendance at the sixth world conference on smoking and health in Tokyo; what steps were taken to obtain private sponsorship for their visit; how many working days they spent away from their department; what class of air travel they used, and with what airline; and if any part of the visit counted towards their annual leave;

(3) if he will ask the chairman of the Health Education Authority for the cost to public funds of the attendance of Mr. Donald Reid at the sixth world conference on smoking and health in Tokyo; what steps were taken to obtain private sponsorship for his visit; how many days Mr. Reid spent away from the Health Education Authority; what class of air travel he used; which airline he used; and if any part of the visit counted towards his annual leave.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 18 November 1987]*: The conference brought together representatives of 56 nations to survey a wide range of issues connected with tobacco and health. In all, 30 people attended from the United Kingdom, including several representatives of the tobacco industry. Australia sent 22 people, including four officials; there were six officials among the 26 attenders from Canada. The United States of America was represented by 90 people, including at least six Government agency officials.

It was agreed that only two officials should attend from the United Kingdom. The total cost of their attendance including subsistence at specified rates, was £3,443, to which will be added necessary expenses of about £300. The two officials travelled to and from Tokyo by British Airways economy class, one on 5 November and the other on 7 November. Both returned on 14 November. No part of the visit counted towards annual leave. It is not the practice to seek private sponsorship for official visits.

The travel arrangements for officers of health authorities are a matter for the authorities themselves within the specified rates, and it is not our practice to make detailed inquiries on these matters without good reason.

The Department's policy is to send officials to selected international conferences at which the results of research into preventive programmes are presented. This policy was explained in the Government's response (Cmnd. 9917) to the 44th Report of the Public Accounts Committee on preventive medicine.

Home Help Service

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about the inflation-adjusted cost of the home help service in the constituency of Batley and Spen for each of the years from 1974 to 1986, respectively.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 16 November 1987]:* It is not possible to produce information about the expenditure on home-help services in the constituency of Batley and Spen. Information in respect of the borough of Kirklees is given in the table which shows the net cost of providing home-helps for each financial year revalued to 1987-88 prices.

Year	*net expenditure £000*
1974-75	2,480
1975-76	2,553
1976-77	2,445
1977-78	2,427
1978-79	2,501
1979-80	2,576
1980-81	2,512
1981-82	2,536
1982-83	2,851
1983-84	3,269
1984-85	3,266
1985-86	3,330

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheepmeat

13. **Dr. Thomas:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning proposed changes in the European Community sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received a number of representations from producers, the slaughter industry and trade, consumer and environmental bodies.

54. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes meeting representatives of the National Farmers' Union to discuss the future of the European Community sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave today to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies).

56. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress there has been within the Council of Ministers regarding the reform of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on the outcome of the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met European Community Agriculture Ministers to discuss the future of the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food gave today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to protect the interests of sheep farmers in the upland areas following the EEC proposals for changes in the sheepmeat regime.

Mr. MacGregor: Our sheep sector has expanded to meet a growing proportion of our market needs and to develop exports. I intend to ensure that our sheep producers can continue to capitalise on their natural advantages under a fair and equitable Community regime.

Common Fisheries Policy

14. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the Community's policing of the common fisheries policy.

Mr. Gummer: Over the past few years, the United Kingdom has taken the lead in promoting major new measures in the Community to control and enforce the common fisheries policy. These have been paralleled by action taken in a number of member states.

Storm Damage

15. **Mr. Lord:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has identified any specific areas in agriculture and horticulture which need special help as a result of the recent hurricane.

Mr. MacGregor: I am completing assessment of losses suffered by fruit farmers, who have experienced severe damage and whose losses are unlikely to be insurable. As the House knows, I have written to the European Commission about issues relating to help with shelter belts, hedges and traditional walls. A full assessment of damage to woodlands is being made by the Forestry Commission which is also giving advice on the orderly marketing of timber. Financial help is available from the Countryside Commission for replanting small areas of woodlands and, for larger areas, from the Forestry Commission.

39. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he now has to relieve the distress of farmers in mid Kent who have suffered in the recent storm.

Mr. MacGregor: The long-standing position of successive Governments has been that farmers bear the cost of bad weather. It is not the normal practice to pay compensation, particularly where risks are insurable. I have, however, written to the European Commission about the possibility of increasing the rates of some grants under the agriculture improvement scheme to help with work needed on shelter belts, hedges and traditional walls and await a reply. I am also making a full assessment of the losses suffered by fruit farmers about which I am in consultation with the NFU and others. I will consider the position when this assessment is complete.

Pollution

16. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent discussions he has held with other Fisheries Ministers of North sea countries regarding the problems of marine pollution.

Mr. Gummer: Last month I met Professor Topfer, the Federal German Environment Minister, to discuss the forthcoming North sea conference and last week I called on the Danish Fisheries and Agriculture Ministers in Copenhagen for talks on a range of environmental issues. Marine pollution is also included in the agenda for the EC Fisheries Council on 24 November.

21. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inspectors are employed by his Department to ensure that the Oslo and London dumping conventions are respected in British ports and waters over which Britain has jurisdiction; and how many *(a)* regular and *(b)* random checks they make annually.

Mr. Gummer: Five scientific staff in my Department are authorised to carry out technical inspections in England and Wales and in addition 23 officers of the sea fisheries inspectorate hold authorisations to enforce the Food and Environment Protection Act. In 1986, a large number of regular inspection were carried out by scientific staff, including 63 involving liquid industrial wastes, the most important category. About half of these were not notified in advance. Additionally, the fisheries inspectorate undertook 26 formal inspections of licensed operations, including the investigation of suspicious activities reported by fishermen and other mariners, most of which were notified in advance.

Arrangements in Scotland are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

23. **Mr. Allan Roberts:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has recently met the National Farmers Union to discuss river pollution caused by agriculture.

Mr. Gummer: I met the vice-president of the National Farmers Union informally on 13 October, when we discussed a number of water pollution issues.

28. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what work he is carrying out to develop techniques for minimising the environmental effects of farm waste.

Mr. Gummer: My Department is engaged on a major programme of research and development aimed at minimising the environmental effects of farm waste. In particular, work is in hand on the measurement and reduction of odour from animal slurries, cost-effective means of reducing silage effluent, the quantification and reduction of nitrogen losses from excreta, and the incorporation or alternative utilisation of straw.

34. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what expenditure he expects his Ministry to incur in the financial year 1988-89 in the control of pollution in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's work on this will cost some £1·6 million in 1988-89.

38. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much sewage sludge is dumped at sea by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: Some 10·1 million tonnes of sewage sludge were dumped at sea by the United Kingdom in 1986.

40 **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the effect of sewage sludge dumping on the marine ecosystem.

Mr. Gummer: Minor effects such as local chemical and biological changes to the sea bed may be observed close to disposal sites. However, monitoring of fish in the areas concerned shows that their quality is not adversely affected, and that away from the immediate vicinity of the disposal site there is little or no detectable effect.

43. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to control marine pollution in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: In pursuit of my statutory responsibilities for controls over the disposal of waste at sea, this Department continues to ensure compliance with the Oslo and London dumping conventions and to subject proposed sea disposal operations to careful scientific scrutiny under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. The amount of liquid industrial waste disposed of at sea by the United Kingdom fell by half between 1980 and 1986, and the trace quantities of mercury and cadmium in sewage sludge disposed of at sea were reduced by over 60 per cent. in the same period. Controls over anti-fouling paints, including a ban on the sale and use of Tributyl Tin products on small boats have been introduced under part III of the Act. Acting jointly with the Department of the Environment, this Department has tightened limits on the discharge of radioactive substances to sea such that the quality status report prepared for the ministerial North sea conference records a marked reduction in levels of man-made radioactivity in the North sea over the last three years. The same report shows clearly that continental rivers are the most important source of man-made contaminants in the North sea.

62. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the effect of pollution on fish stocks in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: Extensive scientific studies suggest that pollution in the North sea has a negligible effect upon fish stocks.

64. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he is taking to reduce pollution incidents from farms.

Mr. Gummer: The Ministry continues to undertake research and provide advice to farmers on how to reduce all forms of farm pollution. Additionally, I am considering with colleagues the recommendation made in the third report of the House of Commons Environment Committee aimed at reducing water pollution.

Rent (Agriculture) Act

17. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with

representatives of the agriculture industry about the Government's proposals for amending the Rent (Agriculture) Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary met representatives of the agricultural and allied workers' national trade group of the Transport and General Workers' Union on 27 October when some aspects of the proposals were discussed.

Rating Reform

18. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the likely impact on farmers of the proposed community charge.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The impact on farmers will vary in accordance with the local authority areas in which they live. Farmers currently pay rates on their dwellings in the same way as other occupiers of domestic property. It is anticipated that there will be considerable variations in the community charge. I refer the hon. Member to the details of likely community charges which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment placed in the Library of the House on 29 June. As at present, agricultural land and buildings will continue to be exempted from the rating system.

Fish Farming

19. **Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department is in a position to estimate where expansion is likely to take place in fish farming over the next few years, in terms of species farmed and localities of new fish farms.

Mr. Gummer: Fish cultivation in the United Kingdom is mainly concentrated on salmon, trout and (in coastal waters) shellfish. Forecasts of future developments indicate that expansion is likely to focus on salmon, mainly in western Scotland.

33. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what expenditure he expects his Department to incur in the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89 in the development of the fish farming industry.

Mr. Gummer: My Department's expenditure related to the development of the fish farming industry is expected to be of the order of £2 million in both 1987-88 and 1988-89, covering direct grant aid and research on fish and shellfish cultivation and disease.

Quick-frozen Foodstuffs

20. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about European Community document 9402/84 on the approximation of laws relating to quick-frozen foodstuffs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We have received recent written and oral comments from the representatives of frozen food manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers whom we are keeping up to date on developments in Brussels.

Sheep Variable Premium

22. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the sheep variable premium.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In the context of steps to unify the sheep support regime, the Commission has proposed phasing out the sheep variable premium. Offsetting this measure would be the payment of a larger premium on ewes and the ending of the clawback charge on our exports. We have pointed out that the variable premium does have some particular advantages as a means of support in the sheep sector. We shall be pressing to ensure that our producers continue to have the ability to capitalise on their natural advantages, to increase their market share and to develop exports.

Bread-making Wheat

24. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will consider recommending to the European Commission that only bread-making wheat be eligible for intervention storage.

Mr. MacGregor: Restricting access to intervention to bread-making wheat would not be in the interest of United Kingdom producers, since, for technical reasons, bread-making varieties normally grown in this country rarely meet all the criteria for bread-making wheat set in Community regulations. Moreover, the removal of all support for feed wheat would lead to distortions in the feed grain market and could stimulate the production of barley, for which outlets tend to be limited, at the expense of feedwheat, for which there is demand both at home and abroad.

Milk Quotas

25. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his current information as to the level of compliance with milk quota regulations in other European Community member states; how this compares with the United Kingdom; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The recent report by the European Community's Court of Auditors, while drawing attention to a number of shortcomings, indicated that in general most member states are complying with the regulations. I know that the Commission takes very seriously its obligation to pursue suspected infringements; they have, for example, recently undertaken a successful action in the European Court against Italy's failure to implement quota regulations.

National Farmers Union

26. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what matters they discussed.

37. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what matters were discussed.

60. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the president of the National Farmers Union; and what subjects they discussed.

Mr. MacGregor: I meet the president of the National Farmers Union frequently, to discuss current agricultural issues. We met most recently on 5 November.

Fishing Quotas

27. **Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make representations in Europe to remove from the quota system the Suffolk inshore winter line fishery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I would find it very difficult to make a case for exclusion of any group of fishermen whatsoever from the operation of the system of total allowable catches and quotas, which it is very much in the United Kingdom interest to see applied rigorously and without exceptions.

Cereals

29. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken following the evidence of fraud and malpractice with regard to the licensed storage of cereals which was drawn to his attention by the hon. Member for Wentworth some months ago.

Mr. MacGregor: Procedures have been strengthened for controlling the intake and storage of grain taken into intervention, and for monitoring the financial soundness of storage companies. In addition, the Intervention Board is continuing to co-operate in police enquiries into events at the Marchington store, and to seek to recover the loss concerned.

47. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the tonnage of cereals that was in storage in the United Kingdom on 31 October.

Mr. MacGregor: There were 1·38 million tonnes of wheat and 0·78 million tonnes of barley in intervention stores in the United Kingdom on 31 October 1987. Comparable information is not available on stocks held on farms or in private stores.

58. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of cereal output for the current year.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department now estimates the 1987 cereals harvest in the United Kingdom to be 21·7 million tonnes.

69. **Mr. Stevens:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made towards a set aside programme for cereals.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory).

Research and Development

30. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will outline the process for reviewing the priorities and objectives for research and development within his Ministry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: There are regular reviews of all areas of research and development work, which draw on advice from research consultative committees consisting of representatives from both industry and the scientific community. These report to a Priorities Board established in 1984 to advise Agriculture Ministers and the chairman of the Agricultural Food Research Council on priorities and the allocation of research budgets. We are also in the process of examining the current balance between industry and Government funding.

57. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has plans to make changes in the number of staff engaged in research and development or advisory work.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The number of staff engaged on all activities, including research and development and advisory work, is kept under review in order to ensure that our objectives are efficiently and cost effectively met.

63. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the expenditure to be incurred by his Department on research and development during 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest estimates of the research and development expenditure which will be incurred by my Department are £112 million in 1987-88 and £117 million in 1988-89. These figures are on a full economic cost basis, including an appropriate apportionment of general departmental overheads and provision for superannuation, which is not borne on my Department's Votes.

50. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his Department's definition of near market research for the purpose of research and development grants.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Near market research is not a term of art and we have no formal definition of it. It is, however, a convenient way of referring to work with commercial potential, to which the Government believe that industry should make a financial contribution.

Agricultural Produce

31. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent the United Kingdom is self sufficient in basic agriculture produce.

Mr. MacGregor: The provisional estimates for 1986 indicate that the United Kingdom was 59 per cent. self sufficient in all food and 78 per cent. self sufficient in indigenous type food (ie: food that can be grown commercially in this country). When compared with 1973 estimates of 50 per cent. and 60 per cent. respectively, these figures indicate the considerable success of British agriculture.

Sheep

32. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment his Department has made of the potential of the Cambridge breed of sheep.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Ministry has conducted assessments of the breed and I shall write to my hon. Friend about our findings.

48. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the present state of the sheep sector.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The sheep sector is buoyant, returns are good and exports are encouraging.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next proposes meeting representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales to discuss problems in the sheep industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said today in reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), we will continue to stay in close touch with the farmers' unions, including representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales, to discuss in particular matters of common concern on the review of the EC sheepmeat regime.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the farming unions to discuss the sheep sector; and what was the outcome of that meeting.

Mr. Donald Thompson: My agricultural colleagues and I continue to stay in close touch with representatives of the farmers' unions. The unions have made clear their concern over a number of aspects of the Commission's proposals as indicated by my right hon. Friend, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in his reply today to the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas).

EC Agricultural Expenditure

35. **Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is satisfied with the powers of the Council of Agriculture Ministers to control agricultural expenditure within the individual countries of the Economic European Community.

Mr. MacGregor: Member states are free to determine their expenditure on agriculture, so long as they do not contravene Community legislation.

Eutrophication

36. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to deal with the problem of eutrophication in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: This subject will be discussed at the North sea conference next week when I and the other Ministers of the coastal states will consider what action should be taken in those areas thought to be affected.

Illegal Fishing

41. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of skippers of fishing vessels convicted of illegal fishing in United Kingdom waters in each of the past four years; and if he will indicate the nationality of each vessel involved.

Mr. Gummer: The number of convictions for offences connected with fishing is as follows:

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*Total*
United Kingdom	54	33	36	20	143
Belgium	1	1	1	4	7
Denmark	6	1	7	8	22
Netherlands	—	1	3	—	4
France	2	1	2	7	12
Spain	2	12	13	10	37
Germany	—	—	1	—	1
Ireland	—	—	—	1	1
Norway	—	—	1	—	1
Faroes	1	1	1	—	3
Total	66	50	65	50	231

Alternative Land Use

42. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has received since the publication of the farm woodlands scheme.

Mr. Gummer: We received many responses to the consultation document "Farm Woodland Scheme" issued earlier this year. The Farm Land and Rural Development Bill, which would provide enabling powers to introduce the scheme, received its Second Reading in another place on 5 November and the Government announced details of their revised proposals for the scheme during the debate. These have been generally welcomed.

Fish Disease

44. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what work he is undertaking to assess the causes of fish disease in the North sea.

Mr. Gummer: The occurrence and causes of fish disease in the North sea are the subject of a continuing programme of research conducted by my Department and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. This research includes investigative voyages and the examination of disease during stock assessment work.

Wool Board

45. **Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met the chairman of the Wool Board; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The last formal meeting with the Chairman of the British Wool Marketing Board was held by the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). The wool guarantee for the 1987 clip was discussed.

Organic Farming

46. **Mr. Conway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will report on the development of organic farming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: There is a growing demand for organically grown food from consumers in this and in many other countries and I believe that this provides an important opportunity for United Kingdom production to be increased significantly. I am therefore particularly pleased that Food from Britain has recently set up the United Kingdom register of organic food standards under the chairmanship of Professor Colin Spedding of Reading university. The UKROFS board will seek to establish, in consultation with organic producers, nationally recognised production standards which in turn will provide a better framework for the further development of this specialised market.

65. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the proposals by the Soil Association entitled "A Manifesto for Organic Agriculture", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Gummer: In "A Manifesto for Organic Agriculture" the Soil Association put forward a number of proposals which, it suggested, called for Government action. Since the document was published, the Government for their part have taken important policy initiatives which should encourage the development of organic production in this country—in particular, the setting up by Food from Britain of the United Kingdom register of organic food standards, on the board of which three prominent members of the Soil Association serve. I hope that all organic producers, whether members of the Soil Association or not, will now seize the opportunities which are beginning to open up to them.

Fruit and Vegetables

49. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on the growing in Great Britain of previously imported fruit and vegetables.

Mr. Donald Thompson: We are broadly holding our share of the market of those fruit and vegetables that can be grown in this country. Home production of some crops has increased, but this has been more than matched by increased demand. Our climate and the limited length of our growing season makes us inevitably reliant on some imports, but new cultural techniques are being introduced which, combined with improved storage facilities should help extend our supply season.

Dairy Industry

51. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will be meeting the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the dairy industry.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I met the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board on 2 November when we discussed a number of issues affecting the dairy industry.

Common Agricultural Policy

52. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress was made on the reform of the common agricultural policy at the meeting of Ministers on 16 and 17 November.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Horticulture Industry

53. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the condition of the horticulture industry growing produce in greenhouses.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Overall, the market is firm; the enhanced capital grants for replacement have helped the industry modernise its glass; and lower heating costs and favourable exchanges in recent years have helped make our growers more competitive. Despite the setback from the recent storm damage in the south, I believe that longer-term prospects are good.

Food Imports

55. **Mr. Gregory:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of British food imports currently comes from member states of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Donald Thompson: United Kingdom imports of food from Commonwealth countries in 1986 amounted to 24 per cent. of the total volume and 22 per cent. of the total value of imports from all sources of these commodities.

Intervention Stocks

59. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the cost of storing food for the Intervention Board in the United Kingdom in 1986 and 1987 to the most recent practicable date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The total costs of storing food, including handling, transport and storage charges, met by the intervention board for agricultural produce in 1986 and 1987 were as follows:

	£'000
1986	140,976
1987[1]	95,155

[1] Up to 6 November

The expected outturn for 1987 is £112 million. The reduction in cost from 1986 is mainly due to a lower intake of cereals after the 1986 harvest, partly as a result of reduction in price support, but also reflects savings from new storage rates negotiated by the intervention board for 1987-88. Through its constant endeavours to get reforms in the common agricultural policy, the Government are striving to reduce these particular costs.

Radiation

61. **Mr. Allan Rogers:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a further statement on the outcome of recent negotiations in the European Communities concerning new permitted levels of radiation in foodstuffs and drinking water.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Since the debate in the House on 28 October, the Commission proposal has been the subject of intense discussions, the last of which took place at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 8 November. The Council was unable to reach agreement, but will re-address the matter on 24 November. In the interim, 11 of the 12 member states (the exception is Greece) have agreed not to depart from previous control levels for third country imports and intra-Community trade.

Sugar Beet

66. **Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the likely turnout of sugar beet yields for the current harvest.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is estimated that United Kingdom's sugar beet crop, harvesting of which is still in progress, will yield about 40 tonnes of beet per hectare. Production in terms of white sugar is expected to be about 1·2 million tonnes.

Rhizomania

67. **Mrs. Gillian Shephard:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made on monitoring for traces of rhizomania in sugar beet.

Mr. MacGregor: My inspectors, assisted by British Sugar fieldsmen, have checked over 12,000 hectares of beet crops since August when the outbreak of rhizomania in Suffolk occurred. Samples from each field inspected have been tested by Ministry scientists and no further trace of infection has been found. Now that the sugar beet crop is being delivered to the factories, British Sugar staff are alert for any symptons of rhizomania. Any suspicious beets will be tested by the Ministry. Samples from loads with low sugar yield will also be tested.

Food Quality

68. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure that there are teams of skilled public scientists who can investigate competently and independently the quality of food.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Food is already sampled regularly by local authorities which are responsible for the enforcement of food legislation, and the samples are analysed by the public analysts appointed by them. Moreover, the Government have a continuing programme of food surveillance which is designed to ensure that the food intake of the population is both safe and nutritious. This programme is operated by Government scientists under the steering group on food surveillance.

Beef

70. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, as a result of beef calves being exported during the current year, he anticipates any beef shortage in the United Kingdom in 18 months time.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The beef market has been in a state of considerable oversupply, with heavy expenditure on intervention and other support measures. Some decline in production and supplies will create a better balanced market and enable producers to be less heavily dependent on support.

Food Prices

71. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the increase in food prices during the past 12 months.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The latest figures from the retail price index indicate that food prices have increased on average by 3 per cent. in the 12 months to October 1987 while prices for items other than food have increased by 4·8 per cent.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

72. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made with respect to environmentally sensitive areas.

Mr. Gummer: The first five environmentally sensitive areas in England were successfully launched on 1 March. We intend to invite applications in five new areas from 1 January 1988 and to expand the existing South Downs area. In the United Kingdom as a whole, eight areas have been designated and a further 11 are planned.

Fish

73. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action his Department is taking in order to ensure an adequate supply of British caught fresh fish for human consumption in terms of both the domestic and export markets.

Mr. Gummer: The common fisheries policy which we negotiated in January 1983 ensures a favourable share of the available fish stocks in waters of Community member states and certain third countries for British fishermen. We shall maintain that share and continue to take the lead in conservation and policing measures which safeguard the future of the industry.

Liquid Milk

74. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the availability of liquid milk to dairies for the production of cheese.

Mr. Donald Thompson: I am aware that there were some difficulties during the seasonal trough this year in meeting the requirements of cheese producers. This is basically a marketing problem and, as such, is a matter for the industry. I have however discussed this question with the Milk Marketing Board for England and Wales which is fully aware of the problem and has sought to minimise it. Earlier this year the industry's joint committee agreed modifications to the milk supply arrangements and more recently the price structure has been adjusted with a view to ensuring adequate supplies for cheese production.

Access to the Countryside

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply of 22 October, at column *915*, if he will make a statement on the outcome of his discussions with the Countryside Commission on better access to the countryside for riders and pedestrians.

Mr. Gummer: Together with ministerial colleagues from the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office, I shall be meeting representatives of the Countryside Commission on 2 December to discuss a range of issues including the question of access to the countryside.

New Zealand Butter

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had from the New Zealand Government concerning the future of New Zealand's butter exports to the United Kingdom; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The New Zealand Government have drawn my attention to the importance that they attach to continued access to the United Kingdom butter market on special terms. Most recently I was visited by the Minister of Overseas Trade and Marketing on 27 October and on 27 November my right hon. Friend the Minister will be meeting the Agriculture Minister.

It would be premature to give an indication of the Government's position, before I have seen the Commission's proposals concerning access to the United Kingdom market for New Zealand butter after 1988.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he has taken and will be taking to implement the pledge given by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, when visiting Wellington last April, in regard to New Zealand's butter exports to the United Kingdom in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said during his visit to Wellington that we would continue to do our best to argue New Zealand's corner in the Community. However, he pointed out that this was becoming more difficult at a time of mounting world surpluses when British dairy farmers were being asked to take substantial cuts in production and against the background of New Zealand's current security policy. Arrangements were agreed in 1986 for New Zealand to export 74,500 tonnes of butter to the United Kingdom in 1988. It would be premature for me to make any statement on arrangements after that date before I have seen the Commission's proposals on that subject which are not expected until the middle of next year.

Intervention Food Stores

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish in the *Official Report* the current contents of each European Economic Community intervention food store in Britain; and what is the total annual cost to public funds of the operation of such food stores.

Mr. MacGregor: At 30 September 1987 intervention stocks at each location in the United Kingdom were as listed in the Table.

Provision in the Intervention Board's 1987-88 Supply Estimates (Class IV, Vote 1) for the storage and related costs of maintaining intervention stocks is £177·3 million towards which contributions from the EC budget were expected to total £100·9 million. However, it is likely that the actual expenditure will be significantly lower.

Intervention beef stocks as at 30 September 1987
United Kingdom

Location	*Tonnes*
Aberdeen	2,763
Antrim	3,797
Avonmouth	147
Ballymena	1,020
Belfast	2,644
Bellshill	28
Bishop's Stortford	7
Blackburn	1,663
Bourne	6
Bridge of Allan	13
Bury St. Edmunds	1,645
Cambridge	7
Cannock	778
Cardiff	201
Coleraine	739
Colnbrook	307
Craigavon	6,300
Cullompton	69
Dagenham	12
Doncaster	17
Droitwich	89
Dundee	297
Dungannon	2,014
Eastleigh	64
Edinburgh	147
Exeter	206
Felixstowe	37
Fleetwood	41
Fraserburgh	344
Frome	156
Gateshead	57
Gillingham	218
Glasgow	345
Glenrothes	1,686
Grantham	5,848
Hertford	84
Hull	5,538
Inverness	324
King's Lynn	1,123
Leeds	921
Leicester	16
Lisburn	4,805
Liverpool	120
London	590
Lowestoft	14
Luton	15
Maidstone	77
Manchester	223
Newry	87
Newtownabbey	5,926
Northallerton	11
Northampton	106
Nottingham	56
Omagh	1,303
Oswestry	6
Paddock Wood	1,132
Peterborough	987
Peterhead	2
Plymouth	—
Pontefract	465
Portadown	5
Reading	29
Rhyl	16
St. Helens	5
Salford	223
Sherborne	45
Shrewsbury	991
Stourport-on-Seven	99
Strabane	235
Truro	265
Walsall	54
Warwick	64
Wigan	282
Wigston	50
Wolverhampton	386

Intervention SMP stocks as at 30 September 1987

Location	*Tonnes*
Banbridge	1,405
Billingham	120
Bridgewater	8
Chard	364
Coleraine	105
Craigavon	40

Location	*Tonnes*
Cumbernauld	101
Exeter (2)	1,586
Grymych	860
High Ercall	667
Knockin Heath	350
Llanelli	285
Market Drayton	160
Moneymore	46
Newton Abbot	10
Oswestry	120
Penrith	160
St. Clears	10
Stonehouse (Glos.)	20
Whitchurch (Salop)	1,080

Intervention butter stock by town as at 30 September 1987

Location	*Tonnage*
Aberdeen	516
Annalong	680
Augher	21
Avonmouth	1,177
Aylesford	99
Ballymena	133
Banbridge	2,091
Banbury	1,148
Belfast	2,882
Birmingham	1,262
Blairgowrie	471
Bristol	12,654
Buxton	3
Cannock	2,662
Cardiff	8,840
Chard	14
Cheltenham	434
Coleraine	1,324
Colnbrook	4,691
Craigavon	1,577
Cullompton	7,642
Cwmbran	3,085
Dagenham	1,565
Dalcross	18
Derby	2,261
Doncaster	2,660
Droitwich	3,192
Dundee	558
Dungannon	380
Eastleigh	435
Easton	212
Edinburgh	1,277
Eglington	11
Evesham	1,806
Exeter	2,772
Fleetwood	1,819
Frome	5,074
Gateshead	426
Gillingham	888
Glasgow	4,782
Glenrothes	5,333
Goole	2,011
Grantham	4,520
Great Harwood	276
Grimsby	1,539
Hereford	742
Heywood	1,505
Hull	5,108
King's Lynn	2,079
Leeds	2,980
Leek	231
Lisburn	1,283
Liverpool	12,690
Llangadog	480
London	8,290
Londonderry	242
Lowestoft	1,581
Luton	911
Manchester	3,995
Merthyr Tydfil	760
Newport	2,359
Newton Abbey	1,907
Northallerton	364
North Shields	3
Nuneaton	955
Omagh	290
Oswestry	1,706
Peterborough	3,498
Plymouth	1,859
Pontefract	1,287
Portadown	1,208
Preston	1,808
Reading	522
Retford	1,020
Rhyl	1,482
Rochdale	712
Sevenoaks	1,606
Sheffield	1,166
Sherbourne	4,625
Shrewsbury	1,712
South Shields	1,378
St. Helens	1,126
Stoke	409
Stonehouse	894
Stourport	2,033
Strabane	941
Sutton-in-Ashfield	1,804
Swansea	2,213
Swindon	464
Tamworth	4,823
Taunton	876
Tewkesbury	1,890
Thetford	662
Truro	1,219
Walsall	198
Warrington	293
Warwick	1,348
Whitland	22
Wigan	38
Wigston	611
Wolverhampton	4,632
Yate	684
Yeovil	168

Cereals Intervention Stocks as at 30 September 1987

Location	*Tonnes*
Airdrie	19,483
Alford	7,412
Alnwick	6,727
Aylesbury	16,703
Banbury	18,614
Bardney	26,179
Belford	12,112
Birmingham	78,378
Braintree	11,065
Bressingham	29,940
Chipping Warden	32,256
Christchurch	14,383
Cleveland	11,616
Clopton	24,445
Coventry	23,218
Doncaster	29,354
Downham Market	5,156
Driffield	9,176
Duns	97,729
Dysart	35,829
Ely	80,729
Felixstowe	69,307
Finmere	10,164
Foulsham	16,533
Glenrothes	23,655
Gloucester	55,135
Grantham	45,387

Location	*Tonnes*
Hadleigh	5,186
Halesworth	82,768
Haresfield	13,459
Hartlebury	62,503
Hayes	4,495
Hemswell	69,434
Holton Le Clay	14,493
Honeybourne	15,329
Hull	25,225
Huntingdon	23,814
Ipswich	35,079
Keith	18,349
Kings Lynn	38,217
Kirkcaldy	14,408
Lincoln	38,618
Locharbriggs	40,884
Maldon	63,680
Manby	15,804
Market Rasen	10,717
Melmerby	6,832
Membury	6,509
Misson	20,324
Newmachar	12,169
Newmarket	41,901
Normanton	7,408
Ormiston	68,870
Owmby	9,005
Penicuik	9,989
Prees Heath	9,413
Raydon	9,113
Retford	18,783
Ringwood	56,192
Royston	19,630
Salisbury	64,197
Sawston	7,895
Scunthorpe	34,720
Selby	8,025
Sleaford	8,366
Snetterton	11,580
Spalding	4,400
Staughton	19,572
St. Ives	6,680
Stowmarket	26,099
Stracathro	48,409
Stretham	2,491
Swinderby	5,275
Swindon	17,124
Tangmere	2,504
Telford	6,184
Tranent	20,603
Turriff	41,122
Watford	60,506
Whittlesey	660
Whittlesford	19,396
Wimblington	15,407
Wisbech	42,161
Witney	7,897
York	17,325

Food (Destruction)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total amount of food, including fruit, which was destroyed in the EEC under the common agriculture policy arrangements in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1985-86 a total of 1,819,126 tonnes of fruit and vegetables were assumed to have been spoiled or wasted under the Common Agricultural Policy arrangements for withdrawals of fruit and vegetables from the market. This represents just under 7 per cent. of production of the products concerned.

Although produce withdrawn may be distributed to certain institutions, distilled into industrial alcohol or used as animal feed, it is in practice difficult to find outlets in the time available particularly where the produce is highly perishable. About 17 per cent. of the quantity withdrawn in 1985-86 is estimated to have been used in this way.

I am concerned at the increase in the amounts being withdrawn. This makes it even more important to ensure that withdrawal provisions are such as to provide only an outlet of last resort. This has been our objective at successive annual negotiations on the agricultural price fixing.

Milk Quota

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements he makes to ensure that transfers of milk quota comply with national and European Community legislation.

Mr. MacGregor: Milk quota may be transferred from one producer to another only as a consequence of a transfer of land, and in proportion to the areas used for milk production. The agricultural Departments investigate cases in which unduly large amounts of quota are transferred in relation to the area of land concerned; and where disputes occur, the agricultural Departments may, before confirming a change to the quota register, ask the parties to the transaction concerned for further evidence to demonstrate that an appropriate transfer of land has in fact taken place.

It is in the interest of producers in general that transfers of quota should not be open to question in the future and I am aware of concern in the industry about some transfers. In response to this, my colleagues and I propose to put the monitoring of quota transfers onto a more systematic basis. Producers whose quota transfer requests are selected for examination may be asked to provide evidence that there has been a genuine transfer of the land in question before amendments are made to the quota registers.

My colleagues and I have now received a number of responses from industry bodies to the consultation document on the mobility of milk quotas which my predecessor announced on 14 May. My officials will now be considering the next steps with representatives of the industry.

ENVIRONMENT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by name the number of land fill sites for waste disposal which are used for the dumping of low level radioactive waste, giving the quantity of low level radioactive waste dumped in each, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Markets

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the local authorities in England and Wales which hold market charters, giving the dates of origin and extent of jurisdiction in each case.

Mr. Howard: This information is not available within the Department.

Rates

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify precisely how the level of non-domestic rates in each area will be fixed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I must ask the hon. Member to await publication of the legislation.

Storm Damage

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now able to give the latest estimates of the costs incurred by local authorities in dealing with storm damage incurred in October both in total and for each authority showing *(a)* the total expenditure incurred, *(b)* expenditure up to the Bellwin scheme threshold, *(c)* grant lost by the authority for expenditure up to the Bellwin scheme threshold, and *(d)* expenditure above the Bellwin scheme threshold, gross and net of specific grant.

Mr. Ridley: My Department does not yet have sufficiently reliable information available to provide the estimates requested. I have already told the House that I expect the cost to be met largely from special financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme or from extra capital allocations which will be made available.

Royal Docks

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call in for public inquiry the planning application for retail and other developments in the royal docks.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have considered carefully whether or not I should call in this application. The Town and Country Planning (Development Plans) (Urban Development Corporations) (Greater London) Direction 1986 and Town and Country Planning (Shopping Development) (England and Wales) Direction 1986 required that I be consulted before planning permission was granted, not that I should necessarily call it in. I have taken into account the representations that I have received. Newham borough council, in whose area the development lies, has not objected to the proposal; and the proposed scheme is fully in line with the LDDC's development strategy for the Royal docks which I approved in March this year. Bearing in mind also the need to maintain the momentum of regeneration in London docklands, I have decided against call-in.

Sports Policy

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he plans to consult the Sports Council about the future of sports policy.

Mr. Moynihan: I have today written to the chairman of the Sports Council to invite the views of the council and those of other organisations interested in sport and recreation, on the future direction of our sports policies and the mechanisms for achieving them. Copies of my letter are being distributed widely in the sporting world and I have placed a copy in the Library. I have invited comments by 1 March 1988.

Pollution

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by year the quantity in tonnes of United Kingdom emission from maritime and aviation sources of *(a)* sulphur dioxide *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* hydrocarbons between 1970 and the present day; and what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to reduce these emissions.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 18 November 1987]*: Emissions from aviation and shipping are not included in the national tables given in the Department's digest of statistics. However, calculations by Warren Spring laboratory from fuel used by ships in inland and coastal waters suggest that the SO2 emissions from shipping are less than 0·2 per cent. of the national total (less than 7,000 tonnes), NOx less than 2 per cent. (less than 37,000 tonnes), and HCs less than 1 per cent. (less than 20,000 tonnes).

Calculations based on aircraft activity in the United Kingdom suggest that aircraft emissions are less than 2 per cent. NOx (less than 37,000 tonnes NOx) and less that 1 per cent. HCs (less than 20,000 tonnes HCs). Aircraft emissions of SO2 are negligible.

Emissions from ships are not regulated at present, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport last year introduced regulations relating to fuel venting and emissions of smoke from aircraft and hopes to bring before Parliament early next year proposals for controlling their emissions of unburnt hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and oxides of nitrogen.

Rating Reform

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) on 12 November, if he will publish *(a)* the implied taxable income per authority used in his estimate, giving the source and statistical confidence limits and *(b)* equivalent calculations showing the local income tax liability and community charge liability for (i) single adults on half, one and a half and two times average earnings, (ii) married couples on half, one, one and a half, and two times average earnings, (iii) single pensioners on half, one, one and a half, and two times average single pensioner household income; and (iv) pensioner couples on half, one, one and a half, two times average pensioner couple income.

Mr. Ridley: The covering notes explained that the figures were calculated on the assumption that differences in taxable resources between areas would be fully equalised. It was unnecessary, therefore, to make any assumption about the taxable income of each authority.

The tax liability of the persons referred to would depend on several factors, including the size of any mortgage. The tax rates we have published would enable any individual to calculate their local income tax liability in the light of their personal circumstances.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 16 November, if he will list the precise parts of a farm business which will be liable to pay the nationally fixed non-domestic rate after 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of business carried out on farms which will continue to be liable for rates. The list would, however include farm shops, and storage premises not used in conjunction with agriculture on that farm. Farmhouses, which currently pay domestic rates will not be rated after the community charge is introduced.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *596*, he will now provide a table of gainers and losers in the same form and on the same basis as table J7 in Cmnd. 9714, "Paying for Local Government";

Mr. Howard [*holding answer 17 November 1987*]: On the basis of the transitional arrangements set out in my reply to the hon. Member of 17 November it is possible to make the following estimates of gains and losses by household type:

£ per week

Thousands of households	*Single pensioners*	*Other single adult*	*Two adults*	*Three adults +*	*All Households*
Losers					
10+	—	—	—	35	35
5-10	—	—	30	395	425
2-5	5	35	1,275	1,010	2,330
1-2	30	115	1,410	330	1,880
0-1	350	320	3,195	270	4,140
Total Losers	380	470	5,905	2,050	8,810
Gainers					
0-1	1,350	740	2,190	140	4,425
1-2	210	285	980	80	1,550
2-5	335	520	1,200	85	2,140
5-10	100	100	350	35	590
10+	10	10	70	10	95
Total Gainers	2,010	1,655	4,785	350	8,800

These figures are based on 1985-86 figures and illustrate the position in 1990-91. Like the figures in Table J7, all the above figures are rounded to the nearest 5,000 households. Differences between this Table and Table J7 may reflect therefore rounding or sampling errors.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his replies on households gaining and losing on the introduction of the full commuity charge in England, *Official Report*, 26 October, columns *37-38* and columns *39-40*, he will give figures of the estimated amount of money gained by gainers and lost by losers.

Mr. Howard [*holding answer 17 November 1987*]: It is estimated that gains and losses from the full introduction of the community charge would amount to £1,040 million —net of rebates. This total includes net gains for single pensioners and other single adult households of £260 million net gains for two adult households of £110 million and net losses for households with three or more adults of £370 million.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 20 November 1987

ENERGY

Wind Power

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received on the further development of wind power.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department received earlier this year a copy of the British Wind Energy Association's position paper "Wind Power for the UK". This presented a case for a substantial increase in the United Kingdom wind energy programme and emphasised that the programme's aim should be to demonstrate the economic viability of using wind turbines to generate electricity for the national grid. In response, the BWEA was invited to discuss details of its report with departmental officials.

Mining (Redundancy Scheme)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he intends to introduce a further redundancy scheme in the mining industry when the present scheme ceases in March 1988.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The British Coal Corporation and other companies in the coal industry are responsible for their own redundancy arrangements.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lecturers

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he intends to intervene in the current lecturers' pay dispute; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to seek to raise the morale of lecturers in further education colleges in order better to meet the needs of industry and commerce.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Secretary of State has no plans to intervene in the current further education lecturers' pay dispute. The Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 abolished the Burnham (FE) committee, and both the pay and conditions of service of further education lecturers are now dealt with in the National Joint Council for Lecturers in Further Education in England and Wales, on which the Department of Education and Science has only observer status. Many further education lecturers are now benefiting substantially from a pay restructuring agreed as part of the 1985 settlement. The local authority employers have made a pay offer worth 9·3 per cent. in a full year in return for which they are seeking agreement on more cost-effective working arrangements, the need for which was accepted by the lecturers in the context of the 1985 settlement, but on which no progress has so far been made. It is regrettable that the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education is nevertheless continuing to encourage its members to take industrial action damaging to the interests of students. I hope that a settlement will be reached soon, in the best interests of the students and of industry and commerce as well as the lecturers themselves.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list, by local education authority, the proportion of the total number of under fives in pre-school education represented by *(a)* three-year-olds and *(b)* four-year-olds.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested for each local education authority in England in January 1987 is given in the table:

Pupils aged 3 and 4 as a proportion of the total pupils[1] [2] under five attending maintained nursery and primary schools
January 1987

	Percentage of pupils	
	Age 3	*Age 4[1]*
Barking	43	57
Barnet	42	47
Bexley	29	71
Brent	49	49
Bromley	8	92
Croydon	19	81
Ealing	48	45
Enfield	41	58
Haringey	51	42
Harrow	26	74
Havering	11	89
Hillingdon	42	57
Hounslow	55	43
Kingston upon Thames	41	52
Merton	46	46
Newham	52	40
Redbridge	22	75
Richmond upon Thames	33	61
Sutton	45	52
Waltham Forest	45	53
Inner London	49	45
Birmingham	43	50
Coventry	36	59
Dudley	42	53
Sandwell	49	41
Solihull	45	54
Walsall	52	37
Wolverhampton	53	40
Knowsley	47	43
Liverpool	45	42
St. Helens	40	54
Sefton	37	53
Wirral	34	62
Bolton	44	45
Bury	33	63
Manchester	51	42
Oldham	49	51
Rochdale	46	51
Salford	54	38
Stockport	27	67
Tameside	43	45
Trafford	37	63
Wigan	40	56
Barnsley	48	45
Doncaster	56	44
Rotherham	48	50
Sheffield	47	47
Bradford	43	53

	Percentage of pupils	
	Age 3	*Age 4*[1]
Calderdale	46	54
Kirklees	43	53
Leeds	42	53
Wakefield	49	45
Gateshead	45	47
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	50	42
North Tyneside	52	38
South Tyneside	50	41
Sunderland	51	47
Isles of Scilly	8	92
Avon	27	69
Bedfordshire	45	49
Berkshire	43	53
Buckinghamshire	28	71
Cambridgeshire	26	72
Cheshire	32	61
Cleveland	47	44
Cornwall	25	72
Cumbria	32	62
Derbyshire	36	60
Devon	25	73
Dorset	24	75
Durham	47	46
East Sussex	18	81
Essex	18	81
Gloucestershire	[3]—	100
Hampshire	16	82
Hereford and Worcester	12	87
Hertfordshire	44	55
Humberside	40	56
Isle of Wight	11	87
Kent	21	76
Lancashire	27	66
Leicestershire	39	57
Lincolnshire	18	81
Norfolk	15	85
North Yorkshire	31	65
Northamptonshire	32	67
Northumberland	34	59
Nottinghamshire	47	47
Oxfordshire	33	66
Shropshire	28	71
Somerset	2	97
Staffordshire	38	60
Suffolk	27	72
Surrey	31	67
Warwickshire	31	65
West Sussex	24	73
Wiltshire	8	91

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[1] Ages at 31 August 1986. Excludes pupils aged 4 at 31 August 1986 who became 5 by 31 December 1986.

[2] Full and part-time pupils.

[3] Less than 1 per cent.

Ampligen

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Medical Research Council has commissioned any studies of the effect of ampligen; what information the council has on studies carried out elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I understand that the Medical Research Council (MRC) has not commissioned any studies of the effect of ampligen. The Council is aware of a preliminary study in the United States of America on a small number of patients with AIDS and related conditions. The MRC is always willing to consider soundly based research proposals for support through its grants schemes in competition with other applications.

Education Reform

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to ensure that his proposals for changes in the management of schools, colleges and universities will not be forestalled by decisions taken before the provisions of the proposed Education Reform Bill come into effect.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In accordance with the statement I made to the House on 22 July, the Education Reform Bill —which is being published today—contains provisions which require my consent to the disposal by LEAs of land used by or held or obtained for or in connection with the purposes of polytechnics and colleges to be transferred from local authorities (clause 95). That requirement applies to all such disposals after 22 July 1987. Similar provisions apply, in the case of the Inner London education authority, in relation to disposals of land which may be required by an inner London borough if it successfully applies to assume education responsibilities for its area (clause 121), and to contracts over £15,000 (clause 120). Similar controls on the disposal of property will apply in respect of schools whose governing body has informed the LEA that a ballot of parents is to be held on the question whether grant-maintained status should be sought (clause 59). LEAs will also be prevented from transferring staff into or out of such schools except with the agreement of the governing body. The Bill further provides that any new agreements or contracts made after 20 November 1987 by any local education authority or by the governing body of any polytechnic, college or school, which would protect members of the staff from compulsory redundancy or guarantee members of staff redundancy compensation above the statutory minimum, shall be void (clause 138). This will ensure that the ability of future governing bodies to manage their institutions effectively is not constrained by inappropriate commitments to the staff. The provision will not preclude the payment of compensation above the statutory minimum where individuals are identified for redundancy.

In the case of universities, the Government's policy is that newly appointed staff should no longer be given "tenure", that is, special protection against dismissal on grounds of redundancy or financial exigency. The Bill provides (clause 132) that staff currently in post who have tenure should retain it as long as they continue in their present appointments, but that those newly appointed or promoted to permanent posts after 20 November 1987 should no longer have this special measure of protection. This approach will provide on an equitable basis for tenure to be phased out as quickly as reasonably possible, without the creation of substantial numbers of new tenured appointments in the period before the commissioners who will be responsible for the required amendments to university statutes have completed their work.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the means by which the provisions of the Education Reform Bill will strengthen the protection of academic freedom.

Mr. Jackson: We have recently reaffirmed the Government's view that academic staff should have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or the privileges they may have at their institutions. The precise content of the idea of academic freedom in any particular situation depends, however, among other things, on the type of institution and the subject taught or researched; we do not believe that it can be said to have a single clear definition applicable in all circumstances. The Government therefore consider it more appropriate for the requirements of academic freedom to be taken into account by the university commissioners, in consultation with individual universities and colleges, when statutes are amended to provide appropriately for the definition of good cause for dismissal and for arrangements for appeals against dismissal. The existence of suitable and disinterested appeals arrangements will represent an important element of protection for academics from victimisation on account of their views. It will be for the Privy Council, in considering whether to recommend to Her Majesty that amendments to university statutes put forward by the commissioners should be confirmed, to satisfy itself that the Government's objective of protecting academic freedom has been properly met. Moreover, the fact that academics will no longer be precluded from actions in the courts against their employers for wrongful dismissal will represent a further strengthening of academic freedom, in addition to the access they have to industrial tribunals over claims of unfair dismissal.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ministerial Visits

Mr. John Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many nights each of the Ministers in his Department spent in Northern Ireland during each of the months of June, July, August, September and October, respectively.

Mr. Tom King: The information is as follows:

	June 1987	*July 1987*	*August 1987*	*September 1987*	*October 1987*
Secretary of State	5	4	3	3	13
Mr. Stanley[1]	1	2	3	5	9
Mr. Scott[1]	2	—	—	—	—
Lord Lyell	9	9	2	9	12
Mr. Needham	6	8	9	6	9
Dr. Mawhinney	2	6	10	7	4
Mr. Viggers	9	6	—	11	—

[1] Mr. Scott left the Northern Ireland Office and Mr. Stanley joined in mid June 1987.

Social Security Reform

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the changes in disposable income after meeting housing costs of the following client groups receiving income-related benefits in Northern Ireland, as a result of changes announced in the reformed structure of income-related benefits *(a)* pensioners aged 80 years and over, *(b)* pensioners aged 60 to 79 years, *(c)* sick or disabled, *(d)* lone parents, *(e)* couples in full-time work with children, *(f)* others in full-time work and *(g)* others; if he will show the increases in disposable income and decreases of disposable income by bands of £1, £2 to £3, £3 to £4, £4 to £5, and £5 plus; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the effect on disposable income of people in Northern Ireland receiving income support of the reformed structure of income-related benefits by main client groups;

(3) what will be the effect for Northern Ireland of the reformed structure of income-related benefits on the disposable incomes of working families with children receiving family credit, by family size;

(4) what will be the effect of the reformed structure of income-related benefits on the disposable incomes of people in receipt of housing benefit or family income supplement or family credit in Northern Ireland by main client group;

(5) what will be the effect for Northern Ireland of the reformed structure of income-related benefits on the disposable incomes of people receiving housing benefit, family income supplement or family credit, by family status and age;

(6) what will be the combined effects of the reformed structure of income-related benefits on the disposable incomes of all people receiving income-related benefits, by family status and age;

(7) what will be the average changes in disposable income for *(a)* those receiving income support, *(b)* those receiving other income-related benefits and *(c)* those receiving any income-related benefit, by main client groups, as a result of the reformed structure of income-related benefits; and if he will make a statement;

(8) what will be the effect of the reformed structure of income-related benefits on the disposable incomes of people receiving income support, by family status and age.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not at present available, but consideration is being given to the possibility of obtaining relevant figures. In broad terms, the impact of the reform will be much the same in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain.

Strangford Lough

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated daily tonnage of *(a)* untreated foul sewage presently entering Strangford lough and *(b)* additional sewage from the proposed salmon farms in Strangford lough; and if sewage effluent was a factor in his refusal of the salmon farm application for Strangford lough.

Mr. Needham: *[holding answer 19 November 1987]*: Of the 19,500 tonnes of sewage effluent discharged each day into Strangford lough, 1,030 tonnes, estimated to include 0·4 tonnes of solid waste, receive no treatment at present. However, when the new sewage works now under construction at Killyleagh, at a cost of some £1·4 million, are fully operational, the currently untreated discharge will be receiving full biological treatment. Salmon farming on the scale proposed for Strangford lough could have produced 0·5-14 tonnes of solid waste daily. The possible effect of such a quantity of waste was a factor in the decision to refuse a consent under the Water Act (Northern Ireland) 1972.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library the reports from groups of officials given to the Anglo-Irish Conference on 21 October and mentioned in the joint statement of that date; what meetings of Ministers of both Governments took place and on what specific issues before this meeting of the conference, as reported in the penultimate paragraph of the joint statement of 21 October; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King *[holding answer 13 November 1987]*: It is not our practice to publish such reports. My hon. Friend the member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) met the Irish Ministers for Tourism and Transport, and for Industry on 29 July, for a general discussion largely on tourism matters; my noble Friend Lord Lyell met the Irish Minister for Agriculture on 12 October to discuss agriculture matters.

ENVIRONMENT

Commissioner for Local Administration

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases have been brought to his attention where the Commissioner for Local Administration has considered a matter and reported on it, has then reconsidered the case when the local authority has refused to rectify the complaint and again urged the local authority to take action and it has refused for a second time to do so; if he will list the authorities concerned and the number, for each authority, of such cases; and whether he is considering any action which could help those individuals who according to the local government commissioner have still not had their complaint properly settled.

Mr. Chope: I understand from the Commission for Local Administration in England that, since it was set up in 1974, there have been 120 cases where the local authority concerned has failed to provide a satisfactory remedy following the issue of a second report by one of the commissioners. A list of the authorities is in the table: where more than one such case has occurred, the number is indicated in brackets.

The Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administraton and the Widdicombe committee on the conduct of local authority business have both put forward proposals for remedying this problem. My right hon. Friend is considering these proposals.

Authorities who have failed to provide satisfactory remedies after a second report.

Arun
Avon[1]
Aylesbury Vale (2)
Babergh
Beverley (2)
Birmingham (6)
Boston
Bournemouth
Bristol City (2)
Bromley
Bromsgrove
Buckinghamshire[2]
Cambridgeshire
Cannock Chase
Caradon
Carrick
Castlepoint
Chelmsford
Cherwell
Christchurch (2)
Colchester
Craven
Ealing
East Devon (3)
East Hants (2)
East Northants (2)
Epping Forest (2)
Exeter
Forest of Dean (3)
Hackney
Hammersmith
Hastings
Hillingdon
Hinckley and Bosworth
Huntingdonshire
Lambeth
Leicestershire
Liverpool (4)
Mid Bedfordshire
Milton Keynes [2]
Newark
Newham
Northavon (2) [1]
North Norfolk
North Wiltshire
North Yorkshire
Oldham
Portsmouth (2)
Purbeck
Rotherham
Salford (2)
Sandwell
Sefton (2)
Slough
Somerset
South Hereford
Southampton (2)
South Holland (2)
South Kesteven
South Lakeland (2)
South Northants
South Oxfordshire
South Tyneside
Southwark (3)
Stratford-on-Avon
Tameside
Tendring
Tower Hamlets
Trafford
Vale of White Horse
Wakefield (2)
Walsall (3)
Wandsworth (6)
Watford
Westminster
West Devon
West Dorset (2)
West Lancashire
West Norfolk
West Oxfordshire
Weymouth and Portland (2)
Wiltshire
Woking
Wycombe

[1] and [2] Both authorities were the subject of one report.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many Ordnance Survey commercial products have failed to show a profit since the introduction of the Ordnance Survey commercial arm in 1981.

Mr. Moynihan: While recognising the need for a reasonable balance between adequate disclosure and commercial discretion in relation to Ordnance Survey trading activities, I believe that it would not be proper to disclose this information.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct the Ordnance Survey not to attempt to influence local authorities against providing map-revision information, which the local authority has itself surveyed, to private sector map-makers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Ordnance Survey has no interest in the use of surveys made by local authorities provided they are not supplied simultaneously with a copy of an Ordnance Survey map.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the competitive consequences of the Ordnance Survey's tax position in relation to the profit it makes from its commercial products.

Mr. Moynihan: As a Government Department, all the revenues of Ordnance Survey serve to reduce its net Vote. There can therefore be no direct comparison with the profits made by private sector companies.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the practice of the Ordnance Survey with regard to reserving the right to prevent publication of a product by a private sector map-maker if the Ordnance Survey itself markets, or intends to market a competing product; and what assessment he makes of the implications of this practice for fair competition between the Ordnance Survey and private sector map-makers.

Mr. Moynihan: Ordnance Survey claims only the right given to any copyright owner to protect his work. To waive that right would jeopardise the aim of Ordnance Survey to minimise its call on public funds, as required by Government.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the commercial arm of Ordnance Survey is automatically provided with confidential information, including the design and print run, of all publications which the private sector map-makers plan to produce based on public sector mapping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Prior permission is required from Ordnance Survey before a publisher may use Ordnance Survey material in a publication. The information is supplied in confidence to the copyright section solely for approval and royalty assessment purposes.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the commercial arm of the Ordnance Survey has access to the periodic sales statistics which the private sector map-makers are required to notify to the copyright section of the Ordnance Survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Publishers whose products are based on Ordnance Survey information are required to notify Ordnance Survey of their sales so that the royalties due can be assessed.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an independent audit of the Ordnance Survey's commercial trading accounts.

Mr. Moynihan: The Comptroller and Auditor General is responsible for the audit of the Ordnance Survey's trading accounts.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by whom the accountants commissioned to review the Ordnance Survey trading accounts were given their terms of reference, and what factors governed this choice.

Mr. Moynihan: The terms of reference for the review of the format and design of the Ordnance Survey trading accounts were agreed by Ministers to ensure that there is no cross-subsidisation of Ordnance Survey's commercial activities from its Exchequer Vote.

Peak park

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what criteria he appoints members of the Peak park planning board; and what notice he takes of the locality of origin of local government appointments to the board.

Mr. Moynihan: In making his appointments to national park authorities, my right hon. Friend has regard to purposes for which the parks have been designated and looks for candidates with experience in a range of relevant fields, and preferably local knowledge. Residences of local government appointees are not taken into account.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many of the members of the Peak park planning board live within the area of the Peak park; and, of those which were appointed by local authorities and which by himself;

(2) if he will list the present members of the Peak park planning board, together with the body that appointed them, their qualifications, and place of residence.

Mr. Moynihan: Three out of 23 appointed by local authorities and seven out of 11 appointed by my right hon. Friend. Current membership and places of residence are:

Name	*Appointing Authority*	*Place of Residence*
Mrs. E. Andrews	Secretary of State	Flash
Mr. J. Beadle	Derbyshire County Council	Derby
Councillor R. J. Beaver	North-East Derbyshire District Council	Stretton
Mr. K. Campbell	Secretary of State	Dore
Mr. J. Cant	Secretary of State	Youlgreave

Name	*Appointing Authority*	*Place of Residence*
Major-General P. B. Cavendish	Secretary of State	Youlgreave
Councillor Mrs. C. M. N. Gowther	Derbyshire Dales District Council	Bakewell
Councillor G. M. Doughty	Derbyshire County Council	New Mills
Councillor G. W. Driver	Macclesfield Borough Council	Higher Poynton
Councillor J. H. Edwards	Staffordshire County Council	Stoke-on-Trent
Mr. J. S. Elliott	Secretary of State	Hope
Miss C. H. Harlow	Derbyshire County Council	Whaley Bridge
Councillor K. C. Hinchcliffe	Cheshire County Council	Rainow
Councillor C. B. Hook	Derbyshire Dales County Council	Baslow
Councillor D. J. Hunter	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Barnsley
Councillor L. Kershaw	Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	Bradford
Mr. C. Langford-Mycock	Secretary of State	Waterhouses
Mrs. P. Mason	Secretary of State	Hope
Mr. L. G. Meadowcroft	Secretary of State	Stockport
Councillor J. M. Murphy	Derbyshire County Council	Staveley
Mr. G. Parkin	Derbyshire County Council	Doe Lea
Councillor M. J. Pye	Sheffield County Council	Sheffield
Mr. J. C. Ratcliffe	Derbyshire County Council	Church Gresley
Miss E. J. Robinson	Secretary of State	Sheffield
Councillor R. Semple	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council	Oldham
Councillor D. A. Skinner	Sheffield County Council	Sheffield
Councillor G. Speight	Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	Batley
Councillor M. Tappin	Staffordshire County Council	Stoke-on-Trent
Mrs. J. Thornton	Secretary of State	Matlock
Councillor Mrs. E. M. Tomlinson	High Peak Borough Council	Buxton
Mr. M. Vallance	Secretary of State	Eyam
Councillor Mrs. W. Watkins	Derbyshire County Council	Derby
Councillor L. A. Watson	Cheshire County Council	Congleton
Councillor G. N. Wilson	Derbyshire County Council	Youlgreave

Biographical details of the entire membership are not held centrally.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of the Peak park planning board, as a percentage of the total, lived outside the area of the park, in the year the board first met, and at subsequent three-year intervals until the present day.

Mr. Moynihan: At present 70 per cent. Records of the addresses of local authority members in previous years are not held centrally.

National Parks

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list how many members of each national park planning board live within the area of that park as a percentage of the total numbers on each board.

Mr. Moynihan: The information for the seven English national parks is as follows:

Park	*Members*	*Number living within park*	*Percentage of total number*
Dartmoor	21	5	24
Exmoor	21	5	24
Lake District	30	10	33
Northumberland	27	1	4
North York Moors	27	5	18
Peak District	34	10	29
Yorkshire Dales	24	3	12

The three Welsh national parks are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Docklands development corporation has spent on education and training for each of the years it has been in existence; and how much it intends to spend in 1988.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is as follows:

	£
1981-83	400,000
1983-84	300,000
1984-85	850,000
1985-86	450,000
1986-87	1,400,000
1987-88	[1]2,300,000

[1] Provisional.

These figures are approximate.

The corporation's education and training budget for 1988-89 is not finalised.

Chelsea Football Club

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from residents of the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham over the proposed development by Chelsea football club at Stamford bridge; and if he will meet the hon. Member for Fulham to discuss the setting up of a planning inquiry.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has received a number of letters from local residents about these proposals, including those forwarded by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham. After careful consideration of these representations we concluded that calling in the planning applications for a public inquiry would not be justified. I have recently written to my hon. Friend setting out more fully the reasons for this decision.

Sports Council

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what remuneration the current chairman of the Sports Council receives; and how many days per month he is expected to devote to the business of the Sports Council.

Mr. Moynihan: The chairman of the Sports Council receives £14,800 per annum, for a time commitment of two days per week.

Pollution

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures the Government intend to introduce to meet their stated aim of reducing sulphur dioxide emissions in the United Kingdom to 3·27 million tonnes by 1990; and what are the implications for this aim of his forecast that emissions in 2000 may be 3·5 million tonnes.

Mr. Moynihan: We have authorised the CEGB to retrofit 6000 MW of coal-fired generating capacity with flue gas desulphurisation equipment, and have announced that all new coal-fired power stations will have the technology to control sulphur emissions.

The forecast range of emissions in the year 2000 range from 2·6 million tonnes to 3·5 million tonnes. This range of estimates reflects the considerable uncertainty about future emission levels which are dependent on factors such as economic growth and energy demand.

We continue to expect to meet our stated aim of policy. The action outlined above will help to ensure that we do so.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reasons were advanced by the Nature Conservancy Council for its recommendation that licences should not be granted for taking from the wild any diurnal birds of prey after 1988.

Mr. Moynihan: The Nature Conservancy Council's recommendation was made on the grounds that the numbers of diurnal birds of prey being kept and bred in captivity should be sufficient to satisfy the needs of falconers after 1988.

Urban Programme

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the qualification by the Comptroller and Auditor General of his Department's appropriation accounts in respect of the urban programme.

Mr. Trippier: The Comptroller and Auditor General has qualified his certificate for the Department's Appropriation Accounts for 1985-86 and 1986-87, which have been prepared and audited in the normal way. This is because of continuing uncertainty about a considerable backlog of uncertified expenditure by local authorities supported by grant aid from my Department under the urban programme (class X, vote 3).

A backlog of urban programme claims built up during the early 1980s. Local authorities are paid grant on account while urban programme schemes are in progress. They are then required to submit final claims, which are subjected to audit by the local authority's auditors. Some claims were submitted very late. In September 1986, 215 claims awaited certification, covering expenditure up to 31 March 1985 of £345·9 million.

In his report on the accounts for 1986-87, the Comptroller and Auditor General recognises that the Department has made "significant progress" over the last year in reducing that backlog. By September this year, the backlog had been reduced to 78 claims covering uncertified expenditure of nearly £210 million. The report notes that changes had been made in the management of the urban programme, and are proving successful in preventing any further backlog from accumulating. The core of the remaining backlog concerns claims from the abolished Greater London council and some of the Metropolitan county councils, and 16 Labour-controlled authorities.

The backlog of claims does not mean that money has been lost or misappropriated. It was paid to local authorities for schemes that have been completed. Certification by the local authority auditors is required to show that the grants have been used for the purpose for which Parliament voted them. The auditors require detailed material from individual authorities to enable them to issue those certificates. The Department is continuing with the full co-operation of local authority auditors to reduce the backlog further.

Sports and Leisure Facilities

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to control investment programmes by local authorities in sports and leisure facilities.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 19 November 1987]*: At present, local authority capital expenditure on sport and recreation falls within the other services block. The Government intend in the near future to publish proposals for reform of the legislation which regulates capital expenditure, including expenditure on sport and recreation, by local authorities in England and Wales.

DEFENCE

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Ministry of Defence engaged the services of a number of advertising agencies in 1985-86 for the purpose of recruiting to the armed forces and the Civil Service. The agencies concerned and the subject of each campaign are listed in the table. It is not our general policy to divulge the costs of individual contracts, which are commercially confidential.

	Campaign
Young and Rubican Ltd.	RN recruitment campaign
Collett, Dickenson, Pearce and Partners	Army officer recruitment campaign
Slaymaker Cowley White (formerly Butler, Dennis and Garland)	Army soldiers, TA, cadet and District recruitment campaigns
George Hynes and Partners	UDR and TA (Northern Ireland) recruitment campaigns
J. Walter Thompson plc.	RAF recruitment campaign

	Campaign
Charles Barker Recruitment Advertising Agency Ltd.	Civilian recruitment campaign
Rex Steward and Associates	Civilian recruitment campaign

Red Arrows Team

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the crash of the Red Arrows team in Lincolnshire on 16 November;

(2) whether he intends to set up a board of inquiry into the accident of the Red Arrows team in Lincolnshire on 16 November;

(3) if he will ensure that safety procedures are reviewed with a view to preventing a repetition of the accident of the Red Arrows team in Lincolnshire on 16 November.

Mr. Freeman: Two aircraft from the Royal Air Force Red Arrows display team collided over Welton in Lincolnshire on 16 November while practising manoeuvres for their performance in the display season next year. Both aircraft crashed to the ground immediately after the collision; the pilots ejected safely, and no civilians were hurt as a consequence of the accident. Claims for damage to property will be carefully considered according to normal rules.

The Royal Air Force has convened a board of inquiry into this accident, which will examine fully all the circumstances with a view to establishing its cause, and preventing recurrence. A summary of the board's findings will be published in due course in the usual way.

Mr. Leigh: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that full compensation is given to the residents of Welton, Lincolnshire, affected by the crash of the Red Arrows team, both in terms of compensation for damage to property and in terms of shock.

Mr. Freeman: All claims for compensation received by my Department will be considered carefully on their merits.

Dartmoor National Park

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what construction work is being carried out on behalf of his Department near Lydford in the Dartmoor national park; and what planning procedures have been or will be invoked.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) on 14 July at column *434*. No construction work is at present being carried out at Lydford on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. Outline proposals for the replacement of Willsworthy camp were put to the Dartmoor national park authority on 19 October 1987, and the normal planning procedures are being followed.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any residential accommodation is provided for Ministers in his Department and charged to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No residential accommodation is provided for Ministry of Defence Ministers and charged to public funds.

Horses

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those units in which Army horses are not allocated, but in which personnel are permitted to hunt in duty hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Personnel in non-mounted units are not normally permitted to hunt in duty hours.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the costs to public funds of equestrian activity in the Army.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many horses used by *(a)* the Household Cavalry and *(b)* other regiments and retired in each of the past three years have been sold for the purposes of serum production or research or for other experimental purposes; and what are the other destinations for horses unwanted for military purposes.

Mr. Freeman: No Army horses have been sold in the past three years for serum production or research or other experimental purposes. Horses that are no longer suitable for military purposes are sold to Army saddle clubs, sold to their riders on grounds of sentiment, sent to a home of rest for horses or humanely destroyed. There are also seven horses which are no longer able to carry out normal ceremonial duties and which are detached to CDE, Porton Down for serum production.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the relative participation rates of *(a)* officers and *(b)* other ranks in playing polo and hunting on Army horses in duty time.

Mr. Freeman: Army horses are not used for playing polo. No central record is kept on the relative participation rate of officers and other ranks in hunting on Army horses in duty time.

Battlefield Artillery Target Engagement System

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the contract for the battlefield artillery target engagement system with Marconi is a fixed-price contract; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 2 November at column *605*.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any cost over-runs to his Department on the procurement of the battlefield artillery target engagement system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: The costs of the project have been estimated more accurately as it has progressed and reassessed at the various stages of approval. Since the introduction of the present incentivised contract arrangements in 1985, costs remain within forecast levels.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what penalty clauses in the contract for the battlefield artillery target engagement system have been exercised.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: The contract contains no "penalty clauses" as such. Discipline over the prime contractor is exercised through the target cost-maximum price incentive arrangement. If cost overruns take the contract cost above the target cost the prime contractor's profit will be eroded. Should the contract price reach the maximum price, all further costs to complete the contract will fall to the prime contractor. The contract also contains the standard default clause, standard condition 14, which enables the MOD to purchase the goods elsewhere if the prime contractor does not produce on time or to specification, and to recover the extra cost from the prime contractor.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the original specifications on the battlefield artillery target engagement system project, as negotiated at the time the contract was given, will be met when the equipment is delivered to his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the cost of each change from the original contract specification in the case of the battlefield artillery target engagement system project;

(3) how many changes to the battlefield artillery target engagement system were negotiated by Marconi with his Department after the original contract was placed;

(4) why changes to the contract for the battlefield artillery target engagement system were not submitted for competitive tender; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: The current contract requires that the full specification be met. Since the placing of the contract in 1985, a large number of minor revisions to the specification have been agreed, some at the company's instigation and some at the MOD's. This process is not unusual in a project as large and complex as BATES. The value of these changes is estimated at less than 1·5 per cent. of the total project cost. To reopen the prime contract to competition for every minor change would be wholly impracticable.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original contract cost of the battlefield artillery target engagement system to his Department at the time the original contract was let.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: The original contract was placed at an estimated cost of some £30 million at 1981-82 prices for full development on a cost-plus basis. The scope, terms and conditions of that contract are not comparable with the present contract which is let against a full technical specification on a target-cost/maximum price incentive basis, and includes the first slice of production.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when Marconi Command and Control Systems secured the contract for the battlefield artillery target engagement system.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 12 November 1987]*: The current contract (for full development and initial production) for the BATES project was let from 1 April 1985. This contract subsumed the earlier full development contract which had been let in 1982.

WALES

Classical Studies

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many candidates from maintained secondary schools in Wales entered for O-level Latin in the Welsh Joint Education Committee summer examinations in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987;

(2) how many candidates from maintained secondary schools in Wales entered for A-level Latin in the Welsh Joint Education Committee summer examinations in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987;

(3) how many candidates from maintained secondary schools in Wales entered for O-level classical studies in the Welsh Joint Education Committee summer examinations in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987;

(4) how many candidates from maintained secondary schools in Wales entered for A-level classical studies in the Welsh Joint Education Committee summer examinations in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information, as supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee, is as follows:

	Latin		*Classical studies*	
	'O' level	*'A' level*	*'O' level*	[1]*'A' level*
[2]1975	1,348	102	226	—
1980	893	78	316	—
1985	581	54	200	35
1987	357	33	101	52

[1] 'A' level Classical studies was first examined in 1983.

[2] Figures for 1975 contain candidates from all establishments. Figures for maintained schools only are not separately identifiable.

Examinations

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total number of candidates entered for O-level subjects in the Welsh Joint Education Committee summer examinations in 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987;

(2) what was the total number of candidates entered for A-level subjects in the Welsh Joint Education Authority summer examinations of 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information, as supplied by the Welsh Joint Education Committee, is as follows:

	[1]*'O' level*	*'A' level*
1975	33,481	8,477
1980	48,217	9,504
1985	56,522	11,583
1987	58,680	11,372

[1] 'O' level candidates include entries for Common Syllabus examinations.

Capitation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the capitation per head in each of the counties of Wales of primary and secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not collected centrally.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many language units (speech therapy) there are in Wales, by county; if he is satisfied with the level of speech therapy provision in each of the Welsh counties; what is his estimate of the numbers of children in each of the Welsh counties with speech or language disorders; how many speech therapists work *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time in the counties of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information about numbers of langage units is not held centrally. The level of speech therapy provision is an operational matter for individual district health authorities to determine in the light of their priorities and the resources available to them. I am greatly encouraged by the increase in the number of full-time equivalent speech therapists employed in the NHS over recent years, which has doubled since 1979.

Information on numbers of children with speech or language disorders is available only in relation to those pupils for whome a statement of special educational needs has been issued by local education authorities. The latest information is taken from LEA returns in January 1987 and is as follows:

	Speech disorder	*Language disorder*
Clwyd	117	206
Dyfed	33	103
Gwent	4	3
Gwynedd	9	17
Mid Glamorgan	131	156
Powys	48	62
South Glamorgan	43	74
West Glamorgan	197	202

The number of full-time and part-time speech therapists employed by district health authorities in Wales as at 30 September 1987 is given in the following table:

	Full-time	*Part-time*
Clwyd	19	7
East Dyfed	13	1
Pembrokeshire	6	—
Gwent	13	4
Gwynedd	9	2
Mid Glamorgan	17	—
Powys	3	3
South Glamorgan	25	5
West Glamorgan	14	1

Nurses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the nurse-to-patient ratio for each year since 1979 in (*a*) Clwyd area health authority and (*b*) Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Such information as is available is given in the table. Both the numbers of nurses employed and in-patients treated have increased significantly since 1979. The following figures reflect the more intensive care given to patients by nursing staff.

	[1]*Nurses per in-patient case*[2]		[1]*Nurses per occupied bed*[3]	
	Clwyd	*Wales*	*Clwyd*	*Wales*
1979	0·056	0·059	1·19	1·14
1980	0·057	0·058	1·23	1·16
1981	0·058	0·059	1·29	1·23
1982	0·060	0·061	1·35	1·27
1983	0·057	0·058	1·34	1·28
1984	0·054	0·056	1·38	1·32
1985	0·055	0·056	1·46	1·36
1986	0·057	0·055	1·54	1·42

[1] Whole-time equivalents as at 30 September excluding nurses in community, school health, Blood Transfusion Service, senior management and teaching. Figures for 1979 have been adjusted to take into account the change in nurse working hours that occurred in 1980.

[2] Total in-patient cases during year.

[3] Daily count of occupied beds, averaged over calendar year.

Job Clubs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many job clubs have been opened in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Clwyd, expressed in travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Seventy four job clubs have opened in Wales since August 1985, and 11 of these are in Clwyd. The table shows the distribution of these job clubs in Welsh travel-to-work areas.

Travel-to-work area	*Number*
Aberdare	2
Bangor/Caernarfon	2
Blaenau Gwent/ Abergavenny	3
Bridgend	3
Cardiff	11
Cardigan	1
Carmarthen	1
Conwy/Colwyn	2
Haverfordwest	1
Holyhead	2
Llanelli	3
Merthyr/Rhymney	7
Monmouth	1
Neath/Port Talbot	3
Newport	5
Newtown	1
Pontypool/Cwmbran	2
Pontypridd/Rhondda	5
Porthmadog/Ffestiniog	1
South Pembrokeshire	1
Shotton/Flint/Rhyl	6
Swansea	8
Wrexham	3

Job Training Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of job training scheme participants in Wales have gained full-time employment since joining the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not yet available. The job training scheme has been operating in most places for less than six months. The Manpower Services Commission has commissioned a follow-up survey of leavers to look into the destination of trainees. The first results will be available in the new year.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the present level of job vacancies reported at jobcentres in *(a)* Wales, *(b)* Clwyd and *(c)* Shotton travel-to-work areas.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: On 2 October 1987 the number of vacancies notified to jobcentres in Wales, Clwyd and the Shotton, Flint and Rhyl travel-to-work areas were 14,949, 2,293 and 937 respectively.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the progress of the two-year YTS in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At the end of September 1987, there were some 25,300 young people in training on YTS schemes in Wales. All those taking part will receive up to two years' high-quality training with related work experience. All schemes in Wales are introducing opportunities to obtain a vocational qualification, or credit towards one.

The latest information on those young people leaving YTS between April 1986 and May 1987 shows that 66 per cent. were going into work or further education and training. With the Government guarantee of a place on YTS for all 16 and 17-year-old school leavers, no young person under 18 need choose to remain unemployed.

Structure Plans

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals with regard to the reorganisation of structure plans for Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Government's proposals for changes to the system of structure and local plans were issued as a join consultation paper "The Future of Development Plans" by the Welsh Office and the Department of the Environment in September 1986. The responses to that consultation paper are now being considered and a further statement will be issued in due course.

PRIME MINISTER

European Council Meeting

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what issues she intends to raise at the forthcoming meeting of the European Council in Copenhagen; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave him on 19 November.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what information she has received from the European Economic Commission about the items on the agenda for the forthcoming European Council meeting in Copenhagen; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The European Council at Copenhagen will be discussing the financial situation of the Community, the reform of the common agricultural policy and the strengthening of budgetary discipline.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the proposals she intends to submit to the December meeting of the European Council on budgetary control and the common agricultural policy.

The Prime Minister: At the European Council I shall continue to make clear the need for agreement on effective and binding control over Community spending, in particular agricultural spending, through the strengthening of budgetary discipline and the introduction of stabilisers on agricultural commodities.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of the Crown Prosecution Service's court work is being covered by agents; what was the total of fees paid to agents in September and in October; and what is the average salary of a solicitor employed by the service to cover court work.

The Attorney-General: During the last quarter, July to September 1987, 45 per cent. of magistrates' court sessions were undertaken by agents. The total of fees paid to agents during September was £1,425,000; in October it was £1,209,000. It is impossible to provide an average salary figure for lawyers employed by the service to cover court work. Court work is undertaken largely by solicitors and barristers in the crown prosecutor and senior crown prosecutor grade. Salaries for these grades range from £11,603 to £16,576 and from £15,030 to £21,092 respectively and certain additional allowances are available.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Attorney-General by what percentage the number of criminal prosecutions has changed since the introduction of the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is given in tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 5 to 7 of "Home Office Statistical Bulletin 21/87" a copy of which is in the Library.

TRANSPORT

Airports (Landing Charges)

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of all landing charges in British Airport Authority-owned airports.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information required is not held by the Department of Transport. I suggest that the hon. Member contacts BAA plc direct.

Manchester International Airport

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has been asked to approve any further development at Manchester International airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since 1979 the Government have facilitated investment of over £100 million on developments at Manchester International. Further bids — including expenditure to prepare the way for a second passenger terminal—are being considered as part of the annual round of capital expenditure allocations for local authority airports.

Weight-testing Stations (M25)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many weight-testing stations are being operated on the M25; how many lorries have been tested in each year since the M25 opened; and how many prosecutions have been initiated for overloading.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One weighbridge site has been provided on the M25 at junction 9 (Leatherhead interchange). It came into operation earlier this month and is being used for checking heavy lorries by the Department's traffic examiners, vehicle examiners, Surrey trading standards officers and the police. Surrey trading standards department have weighed 61 vehicles of which 14 were found to be overloaded, and some prosecutions will follow. All enforcement agencies will be making regular use of the weighbridge site.

East London Road Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received from the London borough of Haringey concerning consultation on the East London road assessment study, stage II; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when consultations on the second stage of the East London road assessment study will be complete; and when will he make a statement on the future of the scheme.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The London borough of Haringey commented in May 1987 on the consultation arrangements for stage 2 and was party to the joint response by the four boroughs in the East London study area. It was also associated with the response by the London strategic policy unit on the terms of reference for stage 2, which touched on consultation. The chief executive of Haringey wrote to me on 2 November about the borough's participation in the consultation process.

Consultations with the relevant local authority associations, the London planning advisory committee, and boroughs in the study areas will take place regularly throughout stage 2. The consultants' final report on options will be published for comment at the end of stage 2.

Lorry Ban (London)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend the night-time lorry ban on London's roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The London night-time and weekend lorry ban is the responsibility of the London boroughs. It is for them to consider its future, and its value-costs and benefits.

Smoke Hoods (Aircraft)

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the research *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Civil Aviation Authority are currently funding into the use of smoke hoods on civil aircraft; at what cost; what applications for further research are currently before him; when he expects to reach a decision on them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Following the B737 accident at Manchester, the air accidents investigation branch of the Department has spent £200,000 on feasibility studies to demonstrate the potential of hoods to protect passengers from the smoke produced in aircraft fires. The branch has no plans for further expenditure. The Civil Aviation Authority is expecting to spend in the region of £150,000 on cabin safety research in 1987-88, much of which has relevance to smoke hoods.

I understand that the CAA plans to make an announcement about the use of smoke hoods before the end of 1987.

BA-BCal Merger

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the implications for charter companies at Gatwick airport of the proposed British Airways/British Caledonian merger.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are aware of the charter airlines' concerns about their competitive position at Gatwick, both from their representations to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and from general contacts with them.

Motorways (Accident Statistics)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents have occurred in the approaches to contra-flow systems on motorways for each individual year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The statistics requested are available only at disproportionate cost.

Dial-a-Ride Service (London)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department will give assistance to the London Regional Transport Authority to encourage an expanded use of the London Dial-a-Ride service in order to provide at least one trip a week for disabled people.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I explained the Government's position in the Adjournment debate on transport for people with disabilities on 12 November at columns 676-80. As to funding for next year, I refer to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) on 17 November.

London Underground (Safety)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a list of incidents on the railways of London Underground Limited since 1 January 1986 when electrical, mechanical or human failure put passengers' safety at direct risk.

Mr. David Mitchell: Prescribed accidents that occur on the railways of London Underground Limited (LUL) are reportable to the Secretary of State under statutory instrument. Many of these incidents are of a minor nature and are not required to be reported individually. All reported accidents are contained within the statistics published in the Department's annual report on the safety record of the railways in Great Britain, a copy of which is in the Library. The table lists those incidents where passenger safety was put at direct risk: only two resulted in serious injury to a passenger.

Subsequently I am only too sadly aware of the serious fire that occurred at King's Cross on 18 November. This incident is not included in the table; it will, however, be the subject of a formal inquiry and a report will be published in due course.

Cause	*Number of incidents* 1986	1987
Technical fault		
Lift and escalator	2	3
Train	1	2
Track	—	1
Human error		
Staff	1	1
Other persons	2	3
Vandalism	13	8
Minor fires in tunnels	3	4

Newly Qualified Drivers

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to impose restrictions on the size of engine of cars and the maximum speeds that can be driven by people in the first 12 months after passing their driving test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. There is no evidence that this would lead to significant road safety benefits and there would be difficulties in enforcing such arrangements.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents involving personal injury or death, excluding motor cycles, were recorded in England and Wales involving drivers between the ages of 17 and 18 years for the latest available year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1986 there were 16,378 recorded accidents in England and Wales where *(a)* one or more drivers or cyclists were aged 17 or 18; and *(b)* no two-wheeled motor vehicle was involved.

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents involving personal injury or death, excluding motor cycles, were recorded in England and Wales for the latest available year.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1986 the number or recorded accidents in England and Wales involving death or personal injury which did not involve a two-wheeled motor vehicle was 215,240.

Child Passengers

Mr. Ken Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the numbers of children travelling in *(a)* the front seat or *(b)* the rear seat of passenger cars who were killed or injured; and how many were (i) restrained or (ii) carried unrestrained, for each year since 1983.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The relevant information is in the table:

Child casualties in cars[1]: by severity, seating position, and seat belt wearing
Great Britain 1983 to 1986

	1983 Killed	KSI	Total	*1984* Killed	KSI	Total	*1985* Killed	KSI	Total	*1986* Killed	KSI	Total
Front seat occupant of which:	16	191	1,169	11	191	1,222	6	173	1,319	11	192	1,434
fitted and worn	7	125	870	6	127	952	1	109	990	7	123	1,085
fitted, not worn	2	25	96	0	12	49	3	14	64	0	14	77
not fitted to vehicle	3	10	53	1	10	49	0	5	51	2	9	52
not reported	4	31	150	4	42	172	2	45	214	2	46	220
Rear seat occupant of which:	59	978	7,245	66	1,030	8,025	62	1,049	8,503	69	1,094	9,003
fitted and worn	8	66	684	5	80	773	8	82	814	10	110	1,219
fitted, not worn	4	42	290	1	44	343	2	60	415	1	79	516
not fitted to vehicle	42	738	5,299	49	755	5,819	37	742	6,131	42	702	5,868
not reported	5	132	972	11	151	1,090	15	165	1,143	16	203	1,400
All occupants[2] of which:	75	1,172	8,440	77	1,229	9,275	68	1,227	9,845	81	1,293	10,466
fitted and worn	15	191	1,557	11	207	1,725	9	191	1,805	17	233	2,305
fitted, not worn	6	67	386	1	56	393	5	74	479	1	93	593
not fitted to vehicle	45	748	5,358	50	769	5,872	37	749	6,189	44	711	5,921
not reported	9	166	1,139	15	197	1,285	17	213	1,372	19	256	1,647

[1] Defined here as three or four wheeled cars.

[2] Includes seating position not recorded.

Transport Authorities (Government Funding)

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what criteria the Government fund *(a)* 12 per cent. of West Yorkshire's public transport expenditure and *(b)* 36 per cent. of the expenditure of most other passenger transport authorities.

Mr. Channon: Like all other local authorities, the block grant allocation of each passenger transport authority depends on its grant-related expenditure per head, its rateable value per head and its expenditure per head in excess of its GRE. West Yorkshire's GRE is significantly lower than four of the other five PTAs, and its expenditure is substantially in excess of its GRE.

Driving Tests

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his proposals for driving licence tests.

Mr. Peter Bottomley *[pursuant to his reply, 18 November 1987]:* The aim of the review was to find ways of improving the driver testing service without prejudicing its integrity. I am determined to cut the queues for tests; to reduce the wastage of resources implicit in a failure rate of over 50 per cent; and to end the situation in which candidates — the customers — cannot get through to booking sections on the telephone.

The report has just been submitted. It proposes a strategy for immediate action to cut waiting times quickly and a package of longer-term measures to improve the standard of candidates coming for test and hence increase the pass rate. Provided these improvements can be delivered, I am inclined to accept the review's general conclusion that the best way forward would be to build on the current system rather than to privatise driver testing. I have accordingly asked for an action plan to be formulated as a matter of priority.

The review emphasises that too many candidates take the test too soon and fail. That lengthens the queues for everyone else. The worst 20 per cent. of candidates have virtually no chance of passing. If they delayed their tests until they were ready, queues could be halved in a year. Candidates should seek and follow their instructors' advice about whether they are ready to take the test and instructors should give firm and professional advice even where it may be unwelcome.

The review also discusses ways of providing learner drivers with a better basis on which to choose a good instructor and of encouraging all instructors to bring their performance up to the standard of the best. These are very important aspects. Good teaching produces good drivers. I am keen to move forward in these areas as quickly as possible and am consulting those concerned with a view to finalising a programme for action early in the new year which might contribute to my general goal of improving driving standards and reducing casualties.

I am placing copies of the report in the Library.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal if he will list in full those substantive motions arising from reports of departmental Select Committees which have been agreed to by the House.

Mr. Wakeham: The following is the information:

On 5 June 1980 it was resolved, "That this House welcomes the important contribution made by the Report of the Home Affairs Committee relating to section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824, accepts the need for a change in the law, and looks forward to the imminent publication of the Law Commission's Report on Attempt and to the public response to these reports, as providing the basis for an early decision as to the best way of reforming the law while ensuring adequate protection for the public." (The motion was amended.)

On 5 December 1980 it was resolved, "That this House takes note of the Second Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1979-80, on perinatal and neonatal mortality (House of Commons Paper No. 663) and the relevant Government Observations (Cmnd. 8084)."

On 6 June 1985 it was resolved, "That this House notes that the period for consultation on the consultative document on wages councils is only just ending and representations are still being received; and asks the Government to take into account the views of the Employment Committee, together with very many other responses from interested organisations and individuals." (The motion was amended.)

On 13 May 1986 it was resolved, "That this House welcomes the steps taken by the Government to keep the House and the public informed of the consequences for the United Kingdom of the accident at the nuclear plant at Chernobyl in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; endorses the Government's commitment to the safety of the complete nuclear fuel cycle in the United Kingdom; and in that context approves the Government's first stage response on 2 May to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste (House of Commons Paper No. 191), setting out as it does the principles against which current proposals to dispose of low-level radioactive waste can be considered." (An amendment was moved to the motion.)

On 7 July 1986 it was resolved,"That this House endorses the Government's response (HC 457) to the Second Report from the Trade and Industry Committee on the Tin Crisis (HC 305-I); regrets the difficulties brought upon the Cornish tin industry, the International Tin Council's creditors and others as a result of the failure of the International Tin Council to reach agreement with its creditors, despite the considerable efforts made by the Government, and welcomes the Government's package of measures to help employment in Cornwall." (An amendment was moved to the motion.)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord Privy Seal, for each of the years since the establishment of the new Select Committees, if he will list the number of reports published, the number debated on the Floor of the House, and the number voted upon.

Mr. Wakeham: A total of 565 reports have been published by the departmental Select Committees since 1979. During the same period, 60 reports from departmental Select Committees have been referred to on the Order Paper as relevant to debates in the House in accordance with the views expressed by the Liaison Committee. Sixteen reports have been debated in relation to the consideration of the Estimates; four on motions for the Adjournment; and six reports have been named in substantive motions. Votes were taken on four of these substantive motions.

EMPLOYMENT

Beach-cleaning Projects

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many beach-cleaning projects have been agreed to with the Manpower Services Commission for community programmes; and how many beach-cleaning projects under the community programme have been vetoed by trades unions.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not available.

YMCA (Portsmouth)

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will seek to amend the law or change the practice which leads the Manpower Services Commission to prevent the YMCA, Penny street, Old Portsmouth, from advertising for an employee to help with Manpower Services Commission training schemes in terms of a supporter of the Christian aims and purposes of the YMCA; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No such restriction has been imposed.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if any residential accommodation is provided for Ministers in his Department and charged to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: No residential accommodation is provided for Ministers in this Department.

Community Programme

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list community programme schemes which have not been proceeded with as a result of failure to secure trades union co-operation or agreement.

Mr. Lee: The Manpower Services Commission does not keep records of community programme project proposals which do not proceed.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Diplomatic Bag

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish evidence available to him on the use of the diplomatic bag for smuggling cannabis, heroin and black rhino horn into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: We have no evidence that the diplomatic bag is used for smuggling cannabis, heroin and black rhino horn into the United Kingdom.

British Subjects (Imprisonment)

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of British subjects currently imprisoned in *(a)* Iran, *(b)* Iraq and *(c)* Libya, and the offences they were charged with.

Mr. Eggar: There are two British citizens, Mr. Roger Cooper and Mr. Nicolaos Yianni Nicola, detained in Iran. Despite our repeated representations neither has been formally charged.

There are two British citizens, Mr. John Smith and Mr. Ian Richter, imprisoned in Iraq. Mr. Smith was convicted on a charge of bribery, and Mr. Richter was convicted on charges of bribery and forgery. There is one British citizen, Mr. James Abra, imprisoned in Libya. He was convicted on a charge of jeopardising revolutionary security by passing secret information to an agent or agents of a foreign Government (espionage).

Non-Proliferation Treaty (Pakistan)

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has concerning alleged breaches by Pakistan of the non-proliferation treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Pakistan has not signed the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Alex Archibald

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken in the case of Alex Archibald, the Scot held by the Thai authorities, for alleged currency offences.

Mr. Eggar: Our consular staff in Bankok visit Mr. Archibald regularly. We remain in touch with his family.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date and with what procedure and ceremony, the Anglo-Irish Agreement was registered with the United Nations Organisation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Anglo-Irish Agreement was registered, in accordance with article 102 of the charter, at 11 am on 19 December 1985 simultaneously by the permanent representatives of Ireland and of the United Kingdom.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any residential accommodation is provided for Ministers in his Department and charged to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: A flat in a Government building is provided for my right hon. and learned Friend in central London.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Lord Chancellor (Pension)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the pension payable to a retired Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Brooke: Since section 29 of the Parliamentary and Other Pensions Act 1972 provides that the Lord Chancellor's pension shall be a fixed proportion of final salary, the pensions of former Lord Chancellors reflect their salary at the time of retirement. These pensions attract pensions increase under the Pensions Increase Act 1971, subject to the condition that they may not exceed the pension that would be payable to the incumbent if he retired. Thus, pensions of former Lord Chancellors cannot at present exceed £35,275.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the pension payable to a former Lord Chancellor is paid in full where the former Lord Chancellor is appointed to a judicial office.

Mr. Brooke: No. Under the letters patent granted to each Lord Chancellor, a pension is not payable while he is in receipt of moneys from an office of profit under the crown equal to or greater than the value of the pension. If the remuneration from such an office is less than the pension, the pension is abated by the amount of such remuneration.

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Brooke: In 1985-86, the Treasury incurred expenditure on the employment of advertising agents for work on two privatisations:

Britoil—August 1985—Dewe Rogerson Ltd.
Cable & Wireless — December 1985 — Collett Dickinson, Pearce & Partners.

In addition, the Central Office of Information incurred expenditure on the Treasury's behalf for the Cable & Wireless prospectus using Dorland Advertising Limited.

Total pre-sale publicity costs (excluding VAT) for each of the two privatisations were:

	£'000
Cable & Wireless	2,422
Britoil	3,528

United States Dollars

Mr. Eastham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been spent so far in 1987 by the Bank of England in purchasing United States dollars.

Mr. Lilley: It is not the practice to disclose details of intervention.

Authorised Deposit Takers

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to what criteria will be used in determining whether, when, and which Japanese finance houses join the list of authorised deposit takers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lilley: The criteria envisaged in the Banking Act 1987.

Standard Chartered Bank

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to whether the Bank of England will make public the conclusions of its investigation into the recent affairs of Standard Chartered bank.

Mr. Lilley: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member on 26 October at column *33*, the full report of the investigation will be subject to Banking Act confidentiality. However, the Bank of England has said that it intends to make the general conclusions public.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if there are any plans to privatise holdings run by the Crown Estate Commissioners in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: There are no such plans.

Interest Rates

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the level of interest rates.

Mr. Lilley: Bank base rates are 9 per cent.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the projected level of public expenditure on housing for 1987-88 compared with 1979, expressed at current prices.

Mr. Major: The table compares the estimated outturn of public expenditure on housing in Great Britain for 1987-88 with the outturn of expenditure for 1978-79 expressed at 1987-88 prices.

Housing Expenditure in Great Britain

£ million

	Gross capital	*[1]Current*
[2]1978-79	6,434	3,493
1987-88	4,704	1,524

[1] Figures include Rate Fund Contribution and non-Housing Revenue Account expenditure.

[2] 1987-88 prices using GDP deflator.

EC Economic and Finance Council

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Economic and Finance Council.

Mr. Lawson: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 16 November. I represented the United Kingdom. Recent developments in the financial and foreign exchange markets were discussed. The council considered it of high importance that the fiscal and monetary co-operation agreed at the Louvre should be continued. European countries were determined to improve the conditions for further internally generated non-inflationary growth, and they intend to co-operate actively with other countries to ensure a more stable development of world financial and foreign exchange markets. Early and appropriate decisions on a further substantial reduction of the United States budget deficit were considered to be especially urgent.

The Council agreed that the monetary committee and committee of central bank governors should be asked to study and report as soon as possible on the Commission's proposals on liberalisation of capital movements and related matters.

The Council confirmed that the economic policy committee should carry out rapidly an economic analysis of the Commission's proposals for the abolition of fiscal frontiers prior to further consideration of the proposals by the Council. I made it clear that the United Kingdom would not permit to come into force any proposals that in any way conflicted with pledges Her Majesty's Government has given concerning the United Kingdom's zero rates of VAT.

The Commission undertook to produce a new proposal for a common system of VAT for works of art, antiques and other used goods. It was agreed that further preparation should be undertaken for a future Council discussion of the draft 18th VAT directive abolishing certain derogations contained in the sixth VAT directive.

The Council agreed that a directive on investment by unit trusts in mortgage-type bonds should be submitted to the European Parliament after the United Kingdom parliamentary scrutiny reserve is raised.

VAT

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total net yield from value added tax on admissions to museums and galleries in the United Kingdom in each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 18 November 1987]*: Returns rendered by VAT-registered public museums, libraries and galleries do not distinguish amounts of tax charged on particular aspects of their business, for example on admission charges. It is not possible to identify separately information about museums and galleries from that covering the whole category of museums, libraries and galleries. Aggregate figures of tax due, tax deductible and net tax repayable for such bodies are as follows:

Year	*Tax due* *£ million*	*Tax deductible* *£ million*	*Net tax repayable* *£ million*
1984-85	3·9	4·3	−0·4
1985-86	5·2	6·0	−0·8
1986-87	5·8	7·2	−1·4

THE ARTS

Collections (Display)

Mr. Miller: To ask the Minister for the Arts (1) what proportion of the collections acquired by them have been displayed to the public during the last three years in *(a)* the Tate gallery, *(b)* the National gallery and *(c)* the British museum;

(2) what proportion of the collections bequeathed to them have been displayed to the public during the last three years in *(a)* the Tate gallery, *(b)* the National gallery and *(c)* the British museum.

Mr. Luce: All the pictures in the National gallery collection, whether bequeathed or acquired by other means are on permanent display to the public. This is not possible for the Tate gallery or the British museum whose collections are very much larger. Statistics are not available in the form asked for, but all the national museums and galleries are aware of the priority I attach to improving public access to their collections. Any items not selected for permanent display, either because constant exposure would damage them or because space is not available, are, however, available to the public on request. In addition, both institutions regularly rotate items between their reserve collections and public display. I continue to encourage our great national museums and galleries to make the national treasures which they house more widely accessible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Balderton Hospital

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when a decision will be taken on the future of the Eastdale unit at Balderton hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: A decision will be taken following the consultation currently being undertaken by Central Nottinghamshire district health authority.

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what consultation procedure with interested bodies will take place on the proposed closure of the Eastdale unit at Balderton hospital; how it will be undertaken; and which community health council will be consulted.

Mrs. Currie: The Central Nottinghamshire district health authority has issued a consultation document to all interested organisations, in accordance with the normal procedures for consultation on proposed hospital closures. Bassetlaw, Central Nottinghamshire, Nottingham, North Lincolnshire and South Lincolnshire community health councils are being consulted.

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, pending a decision on the future of the Eastdale unit at Balderton hospital, it will continue to be available as an option when the discharge or transfer of a patient from a special hospital is being considered by any person or body, including mental health review tribunals, who has responsibility for discharging such a patient; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The unit will remain an option pending a decision on its future.

Mr. Irving: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the average annual cost for the financial years 1981-82 and 1985-86 of running the Eastdale unit; how many patients in each of these years were resident throughout the year and what was the cost per patient; and what was the average cost of keeping a patient at Rampton hospital for the same period.

Mrs. Currie: The annual cost of running the Eastdale unit in the financial years 1981-82 and 1985-86 was £229,000 and £256,000 respectively. No patient was resident in the unit throughout 1981-82; four were resident throughout 1985-86. The cost per patient was £16,099 in 1981-82 and £24,461 in 1985-86. The cost per patient in Rampton hospital was £16,273 in 1981-82 and £30,411 in 1985-86.

Single Payments

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the totals disbursed in each of the past 10 years, at constant prices, by his Department's offices at *(a)* Johnstone, *(b)* Greenock and *(c)* Irvine in respect of single payments for essential items.

Mr. Portillo: Information regarding the amount paid in single payments for essential items at the Department's local offices at *(a)* Johnstone, *(b)* Greenock and *(c)* Irvine is given at 1987 equivalent prices in the table.

Year	*Johnstone* £	*Greenock* £	*Irvine* £
1979-80	227,271	172,646	420,178
1980-81	345,789	415,490	547,070
1981-82	323,062	276,921	606,136
1982-83	569,295	496,443	1,098,048
1983-84	646,362	676,405	1,483,678
1984-85	889,941	931,637	1,750,995
1985-86	1,020,589	1,141,368	1,887,647
[1] 1986-87	927,633	1,595,050	1,895,566

Note: Information is given for the year April to April and is not available for any period before April 1979.

[1] Figures for 1986-87 are provisional.

Solihull District General Hospital

Mr. John M. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement as to when each of the principal phases of the new Solihull district general hospital will commence and when the whole scheme will be concluded.

Mrs. Currie: The West Midlands regional health authority is responsible for the management of building schemes contained in its operational capital programme. I understand that decisions are due to be taken shortly concerning the rescheduling of schemes in the programme to enable the authority to remain within budget. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority for the information he requires.

Supplementary Benefit

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in *(a)* Greenock and Port Glasgow, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole were receiving supplementary benefit payments above the standard rate in order to help pay residential or nursing home fees at the latest available date; and if h[illegible]will estimate the total amount of supplementary benefi[illegible]id to those claimants.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Blood Transfusion

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list any regional blood transfusion centres which have since 1982 *(a)* experienced a shortage of supplies and *(b)* been unable to supply blood to National Health Service hospitals; and what was the duration of the interruption of supply in each case.

Mrs. Currie: Since 1982 no emergency surgery has been suspended because of shortages of blood from the national blood transfusion service. It is for regional transfusion directors to advise hospitals whether blood for elective surgery is to be restricted, and this information is not held centrally. We are aware that shortages of blood for elective surgery have occurred in London primarily because of its many specialist hospitals.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, by regional transfusion centre, the units of blood supplied to non-National Health Service hospitals since 1982.

Mrs. Currie: The figures held centrally for units of blood supplied from regional transfusion centres to non-NHS hospitals since 1982 are as follows:

Regional Blood Transfusion Centre	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Northern	0	2,236	1,739	1,722	1,678
Yorkshire	0	0	950	1,589	2,443
Trent	331	102	2	0	20
East Anglia	2,078	1,864	1,690	1,758	1,655
North West Thames	14,580	19,439	22,413	21,512	21,955
North East Thames	6	0	0	0	127
South East and South West Thames	9,141	10,174	10,433	13,885	17,857
Wessex	0	257	1,342	2,333	2,523
Oxford	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]	[1]
South Western	1,259	1,241	4,338	4,032	2,315
West Midlands	2,628	3,512	3,601	4,431	10,154
Mersey	0	0	0	0	0
North Western	1,414	1,961	2,724	3,065	3,313
England	31,437	40,786	49,232	54,327	64,040

[1] Oxford have previously been included as a "nil return". It is now thought that this may be incorrect and is being followed up.

Cataract Unit (Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposed day care cataract unit at Manchester royal eye hospital.

Mr. Newton: The provision of patient services at local level is a matter for individual health authorities in conjunction with their regional health authority. The hon. Member may therefore wish to address any queries he has to the chairman of the Central Manchester health authority.

Adjudications

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the practice of tribunals in cases where a notice of appeal against the decision of an adjudication officer is made orally by a claimant.

Mr. Portillo: Under regulation 3(1) of the Social Security (Adjudication) Regulations 1986, appeals to tribunals against adjudication officers' decisions must be in writing. Where an appeal is made verbally, it cannot be accepted as an appeal, and the claimant is advised to lodge a written appeal. Where such an appeal is subsequently received it is treated as though it had been lodged on the date of the original verbal appeal.

AIDS

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the projections of AIDS infections in the United Kingdom undertaken by the communicable diseases surveillance centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Last year the communicable diseases surveillance centre published projections for new cases first presenting with symptoms in 1987 and 1988: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 2 July 1987 at column *150*. These cases would not be expected to be reported to CDSC until some time later.

The number of reported new AIDs cases is at present doubling every 10 months. If this rate continues during the fourth quarter of 1987, the communicable disease surveillance centre expects a total of about 1,270 cases to have been reported by the end of this year. It expects about 1,500 new cases of Aids to be reported in 1988. These cases of course reflect the pattern and rate of spread of HIV infection some years ago; and on present evidence it is not possible to make reliable estimates for later years.

Mr. Chris Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what reports have been received from the communicable disease surveillance centre of any British citizen having become HIV positive as a result of *(a)* needlestick injuries and *(b)* blood splashes.

Mr. Newton: The communicable diseases surveillance centre (CDSC) has received one report of a nurse who seroconverted following a needlestick injury. However, in this case, a small amount of infected blood may have also been injected. The CDSC has received no reports of anyone becoming HIV positive as a result of being splashed with infected blood.

Residential Homes

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is *(a)* the number and *(b)* the total cost of supplementary benefit claims paid to elderly residents of residential establishments and nursing homes for each office of his Department in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that the information requested is not collected by individual local offices and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Attendance Allowance

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates would be the annual cost of removing the minimum age requirement for payment of the attendance allowance.

Mr. Scott: It is estimated that the complete removal of the lower age limit for entitlement to attendance allowance would result in additional benefit expenditure of about £17 million in a full year at April 1988 rates.

Ambulances

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which ambulance authorities met the ORCON standard for emergency services in 1986; and which ambulance authorities did not meet the ORCON standard in 1986.

Mr. Newton: The information requested will not be available until January 1988. I will arrange for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Cytology

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage of unfilled posts in National Health Service cytology laboratories.

Mrs. Currie: I regret that information on vacancies for staff in National Health Service cytology laboratories is not collected centrally.

Mr. Miller (Pension)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department will have finalised the pension award to Mr. Miller, a constituent of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate, under investigation since January.

Mr. Scott: The query concerning Mr. Miller's 1980-81 contributions has now been resolved and the local office has been instructed to pay arrears of additional pension. Further adjustment will be required on account of increments to the additional pension and this will be dealt with as soon as possible. A final statement of Mr. Miller's entitlement will be sent to him in the near future. I will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is currently the total number of bed spaces in resettlement units managed by his Department; what have been the occupancy rates over the past year for each unit; and what breakdown is available by age and ethnic origin of the people using each unit.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that there is no breakdown by age and ethnic origin of people using each unit.

The other information requested is as follows:

(1) The total number of bed spaces in the resettlement units managed by the Department is currently 1,836.

(2) The average occupancy rate for each unit for the year ending 20 October 1987 is as follows:

Resettlement unit	*Capacity*	*Average occupancy rate (per cent.)*
London		
Bridge House (Notting Hill)	120	93
Cedars Lodge (South West London)	100	73
Lancelot Andrewes House (Southwark)	60	96
Pound Lodge (Willesden)	80	81
Spur House (South East London)	150	70
West End House (Soho)	120	89
Camden	40	85
Outside London		
Brighton	38	85
Sittingbourne	60	80
Southampton	80	100
Winterborne (Bristol)	70	79
South Wales (Bridgend)	64	63
Newbury	66	91
Fazakerley (Liverpool)	51	95
Walkden (Manchester)	82	94
West Midlands (Lye)	123	62
Alvaston (Derby)	74	90
Leeds	96	68
Leicester	87	82
Woodhouse (Sheffield)	96	70
Bishopbriggs (Glasgow)	77	89
Plawsworth (Durham)	102	70
Total	1,836	

Births

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of live births per special care baby cot in each *(a)* district health authority and *(b)* regional health authority in each of the last six years;

(2) what was the number of low and very low birth weight babies per neonatal intensive-care cot for each *(a)* district health authority and *(b)* regional health authority;

(3) what was the number of births per midwife for each *(a)* district health authority and *(b)* regional health authority in each of the last six years.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The information the hon. Member seeks has now been placed in the Library.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his Department's allowance paid to private nursing homes for each National Health Services patient transferred from mental hospitals.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 9 November 1987]:* Arrangements for transferring patients from long-stay hospitals under the care in the community initiative are for local negotiation. Health authorities meet the cost of contractual arrangements for patient care they make with the private sector. Charges vary according to individual circumstances.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will indicate the number of availability cases referred to the social security appeals tribunal, indicating the success rate of such cases when so referred.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: A total of 631 appeals were heard in Great Britain in the three months ending 31 March 1987 against the disallowance of unemployment benefit because of non availability for work, of which 212 (34 per cent.) were decided in the claimant's favour. A further 85 appeals were heard against the disallowance of unemployment benefit because the claimant had restricted his or her availability for work, of which 39 (46 per cent.) were decided in the claimant's favour.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, (1) further to his reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *878*, to what factors he attributes the increase in the numbers of disallowances between 1980 and 1986;

(2) further to the reply of 22 October, *Official Report*, column *878*,. if he will give a breakdown of the number of disallowances for 1980 and 1986 by sex and age.

Mr. Lee *[holding answer 16 November 1987]*: Statistics of disallowances are not maintained broken down by age and sex and this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

As regards the increase in the monthly average number of disallowances between the last quarter of 1980 and the last quarter of 1986, I regret that the figures given in the reply of 22 October should have read 3,400 and 6,400 respectively.

Without an in-depth study of availability decisions over the period, it is not possible to state definitively what factors contributed to this increase.

Hospital Admissions

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services which are the 10 most common illnesses suffered by patients admitted to National Health Service hospitals for more than seven days.

Mrs. Currie: *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The table shows the 10 most common conditions and groups of conditions for which patients were hospitalised for more than seven days, in order of the greatest numbers of discharge following a stay of seven days or more.

Principal conditions requiring in-patient duration of stay in excess of 7 days, NHS hospitals, England, 1985.

	Diagnosis Codes[1]	*Condition*
1.	D29/31 (Part)	Mental Illness.[2]
2.	D34/33	Diseases of the digestive system.
3.	D43	Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue.
4.	D32/39	Diseases of the respiratory system.
5.	D27	Ischaemic heart disease.
6.	D47	Fractures
7.	D29	Cerebrovascular disease.
8.	D28	Disease of pulmonary circulation and other forms of heart disease.
9.	D37	Diseases of female genital organs including disorders of breast.
10.	D09	Malignant neoplasms of digestive organs and peritoneum.

[1] Based on the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, 1975—9th revision.

[2] Includes depressive disorders, affective psychoses, schizophrenic psychoses, senile and pre-senile dementia, neurotic disorders.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table based on Table 3.14 of the public expenditure White paper (Cm 56-II) with all the figures converted to 1986-87 prices;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table based on Table 3.14.1 of the public expenditure White paper (Cm 56-II) with all the figures converted to 1986-87 prices.

Mr. Newton *[holding answers 26 October 1987]*: The information is as follows:

£ million
(1986-87 prices)

	1981-82 outturn	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 estimated outturn*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY									
Health services									
Hospital, community health and related services									
Current expenditure									
gross	9,830	9,840	9,901	10,032	9,950	10,430	10,661	10,765	10,859
charges	−82	−80	−84	−85	−89	−86	−86	−84	−90
net	9,748	9,760	9,817	9,946	9,861	10,344	10,575	10,672	10,768
Capital expenditure									
gross	858	825	815	881	911	893	889	885	895
receipts	−26	−23	−38	−56	−88	−131	−131	−130	−136
net	833	802	777	825	822	762	758	754	759
Family practitioner services									
Current expenditure									
gross	3,202	3,451	3,550	3,741	3,709	3,895	4,070	4,125	4,277
charges	−299	−336	−353	−368	−346	−381	−374	−391	−398
net	2,903	3,116	3,197	3,373	3,363	3,514	3,696	3,744	3,879

	1981-82 outturn	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 outturn*	*1986-87 estimated outturn*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*	*1989-90 plans*
Capital expenditure (net)	6	7	8	8	10	13	10	9	9
Central health and miscellaneous services									
Current expenditure									
gross	292	305	337	351	367	390	399	382	380
charges	−9	−11	−13	−11	−7	−10	−10	−9	−9
net	283	295	324	340	359	380	389	373	371
Capital expenditure (net)	19	24	32	33	24	22	13	19	18
Departmental administration									
Current expenditure (3)	88	89	103	130	128	122	131	130	127
Capital expenditure (net)	3	1	2	2	5	8	13	9	9
Total National Health Service									
Current expenditure									
gross	13,412	13,686	13,891	14,254	14,153	14,836	15,261	15,394	15,642
charges	13,022	13,259	13,441	13,790	13,711	14,360	14,792	14,909	15,153
Capital expenditure									
gross	886	856	857	922	952	936	924	913	931
net	861	833	820	868	861	804	792	782	796
Personal social services									
Central government services									
Current expenditure	13	12	14	13	13	14	14	19	18
Capital expenditure (net)	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Local authority services									
Current expenditure									
gross	2,683	2,747	2,838	2,887	2,875	3,104	3,183	3,166	3,155
charges	−391	−402	−405	−402	−400	−432	−442	−438	−443
net	2,292	2,345	2,434	2,485	2,474	2,672	2,740	2,729	2,712
Capital expenditure									
gross	100	93	103	109	108	114	105	102	99
receipts	−10	−13	−19	−25	−30	−28	−27	−28	−27
net	90	80	83	85	78	86	78	75	72
Total personal social service									
Current expenditure									
gross	2,696	2,759	2,851	2,900	2,888	3,118	3,198	3,185	3,164
net	2,304	2,359	2,447	2,498	2,487	2,686	2,755	2,747	2,730
Capital expenditure									
gross	100	93	103	109	108	114	105	102	99
net	91	81	84	85	78	86	78	75	72
Public corporations									
General Practice Finance Corporation	5	5	15	25	24	27	12	—	—
Total health and personal social services									
Current expenditure									
gross	16,108	16,445	16,742	17,156	17,042	17,955	18,461	18,569	18,815
charges	−783	−828	−854	−867	−843	−909	−914	−922	−931
net	15,325	15,617	15,888	16,289	16,200	17,046	17,547	17,647	17,884
Capital expenditure									
gross	992	954	975	1,058	1,083	1,077	1,041	1,006	1,031
net	958	919	918	978	962	917	882	847	877
Regional and general industrial support									
Current expenditure	17	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	—
Civil defence									
Current expenditure	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	—	—
Total Department of Health and Social Security—Health and personal social services (net)	16,302	16,538	16,815	17,269	17,164	17,965	18,432	18,504	18,761

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[1] This table is derived from Table 3.14 in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90 Vol. 2 (Cm. 56-II); all figures have been converted to 1986-87 prices using the GDP deflator.

[2] Footnotes to the original table have not been reproduced, but still apply.

[3] For 1985-86, the figure of £100 million in the White Paper was an error. This has been corrected to £124 million before revaluing to 1986-87 prices. The corrected figure is also reflected in the totals for NHS, HPSS and DHSS expenditure.

Table 3.14.1 Analysis by broad economic category

	1981-82 outturn £ million	*1982-83 outturn £ million*	*1983-84 outturn £ million*	*1984-85 outturn £ million*	*1985-86 outturn £ million*	*1986-87 estimated outturn £ million*	*1987-88 plans £ million*	*1988-89 plans £ million*	*1989-90 plans £ million*
Departmental running costs	132	134	152	181	179	175	188	186	190
Running costs receipts	−3	−1	−1	−1	−2	−1	−1	—	—
Other public sector pay	9,233	9,249	9,347	9,432	9,377	9,860	10,096	10,169	10,226
Transfers to the personal sector	45	52	64	72	72	97	67	65	63
Purchases of assets, goods and services	6,851	7,079	7,207	7,534	7,488	7,778	8,039	8,055	8,246
Transfers to the corporate sector	22	5	22	26	24	27	12	—	—
Payment overseas	22	21	25	26	26	30	30	37	36
Total expenditure	16,302	16,538	16,815	17,269	17,164	17,965	18,432	18,504	18,761
Contribution to total public sector capital spending[1]	967	932	931	1,011	1,037	1,029	1,010	987	1,013

[1] This table is derived from Table 3.14.1 in the Government's Expenditure Plans 1987-88 to 1989-90 Vol. 2 (Cm 56-II); all figures have been converted to 1986-87 prices using the GDP deflator.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been cleared from police cells in the last month; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Since 15 October, well over 1,000 prisoners have been taken out of police cells in to prison establishments, and the number of males held in police cells in the south-east has reduced from almost 1,150 to just over 500. The planned movement of prisoners from police cells into prison establishments has been affected by a further substantial increase in the prison population but work continues. In the north region an average of 155 male prisoners has been locked out each night, but the conversion of Hindley from a youth custody centre to a remand centre will resolve this.

Computer Hacking

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals for the amendment of section 8 of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 so as to make computer hacking an offence pursuant to that section, having regard to the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Regina *v.* Gold (1987) 3 All ER 618.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 30 October 1987 at column *455.*

London Lorry Ban

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been instituted by the Metropolitan police in respect of transgressions of the lorry ban in London in 1986 and the current year to date.

Mr. John Patten: Such prosecutions are not recorded separately in the information available.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any residential accommodation is provided for Ministers in his Department and charged to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Department meets the basic costs of the Home Secretary's official residence: rent; rates; heating; lighting; water rates; maintenance and minor works; furniture and fittings.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate, for *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* England and Wales: (i) the number of cases awaiting decisions by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and (ii) the average length of time taken to dispose of such cases; and if he has any proposals to reduce the time taken to dispose of such cases.

Mr. John Patten: There are about 74,000 applications awaiting resolution by the board. Information on the number of which came from Scotland and from England and Wales is not readily available. Figures published by the board in its annual reports show, however, that about 16 per cent. of all applications arise from incidents in Scotland. On that basis, it is estimated that about 12,000 of the 74,000 total are Scottish cases.

Information is not available on the average length of time taken to deal with applications to the board. As stated in the board's latest annual report (Cm. 42, paragraph 5) copies of which are in the Library, 70 per cent. of cases resolved in the financial year 1985-86 were decided within a year of application.

To help reduce the delays in dealing with applications, the Government have made available an extra £33 million for the criminal injuries compensation scheme for this financial year—an increase of about two thirds over the previous planned provision—and additional funding for later years. This has enabled the board to recruit additional staff for a new office in Glasgow. When fully operational, the Glasgow office will deal with all applications from Scotland and a proportion of those from England and Wales, as well as helping the London office to reduce the arrears.

Footballers (Offences)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many professional footballers have been charged in courts with offences relating to their conduct on the field over the past 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is not available from the records of the results of court proceedings held centrally. However, I understand from the Professional Footballers Association that there has been only one case in the English league since 1977 when a player has been prosecuted following an incident during a match.

Police Horses

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many horses used by the Metropolitan police and retired in each of the past three years have been sold for the purposes of serum production or research or for other experimental purposes; and what are the other destinations for horses unwanted for further police purposes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that none of the police horses retired in the past three years has been sold for purposes of serum production, research or for other experimental purposes. Horses unfit for work are retired to recognised rest homes, humanely destroyed on the advice of a veterinary surgeon and in the presence of a mounted branch officer, or sometimes sold to mounted branch officers. Horses found to be temperamentally unsuitable are sold at the Reading horse sales.

British Nationality

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to advise citizens of dependent territories resident in Britain and seeking British nationality as to the applicability to them of the 31 December deadline for registration.

Mr. Renton: Our information programme has been directed to those eligible to be registered as British citizens under sections 7 and 8 of the British Nationality Act 1981, who must apply before 31 December 1987. No such deadline applies to British dependent territories citizens, who will continue to be able to apply for registration under section 4 on grounds of residence here.

Prisons (Disturbances)

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the action plan on Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons' report on the 1986 prison disturbances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I have now received and endorsed the action plan prepared by the director general of the prison service on the report by the previous Chief Inspector of Prisons, Sir James Hennessy, on the 1986 prison disturbances. As I reported to the House when announcing publication of the report on 16 July, action had been set in hand on a number of fronts, including contingency planning, before the chief inspector's report was received. Work has continued since.

Following the chief inspector's report, all establishments were required to review their contingency arrangements in the light of his findings and to submit revised plans to prison department headquarters by the end of the year. New guidance is to be issued shortly on the industrial relations and personnel management aspects of planning responses to industrial action.

As regards the chief inspector's conclusions on the wider issues, work is being taken forward in the context of the major changes in management structure and working practices — known as fresh start — now being introduced in the prison service.

Metropolitan Police (Inspection)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made for Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary to contribute to the inspection of the Metropolitan police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: At the invitation of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary will in future conduct inspections of aspects of the Metropolitan police. The inspections will complement the internal inspection arrangements already existing in the Metropolitan police, copies of reports of which I already receive.

The inspections will ensure that the Metropolitan police and provincial forces share the experience and best practice of each other. Reports of inspections will be submitted to the Commissioner of Police and to me. The programme of inspections will be agreed between Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary, the Commissioner of Police and myself.

SCOTLAND

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Rifkind: Two advertising agencies, Woolward McCann Limited and Ogilvy and Mather Scotland Limited, handled my Department's publicity campaigns in the financial year 1985-86.

The subjects of the campaigns and the cost of each were as follows:

	£
Ogilvy & Mather	
Right to Buy	96,453·30
Children's Panels	25,009·36
	121,462·66
Woolward McCann	

	£
Rates Revaluation	3,087·75
Crime Prevention	45,813·09
Fire Prevention	85,794·25
Multi-Organ Donor Cards	27,649·53
Electoral Registration	27,528·65
Industrial Development Drive	1,439·94
Local Enterprise Week	2,516·01
Scottish Economic Bulletin	1,534·96
Career Service	30,963·07
Botanic Gardens	6,745·02
Road Safety	30,000·45
Control of Pollution	11,054·11
Ombudsman	5,825·21
	279,952·59

Figures include VAT where applicable.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of job vacancies in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency for the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: Vacancy statistics are not available on a parliamentary constituency basis. However, the number of vacancies notified and remaining unfilled on 2 October 1987 at the jobcentres in Barrhead, Govan and Shawlands, which inter alia serve residents of the Glasgow Pollok parliamentary constituency, was 1,094 including 257 community programme vacancies). It is estimated that only around one third of all vacancies nationally are notified to jobcentres.

This information is available in the Library.

Scottish Special Housing Association

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what effect the proposals contained in the recent Scottish Homes document will have on the rights of Scottish Special Housing Association tenants, as guaranteed under the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. It is proposed that tenants of Scottish Homes shall have exactly the same rights as tenants of the Scottish Special Housing Association. This is made clear in the White Paper, "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland" (Cm. 242), which was published last week. The White Paper also makes it clear that the Government propose to give further rights to public sector tenants, from which the tenants of Scottish Homes will benefit.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the cost to the Scottish Special Housing Association of sending copies of his reply to John Reynolds to all the association's tenants in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This is a matter for the Scottish Special Housing Association. I suggest that the hon. Member writes to the chairman of the association.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give a guarantee to Scottish Special Housing Association tenants that rent levels may be subject to an independent fair rent assessment.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The rents of houses let by the Scottish Special Housing Association are determined by the association, within boundaries of discretion set by my right hon. and learned Friend. On transfer of these houses to Scottish Homes, it is proposed that the rents shall continue to be determined in a similar way.

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ballot Scottish Special Housing Association tenants on the matter of whether they wish to stay within the Scottish Special Housing Association rather than being transferred to Scottish Homes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Footballers (Offences)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Lord Advocate was consulted by the procurator fiscal in Glasgow before recent charges were made against four professional footballers in respect of their conduct on the field; what offences the players have been charged with; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate was consulted by the procurator fiscal before the four players were charged by the police with breach of the peace. Since the matter is still under consideration by the procurator fiscal, it would be inappropriate for me to make any statement at this time.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to seek to establish a right to buy for tenants of housing associations and other landlords in the independent rented sector which have the benefit of access to public funds through the proposed Scottish Homes organisation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not proposed that the existence of a financial contribution by Scottish Homes towards the construction or improvement of a house should determine whether or not the house is one to which the right to buy applies.

Right to Buy

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to continue the right of public sector tenants to buy their homes where the ownership of the property is transferred to other landlords under the proposals in the White Paper "Housing: The Government's Proposals for Scotland."

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to bring forward soon detailed proposals for legislation covering various aspects of transfer of ownership of public sector housing.

School Management

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of representations he has received on the consultative paper "School Management and the Role of Parents"; how many of these representations *(a)* fully supported *(b)* partially supported, and *(c)* opposed the Government's proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: By the deadline date of 3 November we had received some 6,500 submissions. Many take the form of detailed comments on our proposals. It is not possible to classify them in the form requested. The main principle of increasing parental and community involvement in education by providing bodies at the level of the individual school is widely supported.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Information

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what advertising agents have been appointed by his Department, or by the Central Office of Information, on behalf of his Department, to handle campaigns involving the communication of information on subjects for which his Department is responsible to Parliament during the year 1985-86; what was the subject of each campaign; and how much was spent on each campaign.

Mr. Donald Thompson: In 1985-86 Doyle Dane Bernbach Ltd. was appointed by the Central Office of Information on behalf of my department to handle the rabies prevention campaign. The expenditure involved was £73,300.

Council of Ministers

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting on 16 and 17 November in Brussels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given in the House on 19 November to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fireworks

Mr. Sims: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received recently urging a ban on the retail sale of fireworks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I have received about 50 letters from hon. Members and from the public asking for further restrictions on the sale of fireworks. This is rather less than in previous years. Judging by reports from the police, fire brigades and hospitals, November the Fifth this year seems to have gone well, although it is too early to be sure about the accident and injury figures. It seems likely that the strengthened legislation against firework offences is having an effect. Our publicity campaign this year was very well received. Taking all these factors into account, I remain convinced that it would be wrong to ban the retail sale of fireworks to legitimate users because of abuse by a minority.

Mr. Sims: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the numbers of children and adults injured in accidents involving fireworks in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maude: A full breakdown of figures for 1981 to 1986 was published in the *Official Report* on 6 March 1987, columns *718-20*. The figures for 1987 will be made known to the House as soon as they are available, which is normally in March.

Office of Fair Trading

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the guidelines set forth by the Office of Fair Trading are subject to review or appeal; and whether, in view of the number of new cases, he has received further complaints about the operation of the guidelines.

Mr. Maude: The recommendations contained in the Office of Fair Trading's May 1986 review of the distribution of newspapers and periodicals are a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading. I understand that his office continues to receive a large number of representations about the wholesale supply of newspapers, and he is keeping the situation under close review.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the Government's plans to privatise the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Atkins: The Government believe that the British Steel Corporation will be best placed to continue its improvement of recent years if its activities are returned to the private sector. No decisions have yet been taken, however, as to how or when the corporation is to be privatised.

Manufacturing

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has on the level of manufacturing output in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England and *(c)* the United Kingdom (i) now and (ii) in 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Comparable information on gross domestic product for the manufacturing sector is given for Scotland, England and the United Kingdom in the 1987 and earlier editions of "Regional Trends", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Cinemas

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what information he has on the average quarterly revenue per cinema in 1967, 1977, 1985 and 1987;

(2) what information he has on the box office revenue *(a)* inclusive of value-added tax, and *(b)* exclusive of value-added tax from cinema admissions in the first quarter of 1967, 1977, 1985 and 1987;

(3) what information he has on how many cinema sites there were in operation in the United Kingdom in the first quarter of 1967, 1977, 1985 and 1987;

(4) what information he has as to how many cinema screens there were in operation in the United Kingdom in the first quarter of 1967, 1977, 1985 and 1987;

(5) what information he has as to how many admissions there were to cinemas in the United Kingdom in the first quarter of 1967, 1977, 1985 and 1987.

Mr. Butcher: The available information is given in the table:

	1967	*1977*	*1985*	*[1]1987*
Average quarterly revenue per cinema (£ thousand)[2,3]	8	21	48	90
Box office revenue (£ million)[2,4]	14	21	32	30
Number of cinema sites[4]	1,736	1,004	655	277
Number of cinema screens[4,5]	n.a.	1,510	1,238	706
Admissions (millions)[4]	66	26	17	16

n.a. = not available.

[1] Information prior to 1987 is based on statutory returns from licensed cinemas in Great Britain. 1987 figures refer to returns from a voluntary panel of cinema exhibitors in the United Kingdom.

[2] Figures for box office revenues are only available inclusive of value-added tax (VAT) for 1977 and 1985, and exclusive of VAT for 1987. VAT was not levied in 1967.

[3] Information for 1985 is based on the first quarter of the year only, that for 1987 on the first half of the year.

[4] Box office revenue and admission figures for the first quarters of 1967, and 1977 are a quarter of the annual figures. The numbers of cinema sites and screens for these years refer to licensed cinemas open at the end of the year and any open for at least 26 weeks during the year but temporarily closed at the end of the year.

[5] Information on the number of cinema screens was not collected until 1969, when there were 22 more screens than sites. The difference between the number of sites and screens in 1967—will have been small.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what information he has as to how many commercial films have been made in the United Kingdom in each year since 1977.

Mr. Butcher: Before the passing of the Films Act 1985, British films released for public exhibition in cinemas had to be registered by my Department. The 1985 Act, however, removed these registration requirements with effect from 23 May 1985 and there are no official statistics of films since that date. The information I have, which does not include training, industrial, scientific or other "corporate" films, is as follows:

Registered British Films under previous Films Acts

	Over 72 minutes	*33⅓ to 72 minutes*	*Under 33⅓ minutes*
1977	42	16	64
1978	51	8	72
1979	40	16	87
1980	41	16	66
1981	32	9	73
1982	29	4	51
1983	36	3	49
1984	37	3	26
[1]1985	18	1	7

[1] Period from 1 January 1985 to 23 May 1985 only.

British Industry (Prospects)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his latest assessment of future prospects for British industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Output should continue to expand, particularly in manufacturing industry, helped by the greater flexibility and competitiveness which our policies are designed to encourage.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 122

SESSION 1987-88

9th November-20th November 1987

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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[Mr. Barron]

The figures of youth unemployment paint a very grim picture. There are seven electoral wards in the Rother valley constituency and they all have an excess of one third of people between the ages of 18 and 25 unemployed. A total of 2,149 young people in my constituency are registered as being out of work, and that figure does not include the many hundreds of people who are on youth training schemes or community programmes.

It is not surprising that youth unemployment is so high. In the past, many young people were recruited and trained by the coal mining industry, just as I was trained in the 1960s. That no longer happens. In 1986-87, British Coal recruited only 33 workers in the whole of the south Yorkshire coalfield, and recruited only 2,000 in the country as a whole. In 1978-79, over 20,000 were recruited to the industry. Not only do young people not get jobs with British Coal, but they no longer receive any training.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Does my hon. Friend accept that nationalised industries such as the Coal Board in areas such as Yorkshire and south Wales were the main trainers of young people? By way of electrical, mining and fitting apprenticeships, young people were able to develop skills. The privatised industries, such as British Gas and in future the electricity industry and in recent years British Coal, are not training young people. That means that unemployed young people have no skills, no options and no opportunities to go into developing employment.

Mr. Barron: My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) raises an important point. I was trained as an electrician in the coal mines in the 1960s and the idea of craft apprenticeships being offered in my constituency has been unheard of for well over four years. I highlighted this major problem in the industry during a debate that I had in the House in May on youth unemployment.

Young people were not trained as electricians and fitters and for other skilled trades merely for the coal industry. It is a major point that these people were trained and entered private industry in south Yorkshire. What remains of the training programme is now threatened because young people are not being taken on. Nothing has changed since I had that debate on youth unemployment in the Rother valley. Between April and September last year, only 38·4 per cent. of YTS leavers in the Rotherham area found full-time jobs, and over 36 per cent. of YTS leavers last year in Rotherham became immediately unemployed.

It is clear that permanent jobs for young people in that area have disappeared and the training schemes that are available are not proving to be a solution to that major problem. In March this year the number of unfilled vacancies in the Rotherham-Mexborough travel-to-work area was 364. That is one vacancy per 63 persons registered as unemployed, compared with the national figure of one per 15. Training and retraining is not just a problem for school leavers, but also for miners coming out of the coal industry in my area.

The jobs and career change scheme, which is a joint enterprise between British Coal Enterprise and the Manpower Services Commission, is an inadequate response to the urgent and pressing needs of our area. Very few people have taken up the retraining scheme and even fewer have completed the course. In September last year, only 447 people had commenced retraining and only 296 completed it. It is no wonder that a report on the scheme commissioned by the Coalfield Communities Campaign and carried out by the department of land economy at Cambridge university concluded:

"the British coal scheme is not adequate to meet the scale of the problem and that training opportunities in coalfield areas are fairly limited."

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does my hon. Friend recall that, as a result of the confidence trick pulled by the Government in setting up British Coal Enterprise, the chairman of that organisation, Merrik Spanton, appeared before a group of MPs at a meeting that I chaired here just before the Recess? We asked Merrik Spanton to tell us precisely where the new jobs were in every constituency throughout the coalfields of Britain. We asked where the £30 million had gone. He would not give us a list, or place one in the Library. That scheme was set up in a flurry of excitement by the Prime Minister and the Government during the coal strike. It is a big confidence trick and no jobs have ensued. The Government ought to be surcharged for the use——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Clearly, a large number of hon. Members are waiting to take part in the debate. Interventions must be brief and hon. Members who make them will be borne in mind when they seek to catch my eye.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not think that a point of order arises. Mr. Barron.

Mr. Barron: I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that I intend to go into the details of British Coal Enterprise. *[Interruption.]* He raises a good point about British Coal Enterprise Ltd. In reality, its setting up is the only way the Government have responded to the problems in any sort of direct fashion. When it was set up I think that I described it in the House as a knee-jerk reaction to the basic problems that had caused the 1984-85 miners' strike. It was set up in the summer of 1984 as an afterthought to respond to the plight of miners involved in colliery closures and the problems that that created in coalfield communities.

The major plank of the Government's success, or non-success, story has been British Coal Enterprise Ltd. and they place great store by its claim to success. The Government say that to date it has created just over 16,000 job opportunities. British Coal Enterprise Ltd. offers three main forms of help. Two of them have provided some aid to local authorities. It has contributed to the provision of managed workshops for small businesses and has supported the enterprise agencies. They are both limited but worthwhile areas of support for local authority initiatives.

The third form of help has been loans to companies, which has assisted in the creation of about 16,000 job opportunities in the coalfields since it began. However, it is impossible to check the accuracy of the figures that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has produced, because it will not name the companies that it assists and it will not even provide a detailed regional breakdown. Loans average about only 15 per cent. of project costs and are never above 25 per cent. British Coal Enterprise Ltd. never initiates business development through its loan scheme. It tends to just marginally cut the cost of investment that would take place anyway.

On current trends, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. will reach the stage where it has outstanding loans of about £50 million, which will stabilise as repayments are made and bad debts start to be written off. The cost to the Government to provide that amount on cheap terms at the most is about £3 million a year, or about 6 per cent. In addition, it spends about another £3 million a year on salaries, managed workshops and enterprise agencies.

Recent coal job losses have been in the region of 100,000 to 150,000, depending on definition. British Coal Enterprise Ltd. aims to offset those jobs at £6 million a year, over a period of eight years, at a total cost of £48 million. Even on the most generous assumption, it envisages spending £480 per job, or an average figure of about £300 per job, to relieve those jobs that have been lost in the industry. If it could achieve that miracle in job creation, it would be in demand all over the Western world. It is just not feasible that it can do it in that fashion.

Earlier this year, the House of Commons Energy Committee report, "The Coal Industry," reported positively about some of the industry's problems. It recommended that the resources allocated to British Coal Enterprise should more nearly match the size of the problems encountered in coal mining areas. The Committee concluded in paragraph 131:

> "If the macro-economic and social disbenefits of the polices of the management of a strategic industry like coal outweigh the benefits to society of those policies, then it is the job of the government to right the balance by fiscal or other means."

In the Government's response to the report, published in May just before the general election campaign, they dodged any direct response to that recommendation.

In paragraph 133, the Committee stated:

> "The worst sort of indifference to the community is displayed when no proper opportunity is given to prepare for a closure."

That obviously referred to colliery closures. It continued:

> "The 1985 strike was precipitated by the decision to bring forward the closure of Cortonwood colliery where the NCB was regarded by miners as having broken an earlier promise to the community. There should be no further antagonising incident of this type. BC should give more warning when closures are imminent — their attitude at present appears somewhat secretive, even complacent, and we were distressed by the CCC's evidence that BC do not enter into a proper dialogue with local authorities on these matters, a criticism echoed by the Local Authorities Associations. This was the burden of a large part of the report of the independent review body which recommended a delay in the proposal to close Cadeby colliery. BC claimed in response that 'the arrangements under which the Board close collieries are more extensive in timescale and consultation with the workforce and their representatives than those of any other major employer in the country'. However, the Board must recognise the special vulnerability of mining communities which we outlined in the introduction to this report, and must take local authorities, responsible Government departments and statutory agencies into its confidence as soon as it begins to suspect that a colliery might need to be closed. Only by so doing will BC justify its claim to be 'like any good employer . . . extremely concerned about the impact of their operational decisions on both their employees and local mining communities'."

The Government's reply in paragraph 5.2 of their response referred to a timetable of four to five months if those concerned decide to challenge a closure. However, if that challenge is not made, the closure will go ahead. That affects not just those who work in the industry but the whole community. It affects small businesses, local transport, pensioners, schoolchildren and women. A number of coal mines have been closed in the last two years by the dangling of carrots with massive redundancy payments. Even this financial year, if miners do not accept closures 13 weeks from the end of the financial year, people who were considering redundancy will lose the £5,000 carrot on top of current redundancy payments.

That is how British Coal is closing coal mines at present, with no respect to the problems caused in the communities. It is a disgrace that the Government have not responded positively to what the Select Committee, which has a majority of Conservative Members, felt that they ought to do.

The Select Committee also recommended that a special ministerial Cabinet Committee should be set up. The Government, in their response, said that there was no role for a Cabinet Committee; yet they have recognised the needs of inner cities and have set up a Cabinet Committee to co-ordinate the work of seven Government Departments to set priorities and oversee results. If the inner cities need that response to their problems caused by the Government—I do not deny that they need that real commitment — so do the coalfields, as they have similarly suffered, although they need different solutions to their problems.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Does the hon. Member accept that coalfield communities in the valleys of south Wales and the other areas that he has mentioned suffer similar deprivation to many of our inner city communities? Does he agree, therefore, that it is essential not only for there to be a special programme for those communities but also that regional policies should be more effective to ensure that resources are distributed effectively?

Mr. Barron: I was about to mention that point. If one took six of the villages in my constituency and put them together, they would have similar housing problems to those of any inner city that the Government are assisting. While many coalfield areas benefit from United Kingdom assisted areas status, substantial areas are excluded, which also excludes them from any existing European aid that may be available.

In paragraph 144 of the report, the Committee stated:

> "It is far from clear that the present distribution of regional aid properly reflects the needs of the mining communities or the advantages of Community membership. We believe Government should have pressed harder to obtain a larger share of EEC aid and we urge a firmer determination to make more persuasive representations for additional assistance."

The Government did not accept that recommendation, and in paragraph 5.10 of their response they describe the objectives of their regional policy, which are:

> "to reduce employment imbalances between regions rather than dealing with particular sections of industry in decline."

If that is correct, it begs the question: when unemployment in Yorkshire is increasing, particularly in areas that have traditionally relied on coal and steel, why have the Government cut regional development grants, at 1986 prices, from £58 million in 1978-79 to £21 million in 1986-87? At the same time, they have carried through a policy of deliberately running down the steel and coal industries that south Yorkshire has been built on for generations. While the Government may argue that regional development grants are not the only avenue of assistance, other forms of help have not succeeded. Rotherham, a borough that I represent, has an enterprise

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zone and also gets selected financial assistance from the Government. However, that has not stopped unemployment increasing.

The Government have rejected the idea of tax incentives as a means of attracting the private sector into areas of high unemployment, although there are some who claim that this policy has been successful in achieving urban renewal in the United States. During September, I visited West Virginia in the United States, which is a coal mining area with problems similar to those that are faced in my constituency. In West Virginia there is a partnership scheme between local authorities and the private sector, but the British Government are less disposed to recognise the role that local authorities can play. They often ignore local authorities, presumably for party political reasons, and in so doing display a lack of common sense. Partnership schemes could help areas that have suffered from the rundown of the coal and steel industries. Unfortunately, the Government seem to be prepared to allow these areas to become wastelands.

There is evidence of that attitude in the Government's neglect of the environment within coalfield areas. Last year, at the invitation of the Coalfield Communities Campaign, the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey), who was then an Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, visited coalfield communities in Yorkshire and north Derbyshire, including the one which I represent. He was quoted in the press as saying that he was

> "deeply depressed by the experience and understood why people in the coalfield areas thought that current spending on restoring the coalfield environment was not enough to solve the problems of unemployment and increasing poverty in such areas."

It was an honest appraisal from the then Minister. The fact that the hon. Gentleman now sits on the Government Back Benches — in other words, he does not hold a ministerial position — perhaps says much for the Government's attitude to the Coalfield Communities Campaign.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): The Coalfield Communities Campaign is directed to improving the quality of life in mining communities, and the Government show no desire to help. Does my hon. Friend agree that, if the Government are not prepared to help, they should allow local authorities to spend the moneys that they have in bank deposits as a result of selling council houses so that they can help to improve the quality of life and revitalise coalfield areas? Local authorities could use these moneys to buy old pit houses. Some of the miners who live in these properties do not know who owns them. The spending of local authority money would improve the quality of life and encourage new industry and commerce to come into the areas that we are discussing.

Mr. Barron: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I can do no more than agree with him. Central Government ignore the plight of coalfield communities and prevent initiatives being taken locally by those who are concerned about the problems in their neighbourhood. It is difficult to understand the Government's approach.

Paragraph 142 of the Select Committee's report states:

> "it is indefensible for British Coal to delay the return of derelict sites to economic productivity. We maintain that it is the responsibility of British Coal to liaise closely with local authorities to ensure the most rapid possible return of mining sites to productive use."

It is well known that, in 1982, when the Department of the Environment's last national survey was undertaken, spoil heaps, excavations and tips — coalfield dereliction — accounted for 48 per cent. of Britain's derelict land that justified reclamation. If the associated dereliction as a result of railway closures is also taken into account, the coalfields' share of dereliction becomes even greater. The amount of dereliction has increased markedly as a result of the closures within the coal industry since 1982.

All the local authorities in coalfield areas have been running reclamation and environment improvement programmes in an effort to overcome the problems of dereliction and to make their areas more attractive to investors. Major improvements have been achieved, but the rapid rundown of collieries and industrial closures over the past seven years have overstretched these programmes. To the legacy of dereliction that stemmed from about 100 years of uncontrolled industrial activity has been added the new dereliction that has come from the recent wave of colliery closures. In addition, the rundown of the steel and shipbuilding industries has resulted in serious industrial dereliction.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Doon Valley): Is my hon. Friend aware that British Coal has adopted a vicious attitude towards welfare schemes that our forefathers saw fit to introduce to improve the quality of life in mining villages? The board is seeking to sell off playing fields. Will my hon. Friend join me — I ask Conservative Members to do likewise—in condemning British Coal's approach to the welfare schemes?

Mr. Barron: I am pleased to join my hon. Friend in condemning what is happening in many mining areas. In the area which I represent, the local authority bought into welfare schemes during the late 1970s. These facilities are now under even greater threat because the Local Government Bill will oblige local authorities to put out their services to tender. In areas where the local authority did not buy in, miners in work had to pay a subscription to support welfare schemes. With manpower being run down, it is obvious that the schemes are in jeopardy. In many instances, they provide the only source of recreation. They must not be left to the vagaries of the market. Someone must step in and ensure that the recreation that the schemes provide stays within the Community. I hope that this issue will be taken up during the debate.

The Government's response to the problem of derelict land has been to ignore it or to leave it to others. Some successes have been achieved with the Scottish Development Association and the Welsh Development Association, but many areas of England leave much to be desired. Many in coalfield areas feel — I believe with some justification—that their communities are being left to decay. These are communities in which people must live, bring up their children, care for the elderly and work, if employment is available to them. These local people are part of the social fabric. The tasks that face them are becoming even more difficult, and one of the reasons is the Government's attitude, and that of British Coal, towards the sale of British Coal housing. The motion refers specifically to Shelter's report entitled "Pits and Mortar". It provides an excellent description of what is happening in many communities throughout Britain.

Paragraph 132 of the Select Committee's report states that British Coal

> "manage their housing in a responsible manner."

This it has not done, despite representations that have been made to it by the Department of Energy, the Department of the Environment and right hon. and hon. Members. Nothing has been done. I have talked on many occasions to tenants and the representatives of housing associations and local authorities. I have spoken and written to Ministers to try to bring help to my constituents. Unfortunately, the Government have closed their ears. Against that background it is not surprising that their response to "Pits and Mortar" has been a deafening silence. The report provides a vivid description of the difficulties that tenants of ex-British Coal houses are facing in having to live with new landlords. There are dozens of reasons why there should be no further sale of this housing.

I shall give the House some examples from my constituency. In Kiveton Park there are homes that are classified under the Housing Defects Act 1984, which in itself has created many problems. It has effectively put a stigma on these houses, even though they are now described as providing an ideal opportunity for DIY enthusiasts. This description is applied in an attempt to re-sell houses that were bought in October 1986 by private landlords for £3,250. They are now being offered at prices between £7,000 and £9,050. As I have said, they are described as providing an ideal opportunity for DIY enthusiasts, and they are the people who are living in those properties.

No mention is made of the problems faced by Mrs. Richardson, for example, who describes her dealings with her new landlords as follows:

> "We get drowned at the back due to faulty guttering and the garage doors are coming off. They were never fixed. So I stopped the rent. He came back"—

this is the new landlord—

> "and said, 'It's against the law to withhold rent.' I told him, 'It's against the law not to do repairs!' I agreed to pay the rent for six weeks during which he would do the repairs. It's now eleven weeks and no one has come."

The secretary of the tenants' association of Kiveton Park, Mrs. Whaley, describes the overall position as follows:

> "There's a lot of problems along with water coming in and panel joints, dangerous electricity and generally no repairs. No one knows how to get their repairs done and writing letters just doesn't seem to work. When repairs are done, they are often done badly."

It is not only tenants in so-called defective houses who are suffering from the policy of British Coal and that of the Government. In the Dinnington area—it is a village in my constituency—brick-built houses have been sold off. The home of one of my constituents, Mrs. Turner, was taken over in December 1986. She states:

> "In January"—

that is, January 1987—

> "I had my cold water tank burst. I rang London—nothing happened. They said they couldn't do anything while the cold weather was on."

Mrs. Turner did not get her tank fixed until the following May; during all that time she was unable to use her bath, hot water or washing facilities.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): The hon. Gentleman says that he has problems with private landlords who are not doing repairs in his constituency. He is obviously aware that they are obliged by law to make repairs. If he has constituents who have problems in that respect, surely they should go to see their Member of Parliament who should put pressure on the landlord, possibly legal pressure, to ensure that he does the repairs. My right hon. and hon. Friends have experience of that and we have very few problems with landlords.

Mr. Barron: Mrs. Turner is one of 16 residents in Dinnington village who are currently taking their landlord to court.

Mr. Skinner: The landlord is probably a member of the Conservative party.

Mr. Barron: Yes, he probably is. The landlord is being taken to court by a solicitor in my constituency, a man to whom I have spoken on many occasions.

The hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) purports to represent a coal mining area. How is a 70-year-old retired miner and perhaps his wife, although he could be a widower, who knows little about the law or landlord and tenant legislation and has no money to go to a solicitor in order to talk about the problem going to cope? Such people are thrown into confusion by the selling and re-selling of their homes above their heads by money speculators. They are unable to comprehend what is happening. The hon. Gentleman is speaking nonsense and he well knows it.

Mr. John Brown, the chairman of the tenants and owners association in Dinnington points out what the problems are for many. He has said:

> "There's another woman whose mind wanders a bit. She's not sure how much rent she's sent off. Sometimes she sends off £100 but because of the system of paying she can't really tell whether she is in arrears or not. The Coal Board used to collect every Wednesday. What is needed is someone to collect the rent and report the repairs to, so everyone knows where they are."

That is exactly what is needed, but it is not happening in dozens of areas.

Despite mounting evidence that the sale of British Coal houses is a disaster for the tenants, British Coal still plans to sell off its remaining 14,500 houses by October 1988. Housing associations and tenants' co-operatives have offered to buy them but British Coal is demanding a higher price than many of the homes fetched at the auctions held late last year. It is asking a price higher than those bidding can afford to offer. Every remaining British Coal house could be taken over by socially responsible landlords if British Coal would drop its asking price or if the Government would assist those willing to buy. If that does not happen, thousands more will be sentenced to the fate of the tenants in my constituency and in the constituencies of many of my hon. Friends.

I have lived in a coalfield community all my life. I have seen the problems worsening day by day. Those areas have never been the most prosperous areas in the country, but the depths of poverty are now at levels that have not been known in my lifetime or for decades past. A few weeks ago during the summer recess I visited the primary school that I attended as a pupil in the 1950s. The class sizes have decreased from about 45 pupils when I was there to about 35. The number of children in those classes receiving free school meals has risen. From my memory of 30 years ago, there were never more than three or four children in each class receiving free school meals. Today, over half the pupils are receiving free school meals.

That is not in a community where the coal mine has closed down. It is in the village of Maltby where I live. The

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colliery in that area has a massive investment programme. The programme is nearly complete and it has cost £170 million over five years. However, there is no correlation between investment in coal mines and poverty in the community. I hope that when the Minister replies to the debate he will not try to talk about investment and productivity in the coal industry and about how good things are when, even in communities that are receiving investment, there is poverty at the levels I have mentioned.

In the Rotherham area there are still coal mining jobs, but over 8,000 children received free school meals in the year 1986-87. That is the reality of the problems and poverty in coal communities that are working and it can only be worse in communities where the collieries have closed. I hope that all hon. Members who speak today will concentrate their minds on what needs to happen to the communities before the problems get worse.

10.15 am

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Those who listened carefully to the introductory words of the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) will have noticed a significant sentence that was almost obscured at the beginning of his speech. He said that he did not want to have a general debate about the coal industry today, but wanted to confine himself to the narrow issue of the motion on the Order Paper. Let me remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a politician is never more political than when he disarmingly says that he wants to leave out a large chunk of relevant material to do with a particular issue and concentrate on a little bit of it.

The hon. Gentleman sought to tell the House that a great economic and social hurricane had blown across many coal mining communities. Needless to say, the name of that hurricane is, in his view, Hurricane Maggie.

Mr. Allan Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I shall tell hon. Members another name for that hurricane—Hurricane Arthur.

Mr. Allan Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alison: I shall give way shortly, but I want to move on a little.

It is ludicrous and grotesque for the hon. Member for Rother Valley to argue that the scale of financial relief and resources being made available to the coalfield communities is inadequate, especially when we consider the cost of the coal strike to the British taxpayer. After all, it is the taxpayers' money for which the hon. Gentleman is appealing, and we are the representatives of the taxpayers. I shall remind the House of the cost to the taxpayer of King Arthur's strike.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose*

Mr. Alison: Subsidy to the power stations to burn more oil during the strike cost £1,624 million. Subsidy to the National Coal Board because of the loss of income and revenue to the coal industry cost £733 million. The income tax lost to the Treasury amounted to £319 million. The police cost was £155 million, expenditure tax loss was £51 million and supplementary benefit to strikers' families cost £64 million. The total cost to the taxpayer of Arthur Scargill's strike was close to £3,000 million.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alison: I will give way shortly.

To ignore that and claim that the Government have not done enough to support the coal mining communities is simply ludicrous.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I did promise to give way to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), and shall give way to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) in due course.

Mr. Rogers: I remind the hon. Gentleman of two points. During the coal strike, in response to an intervention of mine, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the amount of money that the Government were spending on keeping the miners out was a good investment for the country. Has the right hon. Gentleman now turned that on its head? Instead of trying to score third-form public school debating points, I wish that the right hon. Gentleman would address the real problems that are mentioned in the motion, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron). The right hon. Gentleman should address these problems, not try to score cheap political points.

Mr. Alison: I am delighted when Opposition Members accuse me of scoring cheap political points. They are not politicians; they are general men of good will who never indulge in any dirty, sordid party politics. Never so much as a party political thought crosses their mind.

The hon. Member for Rhondda took me up on the issue of whether the money that was shelled out by the taxpayer —£3,000 million—was a good investment. I thought that the hon. Gentleman was always complaining that we were not investing enough in British Coal. He cannot have it both ways. That £3,000 million was either a jolly good investment or no investment at all. He will have to make up his mind. That £3,000 million of taxpayers' money, if it had not to be shelled out for King Arthur's coal strike, might have been available, at least in part, for some of the expenses that are mentioned in the motion.

Can anybody deny that the coal strike—quite apart from the taxpayers' money involved—inflicted serious social and domestic injuries on coal mining communities by damaging local pits? The official figures are that 73 coal faces were lost or irrecoverable as a direct effect of the coal strike. That was typified by Polkemmet colliery in Scotland, where all three faces were lost and the pit closed. That self-inflicted damage was the result of Hurricane Arthur blowing over coal mining communities.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale) *rose*——

Mr. Alison: The hon. Member for Rother Valley wanted to have a go. He does not wish to any more. I shall give way to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) in a moment. I shall complete this part of my speech.

Against that background, the hon. Member for Rother Valley did not do a fair job in commenting on the more narrow matters relating to British Coal Enterprise Ltd. He did not give sufficient credit to what has been done. Nearly £37 million in taxpayers' money is going to the National Coal Board or to British Coal to help in the creation of as many as 23,000 new jobs.

Mr. Skinner: It is a con trick.

Mr. Alison: In one of his typical interventions, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) says that it is a con trick. Imagine the words "con trick" falling from the mouths of those who support Arthur Scargill. What about the con trick after the March 1983 ballot, which was held throughout the coalfields to find out whether the miners wanted to strike? What about the con trick of the 1984 ballot to see whether they wanted a strike or not? In nearly every case, the large ballots in different areas resulted in massive majorities against a strike. Where was the con trick? It was King Arthur's con trick. He is the man of con tricks, in getting the coalfields out on strikes that most miners did not want.

The hon. Member for Bolsover says that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. is a con trick. We shall not take the lesson from him. We can see what British Steel has been able to do by its enterprise project. It has done a massive job in creating jobs. We shall see British Coal Enterprise Ltd. do the same thing.

Hobart house has kindly supplied me with a list of specific projects, broken down into all the main regions, specifying the number of jobs that will be forthcoming, and giving the total of projects and jobs. The jobs will materialise, just as they did in the case of British Steel.

Mr. Hood: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the loss of three coal faces and the closure of Polkemmet colliery. Is he aware that that colliery closed because British Coal deliberately flooded it? The unions offered to go in and save it, but they were held back by British Coal. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware also that, in Scotland, Polkemmet, which produces coal for Ravenscraig steelworks, is now being run on imported coal from Colombia and South Africa? The hon. Gentleman referred to sabotage. It was sabotaged by the Government and British Coal in closing down a major industry.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman has produced the ludicrous argument that British Coal deliberately flooded Polkemmet colliery. As he made the point, I shall respond to it. He knows that many deliberate things were done during the coal strike. There was much deliberate mobilisation of coal miners to go and picket. Why, then, did the coal miners not deliberately stop the National Coal Board from flooding Polkemmet colliery? Why did they not mobilise large forces and stop the few managers from deliberately flooding it? There could not be any more ludicrous argument than the hon. Gentleman's thesis that British Coal management deliberately flooded Polkemmet colliery.

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I shall not give way. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman once. I must press on.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman clearly will not give way. Hon. Members must not persist.

Mr. Alison: It is not only the investment in British Coal Enterprise Ltd. that I wish to draw to the attention of the House. The hon. Member for Rother Valley——

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford) *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley touched on British Coal investment in the rather wider technical, proper productive investment sense in the coalfields. According to my figures, it is running at about £650 million a year at present. In my own constituency, investment in the Selby project will be at least £1.25 million, and we have spent £1 million on it already. That kind of capital expenditure on new pits, new projects and new machinery is directly relevant to some of the older communities and coalfields that he talked about.

Leaving aside the rowdy exchanges that we have had the motion points out some of the difficulties that the older mining communities face. For example, in my own constituency, where we have had, in principle, an influx of 3,000 new miners to work in Selby, at least half seem to have decided not to live in the Selby constituency, but to commute. In other words, they will live in their own communities in south and west Yorkshire. Some of them travel from as far as Bradford every day by car. If they are not on strike—most of them do not want to be—face workers can take £250 a week back into the communities in which they live. They commute to and from the new coalfields.

That is the way to get resources, buying power, enterprise, new prospects and new hope to some of the older villages. It is happening in Selby precisely because coal miners are commuting in their cars from places all over south and west Yorkshire and earning good money and taking it back to their communities. Some such coalfield communities might become as prosperous as Ascot and other such places as people take money from the coalfields back to their communities. That is the way to get prosperity for pit villages.

Mr. Lofthouse: On the point about the British Coal Enterprise Ltd. scheme, in which the hon. Gentleman seems to put great store, the deputy chairman of the National Coal Board informed the Select Committee:

> "I do not claim much for it",

meaning the British Coal Enterprise scheme. Indeed, other senior officials informed the Committee that they expected the scheme only to scratch at the surface of the problem.

Mr. Alison: The chairman of the National Coal Board could not claim much for it because he was not providing the money. The Government provided the full £37 million. The Coal Board did not provide anything, so it is no wonder that the chairman said that.

Finally, I should like to make a constituency point, which I hope leaders of British Coal will take on board as it has some bearing on what is known as the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation. In the public inquiry that was held in my constituency in 1975 on the development of the Selby coalfied, reference was made by Mr. J. G. C. Milligan OBE, the director-general of industrial relations at the National Coal Board, to the provision of leisure facilities in Selby. In referring to the settlement of miners and their families into new communities, Mr. Milligan stated:

> "This has been helped in some places because the arrival of miners has led to the provision of improved recreational and other facilities assisted by the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation which is financed by the Branch."

That statement was incorporated into the inspector's findings at paragraph 25.10 on page 47 of the report on the Selby coalfield inquiry.

The implication is that the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation was hoping to promote the

[Mr. Alison]

acceptance of the Selby project by holding out the prospect of some welfare provision for Selby. I am sure that, although that was said as long ago as 1975 and that in 1987 nothing has as yet materialised, the Coal Board will, in good faith, produce some extra resources to ensure that Selby gets its recreational facilities. I hope that the Coal Board will be able to expedite that as soon as possible.

10.31 am

Mr. George J. Buckley (Hemsworth): I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to make my maiden speech in this debate on the coalfield communities. I hope that Conservative Members will not degenerate the debate by raking over the coals of the 1984-85 strike. I am sure that it was not for that purpose that my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) tabled the motion on the Order Paper. Opposition Members are trying to draw the coal communities to the attention of the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley outlined their problems extensively.

In this, my maiden speech, I want to draw to the attention of the House the social traditions of my constituency. It is a mining constituency and its communities are very much dependent on the prosperity of the mining industry. By their very nature, the communities in my constituency are isolated as compared with other parts of West Yorkshire. When the mining industry developed at the turn of the previous century, small communities developed around the mines. They were attached to the workplace of the mine, and the entire community revolved around the investment that then took place in the mine.

Hemsworth is no different from other traditional mining constituencies. The House will appreciate the complexities that that causes. The House must be aware — I am sure that Opposition Members are aware — of the difficulties that such small communities encounter when dealing with the transformation of the economy of the area. It is that transformation that should exercise our minds in this debate, not the historical upheavals of industrial struggle. My constituency is made up of small communities such as Upton, Ryhill, Havercroft and Featherstone, which, in the past, were totally dependent on collieries that no longer exist. The fact that the mines no longer exist has caused havoc in the economy of my constituency.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley has stated, we are not talking about the prosperity of the coal mining industry in isolation, but about the overall economy of the community, the social aspects of that rundown of the economy and the inability of the economy to rejuvenate itself from its own resources. I feel sure that the House will appreciate that massive Government assistance is needed to finance investment in the transition from dependency on one source of employment to alternative employment in the area.

I should like to pay tribute to my predecessor who represented the Hemsworth constituency for 13 years in this honourable House. Naturally, my predecessors in the constituency are from mining stock. My immediate predecessor, Alec Woodall, represented the constituency diligently and I am sure that many hon. Members will recall the many opportunities on which he exercised that responsibility. I hope that the House will wish him well in his retirement. I should like to mention other hon. Members who represented the constituency before my immediate predecessor. They include Mr. Alan Beaney, Mr. M. E. Holmes and Mr. G. A. Griffiths, who were all from traditional mining stock.

The indigenous problems of mining areas are not new. I do not want to lead the House into believing that the problems of mining communities are new. However, such problems are now more desperate as a consequence of the present Government's policies. I found it curious that the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) who, I am sure, tried to make a positive contribution to the debate, referred to the £3 billion that was expended by the Government during the 1984 strike. I shall make only one point on that — £3 billion was spent on negative expenditure, whereas only £37 million has been spent in positive expenditure on British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I ask the House and the nation to weigh up that fact. My hon. Friends and I call upon the Government and Conservative Members to give positive consideration to the problems that exist in mining communities. We want to resolve those problems, but that cannot be done without massive Government aid.

I refer now to recent mine closures. In my constituency alone — this will be duplicated throughout British coalfields — Ackton Hall colliery was closed in 1985. That colliery was surrounded by the community of Featherstone and when it closed 1,388 jobs were lost. In 1986 Kinsley drift was closed with the loss of 460 jobs and more recently in 1987 Nostell colliery has been closed, with the loss of 600 jobs. Such closures have a massive impact on small mining communities. South Kirby colliery, which is currently under review by British Coal, employed at one time nearly 2,000 men. It currently employs 696. That is a massive reduction in employment potential. The colliery is under threat of closure and that is having a major impact on the South Kirby, South Hemsworth and Upton areas.

We must get the problem into perspective. As my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley has said, we must realise the social consequences of the rundown of the mining industry and ask the Government to give a positive response. Apart from the fact that the social structure of mining communities is being destroyed, their regeneration is causing immense difficulties. Even if new industry could be cajoled and persuaded to take root there, massive investment in the infrastructure would be needed to make such areas economically viable. Even if the Government were generous enough to provide investment in mining community areas, no industrialist, with the best will in the world, would be prepared to go down small village roads with large transport lorries to reach industrial estates.

I am disappointed and surprised that the Government have not responded to the excellent Shelter report on housing in mining communities. It is impossible to dispose of properties, whether they are rented or owned, in mining communities when the only source of employment is taken away from them.

I shall not refer to statistics in my maiden speech. I do not really care about them. The unemployment statistics for mining communities are higher than those for any other group of unemployed people in Great Britain. Unemployment statistics as high as 20 per cent. are to be found in mining communities. The people who live in those communities are devastated by the high level of unemployment. Coal mining communities, including those in my constituency, are taking advantage of the so-called community programmes and of work training experience, but Government schemes are temporary. They do not provide a long-term solution to unemployment in mining constituencies. They are only a palliative.

[illegible] task I have set myself in my maiden speech is to outline to the House the desperate plight of the communities that I represent. I repeat the call in 1959 of one of my predecessors, Alan Beaney. He said:

> "Miners will spurn charity, the dole and National Assistance. We shall demand the right to earn our livelihood in the full dignity of our labour."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1959; Vol. 612, c. 557.]

I repeat that call in 1987. We do not want charity, or the dole, or unemployment. We demand the right to earn our living in order to maintain the quality of life for our families and children.

10.42 am

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (Derbyshire, West): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) and to congratulate him on his maiden speech. He well fulfilled the tradition of maiden speakers by giving a graphic description of his constituency and by paying a formidable tribute to his predecessor, Alec Woodall, who was well respected on all sides of the House. He was a man of Hemsworth who, throughout his career as a Member of Parliament, represented that constituency. We congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his maiden speech. I know what a great relief it is to get it off one's chest. I am sure that he is looking forward to making many more contributions to our debates in the months and years to come. The hon. Gentleman chose the right debate in which to make his maiden speech.

In recent times there have been a number of changes in mining communities. However, such changes are not a recent phenomenon; they do not apply only to the 1970s or the 1980s. My father died when I was very young. One of my few memories is of my father walking over the old pit tops in the Cannock Chase and South Staffordshire coalfields. I remember the High Town colliery where he used to work in the south Staffordshire coalfield. Since 1960 there have been over 32 mine closures in the south Staffordshire coalfield—a horrendous number. In recent years only one new mine—Lea Hall—has been opened in the area. That shows how radically the area has changed. That new mine was opened in 1960 by a Conservative Government.

To say that this Government have paid no regard to the coalfield communities is a travesty of the truth. Opposition Members regard the coal industry and the coalfields as their bastion, but sometimes they suffer from selective amnesia. The then National Coal Board, now British Coal, recognised on many occasions the importance of the coal industry. The 1966-67 report of the National Coal Board says——

Mr. Barron: The hon. Gentleman says that Opposition Members seem to regard the coal industry as their bastion. During the last five years, coalfields could have been found in 105 constituencies that are represented by both Conservative and Opposition Members. The hon. Gentleman cannot claim that the Opposition regard the coal industry as their bastion. The hon. Gentleman ought to direct his remarks to the problems in the coalfield communities. He should not refer to investment in coal mining. That is not the subject of this debate.

Mr. McLoughlin: I understand why the hon. Gentleman is anxious that I should not refer to what is happening now in the coal mining industry. I am not turning away from the subject of the debate. The hon. Gentleman's motion calls attention to the report of the Select Committee on Energy, which deals with the present state of the British Coal. He cannot say that we should pay no regard to the Select Committee's report and to the history that backs up its conclusions.

Mr. Barron *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I see that the hon. Gentleman wants me to give way, but I do not intend to do so. I have given way already, and many other hon. Members want to speak in this debate.

The only way for British Coal and for the industry to have a successful future is by winning markets and selling coal. We cannot run away from that most important fact. That point has been accepted by many NCB chairmen and by many Governments.

I said earlier that I wanted to refer to the NCB's 1966-67 report. It says:

> "The task now facing the Board is to secure the largest possible output of coal at prices that are competitive with all rival fuels. Competition from oil, natural gas and nuclear power will be a formidable and continuing challenge to coal's share of the expanding energy market."

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to delay the debate, because many hon. Members want to participate in it, but the motion specifically refers to the social problems and to the high levels of unemployment, falling investment and increasing poverty in the coal industry. The motion then refers to the Select Committee's recommendations regarding the coalfield communities. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) is deliberately diverting this very important debate from the problems of the mining communities to investment in the mining industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is right to draw attention to the fact that the Select Committee's report is relevant to the motion only in so far as those parts of the report are relevant to the motion.

Mr. McLoughlin: With the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is impossible to refer to the coalfield communities without referring to the investment by British Coal. There is no doubt that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am drawing the hon. Gentleman's attention and that of the House to the fact that the appendix to the motion says that the report will be relevant to the debate only insofar as parts of the report are relevant to the motion. References to the report should be confined to that purpose.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am trying to set this debate in context by suggesting that this is not the first time that coalfield communities have had to go through radical changes. I am sorry that Opposition Members seem to find that so objectionable.

The future and the size of the industry and its employment opportunities depend upon the speed at which British Coal's plans for making coal more competitive can be fulfilled.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: No, I will not give way, for the simple reason that a lot of other hon. Members wish to get in and make their own speeches.

There is no doubt that the way in which we will secure a positive, good coal industry future is by becoming competitive within the market.

Mr. Cummings *rose*——

Mr. Allen McKay: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I want to give other hon. Members the opportunity to make their speeches, but I will give way to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

Mr. McKay: Can the hon. Gentleman explain to the House what he and British Coal mean about being competitive—competitive with what and with whom?

Mr. McLoughlin: The competitive nature of coal must be based upon its relationship with the gas industry, the oil industry and imported coal, although some people would say that imported coal represents an unfair area of competition. I believe that British Coal can get round that problem by offering quality. There is no doubt that, with today's modern fire-handling, coal-burning equipment, quality is of the utmost importance. It is important to ensure that the product is clean and does not have a high ash content when delivered.

I wish to spend some time discussing the coalfield community that I know in south Staffordshire, which is now partly represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). I wish to discuss the two mines that are left in that area, Lea Hall colliery and Littleton colliery. As far as I can tell, the greatest threat to the production in those areas is not from British Coal, but from the Labour-controlled county council. That county council will not allow opencast mining to take place in that area. One of the problems alluded to by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) was related to those areas that had produced coal and the subsequent use of the land that had become derelict. One of the problems that is faced when local authorities continually stand in the way of opencast mining is that areas become landlocked.

Mr. Rogers: What about north Yorkshire?

Mr. McLoughlin: Such landlocked areas cannot be used.

There is no doubt that, if opencast mining is not allowed at the collieries I have mentioned, the future of those collieries is in danger. The coal mined from those colleries has a fairly high chlorine content and opencast coal is required to blend with that coal. The way in which British Coal and the Opencast Executive return such land to productive use ensures the benefit of amenities for such communities. Such efforts are commendable.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: No, I will not.

The coal industry wants a future and there is no doubt that it can have a future. There have been closures and to an extent they are regretted, but such closures are not a new thing. No Government have done more to help with the changeover period than this Government.

Mr. Rogers: Absolute rubbish.

Mr. McLoughlin: This Government set up British Coal Enterprise Ltd. to try to help with that transitional period, which has been extremely difficult. However, anyone who considers the recent actions of British Coal and the National Coal Board will appreciate that some huge closure programmes took place between 1965 and 1970. The Opposition cannot escape that, yet it is one example of the selective amnesia of the Opposition.

I should like to refer to the annual report of the National Coal Board for 1965-66. I believe that a Labour Government were in power at that time. That report states that the board had originally

> "planned to phase colliery closures fairly evenly over the years 1966 to 1970, but at the Government's suggestion the major part of that closure programme will be completed in the two years 1966 and 1967."

There was no help whatever from the Government to see that transitional period through. There was no British Coal Enterprise Ltd. and nothing to help those mineworkers.

There have been tremendous changes in the coal industry. We have accepted that those changes must take place, but we have tried to do something to help.

When my hon. Friend replies to this debate, I hope that he will make some reference to the Select Committee on Energy report. I draw his attention to paragraph 193;

> "It may also be that there are pits which BC has recently closed or will close in the immediate future which could be operated profitably, whether on a different scale or by different methods."

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have already pointed out to the hon. Gentleman that he is out of order if he talks about the mining industry. Will he address himself to the problems we are talking about?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: What I have done is the very opposite of what the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) has suggested. It is in order to talk about the coal mining industry. It would seem to me extremely difficult to talk about the coal mining communities without talking about the coal mining industry. However, I was at pains to point out that the fact that there was a link provided on the Order Paper with that Select Committee report did not mean that we should have a debate about that Select Committee report, although it would be relevant to refer to it.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to you Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that this matter is important. So often Opposition Members say that there is not enough investment in the coal industry. However, we are told that the National Union of Mineworkers has access to quite a bit of money, often from Libya and such places. The report continues:

> "For example, BACM witnesses thought that Horden colliery had an 'opportunity of breaking even' or better; NACODS argued vigorously that Bates colliery should not have been closed; while the NUM maintained that up to 20 million tonnes of capacity had been lost because of the abandonment of the Plan for Coal. In consequence, when BC decides to close a pit, we believe that the licence to operate at that site should immediately be offered on the open market."

The report said that that licence should be offered on the open market only after it had been offered to the unions and those people interested. I believe that that would be a positive way to ask the unions to give their commitment to British Coal.

British Coal and the coal industry have great opportunities in this country. I believe that those opportunities will come about as a result of investment and achieving more sales in the industrial market. At the moment, approximately 10 per cent. of British Coal's output goes to the industrial market. There must be ways in which that level can be increased, and that would lead to a great future for the coal communities. I appreciate that those communities feel threatened at the moment. Indeed, there have been tremendous changes within that industry, but the challenge of those changes has been met.

Mr. Cummings *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin: I am about to conclude; then other hon. Members will be able to speak.

The challenge has been met by the coalfield communities. I believe that, in future, similar challenges may be faced if a positive commitment is given to the industry. So far as the union has an impact on the future of the industry, the present president of the NUM has done more to sell British Gas for industrial installations than anybody else. At the very mention of the burning of coal, the spectre of Scargill emerges. That does great damage to the potential sales of coal.

There is only one way in which British Coal will have a successful future; that is by selling its products within the market so that we do not have to rely on imported coal. That is the way that the coalfield communities can secure a future.

Mr. Rogers: Cheap black labour in South Africa.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. All this sedentary noise is only delaying the debate and it is out of order. I hope that hon. Members will behave themselves.

Mr. McLoughlin: When British Coal has a positive future, the coal communities will have a positive future.

Let us consider wages—the hon. Member for Rother Valley mentioned this. The average wage of miners in 1965-1966——

Mr. Barron: I never mentioned wages.

Mr. McLoughlin: The wage level then was £19 14s. British Coal's annual report for 1986-87 shows that a miner's average earnings in that year were £219 a week. Wages generally would have had to increase 10 times during that period to keep up with wages in mining. The fact that for miners they increased by more than 12 per cent. above that does not bear out what the hon. Member for Rother Valley said about miners being poor and unable to pay their way. Indeed, it adds to the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about the future of coal mining areas.

Money is there to be made in the industry, provided that we can sell the coal. But we must not produce coal that we cannot sell, because that is no good to British Coal or to the country which, under this Government, has invested a great deal of money to give British Coal a future.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that about 20 hon. Members are trying to catch my eye. Unless speeches are curtailed, many of them will be disappointed. I appeal for very brief speeches.

11 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on his sensible maiden speech and on his valuable contribution to the debate.

This is a depressing debate. Not one job in the coalfields will be created by raking over the grim experience of the strike. The shouting match that seems to be developing is wholly out of character with the work that the Coalfield Communities Campaign has done. I commend that organisation, which works across party lines, having to accept that the coal industry involves change and having to accept that colliery closures have taken place and will take place in the future. It brings together people who have different views about what the rate of closure should be and about the Government's policy towards the industry. But it brings them together in agreement that the coalfield communities have specific problems that need special attention. We should take our model from the Coalfield Communities Campaign in our discussions on these matters and in our attempts to develop ways of dealing with the problems. I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) chose this subject for debate today.

Since 1957 my constituency has experienced 10 colliery closures, three of them in the past few years. We still have the large and productive Ellington colliery, which has absorbed manpower from all parts of the Northumberland coalfield, but almost all the Northumberland coalfield's eggs are [illegible] that one basket. It is worrying to think that Lynemouth colliery, which, in its time, was a showpiece colliery and the great hope of the future, has gone. A great deal of hope now hangs on the future of Ellington colliery. My constituency is experiencing all the problems which have been described during the debate and which are shared by other hon. Members.

The Select Committee report states:

> "It is far from clear that the present distribution of regional aid reflects the needs of the mining communities or the advantages of Community membership."

Nowhere is that more true than in the Northumberland coalfield. The Alnwick and Amble area, which has experienced the colliery closures that I have described, does not enjoy any development status and is wholly denied the benefits of European aid, as well as the now very limited benefits of the Government's regional policy. The adjoining Morpeth and Ashington travel-to-work area has only intermediate status, which gives it limited assistance. Unemployment in the Alnwick and Amble area is higher than in most intermediate areas, and higher than in many assisted areas. It is a clear case of what the Select Committee meant: the Government have ignored the way in which colliery closure patterns have developed by failing to revise their assisted area map. They have simply not taken account of the impact of colliery closures on their regional policy.

We have pleaded with Ministers again and again. Just a few weeks ago a deputation from the coalfield came to see the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I too went to see him, but he was unable to respond positively, although he listened to us sympathetically and acknowledged that we had a good case. He has still done nothing to bring to that area, so hard hit by colliery closures, the benefits of regional policy and access to European help. It would be helpful if the Under-Secretary of State for Energy would tell us today what will happen

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

on regional policy. Will there be a regional policy in the future? Will it be drastically changed, as the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry seems to wish? If it is changed, what will be done to ensure that it meets the problems of the coalfield communities, which have the most obvious need for an effective regional policy?

The coalfield communities have tended to lose again and again in various aspects of regional policy. Urban aid is another example. Many of us are worried that, with the understandable emphasis on the needs of the inner cities, the problems of the coalfield communities will be forgotten because they are small communities. Yet the problems in those communities are just as acute.

In my constituency, urban aid was withdrawn suddenly from Alnwick — an area where many miners and ex-miners live — on the grounds that its population was fewer than 20,000. It met every other criterion, including free school meals taken by many children and high rates of deprivation. It met all the criteria that one could imagine, except that it had a population of fewer than 20,000 and, according to the Government, was not urban. One can think of many colliery communities that are smaller than 20,000 but which have worse problems, on all the standard criteria, than some of our worst inner-city areas. We are worried that the needs of the coalfield communities will be forgotten while the inner-city problems receive the emphasis which, of course, they deserve.

The Select Committee, and hon. Members today, mentioned miners being given the chance to take over their pits. The Select Committee said that the Department of Energy should be the body that licensed coal and that miners should have the first option to continue mining operations at a colliery that has been closed. But I must tell Conservative Members that the Government have not done that. They have left licensing in the hands of British Coal, and it has not given the first option to the men who work in the pits.

A specific example of that was Whittle colliery in my constituency. When the colliery closed, a group of employees decided that they would like to take it on and mount a smaller mining operation, for which they could see a clear future, and for which they had access to capital, but British Coal, following its normal practice, granted the licensing option on a first come, first served, basis to an organisation which was familiar with the procedures and got in its application quickly. The miners at the pit simply were not familiar with the procedures and could not be expected to know what they had to do.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that the engineer who closed Whittle mine is leading the consortium that wants to buy it?

Mr. Beith: That would require apportioning responsibility within British Coal more accurately than I could, but it would at least be fair to say that the outside consortium that put in its bid knew British Coal very well, was familiar with its procedures and had good contacts on the board. That is not giving the miners first option on their pits. Indeed, they would have to wait for 12 months to see whether the first applicant backed out before they had any chance of becoming involved, and by that time the pit would have deteriorated substantially.

In this case there is hope that an understanding will be reached between the miners who wanted to take over the pit and the group that has the first option, but it is not a sensible way to proceed. Why should British Coal license its competitors? Why should a body which is a near-monopoly have the right to license its potential competition? I do not understand what sense that makes in the Government's economic thinking. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, for miners to get the first option to take over their pits. The Government fell down badly in not doing something about that when I drew it repeatedly to their attention.

Another problem affecting the coalfield communities is opencast mining, which provides 40 per cent. of Northumberland's coal production and employs more than 800 people, most of them local. Initially, it helped a great deal to clear up dereliction in parts of my constituency. Therefore, the problems associated with it were borne by the community, in the knowledge that, at the end of the day, the area would be in a better state than it was when opencast mining started. But we have moved from there to the point where opencast mining is going deep into open countryside and its proximity is beginning seriously to threaten local communities.

In places such as Linton and Ulgham, people are deeply concerned that opencast mining is coming right up to their doorsteps, posing environmental problems for a long time to come.

One of the few benefits of the decline of deep mining in areas that have experienced many environmental problems as a result of such mining is that at least the environment would be improved. For most of their lifetime they now face the threat of serious environmental disruption from opencast mining. We must consider carefully how to maintain employment in opencast mining without further disrupting the local communities, which have already had to cope with a great deal over the years.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): I am very interested in the hon. Gentleman's comments. Does he believe that the situation is getting to the point where the land is not capable of being restored to a better condition than it was in the past?

Mr. Beith: Opencast mining is moving into areas where I cannot imagine it would be restored to a better condition than before. In some parts of my constituency, areas made seriously derelict have emerged in a better state than they were when opencast mining took over. It is still painful and hard going for the people living there, and, in the case of bigger schemes, it was for a long period. Following the Butterwell scheme, however, the potential expansion of opencast mining around villages such as Ulgham and Linton creates a long period of disruption with no prospect that the areas will be better after restoration than when they started. It makes it difficult for local people to accept, even though it would offer employment to local people.

Given the decline of deep mining in many areas, the case for improvement of the environment is very strong. The village of Lynemouth has a very attractive beach and setting, but it has all the grimness of massive tipping and the works associated with it. The local authority should have the support and encouragement of the Government to try to do something about it. These communities deserve environmental improvement. When I talk to people in Lynemouth they look back to the time when it was a showpiece village. It was to have been the model coal mining village of the future. In the intervening years, it has suffered serious environmental decline and the people in that village now look back with real sadness, because it is not now what it was once hoped it would be. By modern standards, the housing stock is quite inadequate. Many houses have no inside toilet and have inadequate facilities. Local authorities should have more freedom to use their own resources—the money in the bank from council house sales—to improve the communities.

All these things must be taken together. Villages suffering from environmental decline need a resident policeman to ensure that vandalism does not lead to a further decline in the physical structure of the community. To put these places back on their feet requires the integration of many policies, not just housing policies.

Hon. Members have referred to the problems that have arisen from the sale of Coal Board houses. I welcome the fact that many miners now want to buy their own homes and have been able to do so. I do not believe in the company town structure in which the employer owns everything—the place of employment, trading facilities and houses. It is an unhealthy and uncomfortable position for the community. However, where tenanted houses are sold, we want to see housing associations and local authorities, rather than distant landlords, given the chance to take over responsibilities.

There was a specific problem at Ellington colliery, where miners could not purchase houses because the lease was not owned by the Coal Board. The Coal Board has agreed to buy the lease when it expires, thus enabling people to buy the houses in which they live. I am grateful to the deputy chairman of the Coal Board for the personal interest that he took in the matter, which I hope will be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

I find it extraordinary that, in areas such as Northumberland which still have considerable deep-mining potential, the Central Electricity Generating Board should be considering, not its coal-producing capacity, but its attractiveness for nuclear power. It wants to establish a nuclear power station at Druridge Bay rather than expand coal-fired power facilities in the area, thereby sustaining coal-based employment. We shall have plenty of other opportunities to debate this issue, but if the Government intend to privatise the electricity industry and put the issue to the free market, it is obvious that private enterprise would not make that decision. The CEGB is taking decisions which the free market would not support. I want to see the courage of the Minister's convictions when we come to that issue.

One of the few things bringing money into the coalfield communities at the moment is, alas, the redundancy money being paid to miners. That has some side benefits. I am glad to see that those who are able are setting up their own businesses and others are enjoying an early retirement from an arduous industry. I look back to the time when I was first elected. When I went down the pits, miners said, "People should not have to work here in these conditions. As soon as I can get out, I shall do so. I do not want my son to work here." Now they do not say that, because they do not see alternative opportunities outside the pit.

It is all the more important, therefore, that we put the effort into helping and restoring these communities. Redundancy money is only a short-term thing. When that is gone, there will be no opportunities for young people in those areas when they leave school. There is a potentially great market if we realise what is available in those areas—the quality of labour and the fact that land costs are much lower than in the congested areas of the south of England—but it will need encouragement and backing from the Government to safeguard the future of communities that have given so much to this country over the years.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I repeat my plea for brief speeches.

11.15 am

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): This is a welcome opportunity to discuss the circumstances of the coalfield communities. In response to the request for brief speeches, I apologise in advance if I do not accept any interventions, so that more people may have the opportunity to speak. However, it would be remiss of me not to join other colleagues in congratulating the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on his exceptional maiden speech. We all look forward to his future contributions to our coalfield debates.

Of course, one cannot divorce a debate about the coalfield communities from a debate about the wider circumstances of the industry. It is typical of the disarray on the Opposition Benches that they have done nothing this morning but precisely that. Government policy towards the coal industry affects the communities in three vital ways—first, in relation to the investment and restructuring of the industry; secondly, in relation to the employment and environmental restoration of those areas with pit closures; and thirdly, in relation to the working practices and industrial relations of the industry which will determine the pattern and location of future investment and the shape of the communities that will serve them.

My constituency is deeply involved in all three aspects. There have been a number of pit closures in recent years. There is one long-term pit remaining with major investment in it. Significant problems have arisen from opencasting and its aftermath and there is the development of the Selby coalfield adjacent to my constituency. Let me deal first with investment and restructuring. No industry can have a future unless it produces a commodity at a price and time and of a quality that its customers require, without the threat of disruption. After all the water that has flowed under the bridge in the last five years, is it not a tragedy that we still have to tell Labour Members that in our coal debates.

Leaving all the rhetoric aside, two simple facts stand out. First, the Government are spending £2 million a day in support of the coal industry to give it a future; secondly, major restructuring has taken place, without any compulsory redundancies. Without that investment and restructuring, the future for all coalfield communities in Britain would be very bleak indeed. That is widely recognised in my constituency by miners who have a future in the industry, as a result of Government investment, and by those who are taking their redundancy money and making careers outside the industry, thus broadening the industrial base of my constituency.

This leads me to my second point, concerning the restructuring of employment and the environment, which

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

is vital in areas with pit closures. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, in taking away the lessons from the debate, to go back to a point that I have raised in previous debates. The urban development corporation, which works so well in city centres, is a device well suited to the remoter mining communities. It should not be confined to the city centres, because there is dereliction and poverty outside those areas, too. If we have a device that works well in one place, let us adapt it to all the places that need it.

The opencast debate has been a constant theme this morning. There may be circumstances in which the effective restoration of an area of pit closures, where there has been deep mining, will be achieved more effectively if there is opencasting afterwards, but I hope that not many hon. Members share in their constituencies the problem that I have with the Gamblethorpe site in mine. After a long period of opencasting, when the site was supposed to be restored for the benefit of the community, the local authority said, "There's a lovely deep hole. We'll tip rubbish into it for the next 20 years." Anyone in my area who makes another proposal for opencast mining will have to answer to those who look at the example of Gamblethorpe and say that they want guarantees that in their lifetime that site will be restored for public use and utility. It is no good people arguing that opencasting is essential unless they also address the real concerns of people who live in those areas and look at what has already happened.

It is pointless Conservatives arguing any more with the Opposition about British Coal Enterprise Ltd., when the Opposition do nothing but belittle its efforts. Let me say simply that any investment that it wants to make in my constituency will be welcome. I have found its co-operation and assistance in business projects welcome. There is an open door for it among Conservative Members, and if the Opposition do not want it and do not recognise its achievement, let them forget about it. We are happy to use that resource that has been made available.

Working practices and industrial relations are a vital concern in my area. We do not want the future of the Selby coalfield to be put at risk because of the failure by the NUM to adapt to modern working practices. The problems that have arisen in south Wales have been noticeable, and led to Dr. Kim Howells of the south Wales NUM saying that Mr. Scargill

> "is prepared to distort history and mangle the facts to convince others, and perhaps himself, that he is the saviour of the workers. The national president feels he has to bulldoze into the dirt anyone who dares voice opinions contrary to his own. He dismisses the democratic decisions of the South Wales miners as if he were the Pope and they were heretics".

Mr. Scargill has achieved what people would have regarded as almost impossible five years ago. He has marginalised the NUM, first by splitting it over his undemocratic strike, and now by threatening to split what remains over the fundamental issue of the adoption of modern working practices. He is the real enemy of the coalfield communities. Nobody is deceived by his sudden conversion to democracy on the road to Damascus—or is it Tripoli or Havana? Labour Members of Parliament could use this debate most profitably for their coalfield communities if, at this sensitive moment, they were to take the opportunity of repudiating Mr. Scargill and what he stands for.

11.23 am

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): It is my privilege to represent four of the 14 remaining pits of the Welsh coalfield.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) talked about change. Our communities are not strangers to change. There are now 14 pits compared with a coalfield that once had 200 pits and 108,000 miners. Our communities are not static. The hon.Gentleman missed one point—he does not realise what has been going on in the past few years. We have lost jobs not only in the coal industry. Over the past 20 or 30 years, we have sought to diversify our economy and encourage alternative employment. In the 1950s and 1960s, regional development policy brought new companies to our area and produced an alternative economy. What is the big difference between then and the past seven or eight years? Not only have we lost more pit jobs, but the jobs that were brought in by the companies and factories that were meant to be the alternative economy have become the victim of decline.

I can illustrate that best in my own community in Merthyr. There was a regular movement from pit to factory in the 1950s and 1960s. That is why pit closures took place—alternative jobs were being created. People moved between Merthyr Vale and Aberfan pit and Hoover and Thorns. There were job opportunities, but not only Penrhiwceiber, Ewis Merthyr and Deep Duffryn collieries have gone. In 1979, there were 5,400 jobs at the Hoover factory, but now there are only 1,900. That is a loss of nearly 4,000 jobs. Thorns has halved the number of jobs in the neighbouring factory. It is a matter not only of pit closures but of the decline and destruction of jobs in the alternative economy in our pit communities, which has led to tension and frustration. That is the major issue that we face. The number of jobs lost in the pits and through the decline in the factories is the equivalent of the closure of the whole of one steelworks in my community. So we are not strangers to change. Jobs are being destroyed not only in the coal industry but in our industrial and manufacturing base.

In the county of Mid Glamorgan, there are now nearly 30,000 fewer people in employment than in 1979. That is taking into account a notional figure of the number in self-employment. That is the crisis that we face and the difference between the 1960s and the 1980s in my communities. Four of the 14 remaining Welsh pits are now under review, so it is little wonder that we are worried about a new wave of redundancies and pit closures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and several of my colleagues went to see the present Secretary of State for Wales when he was Secretary of State for Energy just before the election to discuss the redundancy payments scheme. He said that we did not need one in the coal industry any longer, which we had until last March, because the restructuring and rationalisation were over. But now a new redundancy payment scheme has suddenly been reintroduced—£5,000 per man if more than 50 people leave the pit. It is an incitement to a collective walk-out by miners, who now fear that we are in for another round of pit closures. It is little wonder that the apprehension, worry and concern are re-emerging.

We are concerned not only about pit closures, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) is right to remind Conservative Members, but about the impact of closures on the communities that are the subject of the debate. I should like to draw attention to some key areas.

There is not only environmental dereliction but dereliction in health, housing and infrastructure. In my constituency, there has been a generation of dereliction in limbs, lungs and heart. Our health resources, hospital services, demands and special health needs, by every index that one can devise, show that the county of Mid Glamorgan has massive deprivation. The resources given to the area do not match, reflect or acknowledge properly our historic health problems, which are with us now. That is an issue of profound concern. Our area health authority suffers from a lack of resources.

I do not have so many massive problems as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley, with regard to tenants of Coal Board housing. I used to have them, and we are beginning to resolve them. One of the reasons why we do not have so many is that we have a long tradition of working-class home ownership. Vital to the maintenance and salvation of that housing stock are improvement and repair grants, yet thousands of my constituents in the communities of Rhondda, Merthyr and Rhymney have been waiting up to four years for repairs and improvement grants. On top of that, the Government introduced in their White Paper plans to means-test for home improvement grants. That would be a disaster for housing in our communities. In terms of health, housing and the infrastructure, we have the right to demand on behalf of the coal mining communities bigger resources and more investment.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend has highlighted a problem that is peculiar to the south Wales valleys as against areas such as Yorkshire. It is true that the Rhondda has the highest percentage of owner-occupation in Britain and we desperately rely on improvement grants for our very old houses. Does my hon. Friend agree that leasehold reform is a problem? British Coal or other home owners have sold off their leases. Some 100 years have passed since the houses were built and we, as constituency Members, have to chase property companies all around the country.

Mr. Rowlands: Our communities are familiar with the problem of ground landlords, and that legislation needs to be strengthened.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to some positive steps that could be taken to encourage development in the south Wales coal mining communities. It need not be a matter of gloom and despair—it could be a positive move. The people and those communities have a great capacity for survival and regeneration. We have already demonstrated that, and we can do it again.

One way of supporting south Wales coal would be to develop power generation within the region. This year, for the first time, south Wales will be a net importer of electricity. For the past three or four years, we have exported electricity. Although there may be a case for building the large coal-fired plants at West Burton and elsewhere, there is also a case for the smaller units of power generation such as the combined heat and power scheme or the extension of Aberthaw C to produce regionally generated electricity so that once again we shall at least be in balance, or be able to contribute to the national grid. If we did that, opportunities would arise which would reinforce and support the Welsh coalfield. That would give greater stability to the coal industry.

I want to emphasise to the Minister that we do not need a new agency—we have the Welsh Development Agency and the local authorities. We need resources and a bigger budget, particularly to help with land reclamation. I have some knowledge of those matters as I was the first Minister in the Welsh Office to set up the land reclamation project in 1969, and I represent the community of Aberfan. We know all about the problems of land reclamation and land dereliction. Since then, we have been quite successful, and we have spent £100 million.

The problem is that we still have the same amount of dereliction as when we started the project. Even with the investment of £100 million we are still in the same position in terms of clearance because the pace of new land dereliction is almost as fast as our ability to deal with existing dereliction. Therefore, the WDA's budget of £16 million a year for land reclamation is hopelessly inadequate for the needs of good environmental and reclamation programmes on the scale needed by communities such as those in my constituency. We need a budget of about £25 million. Is that a terrible demand, considering how much money the Chancellor claims to have available? Is it so terrible to request that we spend £25 million a year on clearing the land dereliction in our communities?

We must also stop creating new land dereliction. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin), spoke about opencasting. I have vivid experiences of opencasting.

We had one of the largest holes in Europe. The hon. Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste) spoke about the holes in his constituency. I have one that would compare with his, and the local authorities are putting rubbish into it. In addition, British Coal has proposed the opencasting of both sides of my valley simultaneously — only yards away from residential areas, and next to a new industrial and commercial park on land that we had just reclaimed and in which we are trying to promote new diversified investment in our economy.

When Ministers speak about expanding the opencast programme in my community, where there is still a lot of coal in the hills, people know that 10 or 15 years of opencasting will mean the destruction of opportunities to diversify our economy and move into other areas. We are told that we must attract jobs and companies, and we must not cling to the old jobs in coal and steel. We may not want to cling to the jobs of gouging and desecrating our hillsides when, as a result of reclamation programmes, we can regenerate, build new factory premises and create new varieties of job opportunities so that the community that I represent, which started the industrial revolution in the 1750s, can take part in the new industrial revolution of the 1980s and 1990s.

11.36 am

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on his choice of subject — the effect of Government policy on coalfield communities—a title that allows hon. Members a fairly wide brief for today's debate.

With British Coal's continued commercial success towards viability, it may be the only time that the House has the opportunity to debate the coal industry, when it

[Mr. Andy Stewart]

is introduced on a private Member's motion. It is a far cry from the annual ritual of the Secretary of State for Energy coming to the Dispatch Box cap in hand to ask for money to meet the National Coal Board's revenue deficit, which during the lifetime of this Government has been £5·5 billion. With those requests was always the latest plan fo[illegible] the industry to become viable in our time. The mo[illegible] famous of those plans was "Plan for Coal" 1974-75. Even today, the concept of that plan cannot be criticised. It was born as a result of the world's energy crisis, conceived between Government, management and trade unions, but sadly it was only the Government who stuck to their side of the bargain to meet their investment commitment. Weak management and domineering union leadership denied the work force the opportunity to participate in the plan, giving them the rewards which should have been theirs by right.

With the wisdom of hindsight, we now know that, if "Plan for Coal" had been adhered to by all its signatories, our coalfield communities would not be facing the problems of today. However, before highlighting those problems, I must pay tribute to those who work in the coal industry for achieving productivity records which would have been considered unobtainable two years ago. Productivity has increased by 23 per cent. in the last year and is unmatched by any other industry, giving us unprecedented national levels of production of more than 3·5 tonnes per man shift. In my constituency, more than 5 tonnes per man shift have now been reached.

Mr. Hardy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No. Many other hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Hardy: It is important. I want to agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Stewart: I am grateful for the compliment.

Continuing good results ensure the coal industry's future — a future in which British Coal's largest buyer, the Central Electricity Generating Board, will be privatised. Private or public, 75 per cent. of that industry's raw materials will be coal for the foreseeable future.

Mr. Hardy: Will it be British coal?

Mr. Barron: Will it be Nottinghamshire coal?

Mr. Stewart: If the hon. Gentleman will give me a chance, I shall deal with that.

The history of the nuclear industry guarantees the industry's future.

Earlier this year, two new coal-fired power stations were announced, one of which will be built in Nottinghamshire, with a promise of another three in the medium term. The commitment was recently endorsed by the Secretary of State for Energy as justification for increasing electricity prices to pay for that investment. There is a large market for coal and the demand can be met by British Coal meeting customers' requirements on quality, availability and price.

The House will recall that last year British Coal reduced its prices to the CEGB by £4 per tonne to secure a five-year contract. Knowing those who work in the industry, I am confident that that contract can be won again in four years time.

Mr. Hood: Against imported coal?

Mr. Stewart: Yes, against imported coal because many coal faces in British mines are matching the high performance levels achieved by our overseas competitors, and because the high investment in the heavy duty coalface equipment will continue. In Nottinghamshire alone this amounts to £220 million in the next two years. That continuing efficiency and our advantage in transporting coal with the knowledge that the world steam coal trade is small and unreliable gives me confidence to predict that the electricity industry will continue to receive its present volume from British coal for years to come.

British Coal has other valuable customers, taking 25 per cent. of output. To increase that market, it introduced Coalflow at a launch in Nottinghamshire in September. Coalflow is a system which is clean, automatic and gives cheap heat at a cost which is 20 per cent. lower than oil or gas.

This autumn British Coal launched a new coal conversion scheme in response to the ending of the Government's coal firing grant. Within a month that initiative has been a huge success, attracting applications from industrialists, local authorities and health authorities. It was especially good news for the public sector, since it was not eligible under the old scheme. The savings will allow the public sector to devote more resources to its services and communities.

While I am talking about conversions, perhaps the hon. Member for Rother Valley will tell us how he has been converted from being the chief campaign manager when Arthur was elected president, to being the chief campaign manager for his present leader, who wishes Arthur to disappear completely.

I have spoken about the upside of the coal industry. Unfortunately that success has been responsible for a downside, with pits closures, unemployment and low morale in the industry where the future of some pits is uncertain. Associated with that is the inept way in which British Coal went about disposing of the remaining housing stock, which caused unnecessary fears among tenants, not only those living in my constituency but across the breadth of the country. The uncertainty which we in the coalfields have experienced for the past two years will, I hope, be satisfactorily concluded in Nottinghamshire in the next few days. The "Pits and Mortar" report, to which the hon. Member for Rother Valley referred, gave me one small comfort.

Mr. Hood: Is that all?

Mr. Stewart: It actually gave me three small comforts. Nobody in my constituency featured in that document. What surprised me was why other hon. Members allowed what happened in their constituencies to arise.

Mr. Barron: When we debated the matter at the conference in Mansfield it was clear that the houses in Nottinghamshire have not been sold because Nottingham estates office has been tied up dealing with subsidence claims and has not been able to go ahead with the regional sales policy. That should be easy for anybody to understand. Perhaps I should draw a picture for the hon. Gentleman so that the facts will sink in.

Mr. Stewart: There have been no sales in my constituency because the former chairman, Mr. MacGregor, imposed a moratorium until arrangements could be made with local housing associations. That is why they did not feature in "Pits and Mortar". If you had been listening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have heard that the contracts for sale of these houses in Nottinghamshire will be concluded in the very near future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was listening.

Mr. Stewart: You never miss a thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to thank my local district councils, the coalfield community campaign secretariat and the housing associations which will be the new landlords. Above all, I must thank my elderly constituents for being patient and understanding. The Nottinghamshire coalfield is generally regarded as being one of the most prosperous in the country.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stewart: No. The hon. Gentleman must realise that many other hon. Members want to make a contribution. I am sure that he agrees with everything that I have said.

The Nottinghamshire coalfield is generally regarded as one of the most prosperous in the country, with an assured long-term future. However, 15,000 jobs have been lost in the industry over the past five years. In March 1982, almost 41,000 people in the county worked for British coal. By March this year that number had fallen to 26,000. Half the lost jobs were due to pit closures and the others to increased productivity and mechanisation.

Hucknall colliery in my constituency closed after 120 years, as a result of what is known in the industry as a wash-out of the coal seam, causing losses of 1,400 jobs and over £100 million. In March this year Newstead joined the Annesly colliery complex in the constituency represented by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and in the next 10 days the future of Linby colliery will be discussed. I hope that I have illustrated clearly that even in a successful coalfield there are closures and job losses.

Recognising the need for rationalisation, the Government introduced generous redundancy terms for those who wished to leave the industry before 31 March this year and arranged alternative jobs for those who wished to stay. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members must be patient; I have a long speech to make.

So far, we have not given assisted area status to all areas which are heavily dependent on mining. That was recommended in February this year when the Select Committee on Energy published its report on the coal industry. In a paragraph relating to pit closures, it recommended that such areas should have assisted status. It also urged the Government to pump in more resources at least comparable to the commitment required to generate London docklands.

Of course, we now have the new commitment to the inner cities. I believe that the time has come for some form of regional assistance that is specially aimed at the problems of the declining coalfields. Such coalfield aid could be directed to improving business advice and support services, providing better sites and premises for industrial development and improving the local infrastructure and environment.

As things now stand, local authorities in the east midlands do not receive any extra resources to meet the demands that fall upon them when pits close in their districts. I pay tribute to Nottinghamshire county council which, in the past four years, has made available assistance from its own resources to 17 businesses in the pit closure areas of Nottinghamshire, totalling £797,000 in loans, £546,000 in equity subscriptions and £32,500 in grants. My district councils of Ashfield and Sherwood also help in this work, but without special coal aid they are losing the battle in which we have involved them.

As deficit funding to British Coal is almost over now, would my hon. Friend the Minister consider channelling some of the substantial savings into the hard-hit coalfield areas? That would complement the role of British Coal Enterprise Ltd., which is doing an excellent job within its brief. In our region of the north midlands, which comprises Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, British Coal Enterprise Ltd. has committed £1 million, which has resulted in 640 new jobs.

I know that those figures do not yet match the 3,000 who left the industry in my constituency during this period. That is why I appeal to my hon. Friend to consider the number of lost jobs in the industry and present a case for European assistance for programmes that have been successfully introduced in recent years for other traditional industries—such as steel, textiles and shipbuilding. We need look no further than the old steel town of Corby to see how successful that programme has been.

The Coal Industry Act 1987, passed by the Government this year, is one that Opposition Members will not wish to be reminded of, as they tried to vote it down at every opportunity. The Act will have a profound effect on the running of the mineworkers pension scheme, which has assets of £5 billion, by allowing two seats on the pension body to be taken by members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. Their expertise will enhance the moneys paid to their pensioners, who are the forgotten people of the coalfield communities — but no longer. In future, investment decisions will be made with their interests in mind — not those of Marxist philosophers. As Roy Lynk, the president of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers said:

> "A good union can be judged by the treatment of its pensioners."

To back up his statement he announced a 30 per cent. increase in his members' pensions from this month. That, I am sure, will not have gone unnoticed by those who depend on the mineworkers scheme for their pensions.

Today, the industry is entering a new chapter in its history — viability through capital investment, a work force committed to increasing productivity, and, God willing, a future without Scargill.

11.55 am

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Unlike the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), who passes as a farmer, I was in the mining industry for 27 years—14 of them in the coalfields—so I know what I am talking about. I remember when the Coalfield Communities Campaign was set up to help the areas affected by pit closures and the running down of the industry, which Arthur correctly predicted would happen. Never mind the strike. It would have happened even if the strike had not taken place, so let us get that out of the way immediately.

I want to discuss my area. I am a miner, but I do not have a mine in my constituency—unfortunately, it was closed. It was the first colliery to go through the so-called review procedure set up during the miners' strike. I remember trying to fight to save it. I remember coming down here with the delegation of councillors, the Mayor,

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

Old Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all, and we went to see that 71 year-old American known as the chairman. We sat round the table and said that there would be devastation in our town if its only pit, which employed 1,500 men, was closed. The man's answer was that he was sorry, but his remit was to get rid of uneconomic capacity. It did not run to acting as the conscience of the community, or anything like that.

We received little help from Mr. MacGregor, so we hot-footed it to the House of Commons to see the then Secretary of State for Energy, who is now in the Welsh Office. He was very nice and told us that our pit would go through the review procedure, and he would abide by whatever decision was arrived at. We thought that that was quite fair, considering that it was just after the miners' strike. What more could we want if the Secretary of State was going to abide by whatever decision was made?

We got our review and we obtained a decision, which was that the pit should stay open for two years at least to see whether it could break even. We reckon that it could have done, and that was how we convinced the independent review to take that decision. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State for Energy was never found again. We sent him letters and telephoned him, but we could not find him. Obviously, someone else, somewhere else had taken a decision, which he did not like, to close the mine, whatever he said about it.

So there were 900 redundancies in Blyth Valley and the men took their money, with which some tried, and some failed, to set up businesses. There is now 18·4 per cent. unemployment in Blyth, which is the highest recorded level since records began. I am quoting figures from this year's economic review of our town. They have been put together by professional men. That means that 21 per cent. of all men who are capable of working in a proper job are on the dole. Two big wards adjoin the area around Bates's colliery. Cowpen ward has a male unemployment rate of 29 per cent. Croft ward, which I represented as a councillor for 20 years, has 27 per cent. male unemployment. That makes a grand total of 21 per cent. Those two areas are close to the pit and comprise the region that we are discussing.

I sometimes have to laugh when people talk about regional aid. The amount of regional aid given by the Government is unbelievable, and I shall tell the House about it. Regional aid for northern regional development used to be £235 million. Today, under this Government, it is £70 million. That is the amount given to the northern region Coalfield Communities Campaign. It has been decreased by 78 per cent., and that is an indictment of the Government. That is all that they are doing for the areas that they have devastated in the north-east.

Hon. Members have mentioned British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I must admit that since its launch it has done a lot. We estimate that at least 198 projects have been given £5 million in the north-east region. On numerous occasions my hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) has tried to find out how many jobs it has created. It cannot tell us how many have been created in my constituency, nor can it tell how many have been created in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Easington. British Coal Enterprise Ltd., cannot tell anybody how many jobs it has set up. We know that 198 projects have been set up, but how many jobs did they create? That is what we want to know, but we cannot find out. We know how many jobs it says it has created in the north-east, but we want to know the figures for specific areas.

I do not decry British Coal Enterprise Ltd., because it has done the best that it can under the circumstances and has set many people up in business, but it should try to provide some proper figures about the constituencies, and perhaps the Minister will take note of that point. In the north-east we need something to rejuvenate the people following the massive pit closures since the strike. We have had four or five such closures and many men took redundancy payments and are now on the dole.

We have asked for an extension to Blyth power station. In the north-east we have the capacity of I. E. Parsons. It has been making skilled men redundant, and those men can build boilers and know about engineering and other trades. Once those men go, they are lost for ever; and we know that we need that power station. Lord Marshall might say that he does not need it in the north-east just yet, but we need it in order to keep the men that we already have, because we are losing skilled men at an awful rate and will never get them back.

The Coalfield Communities Campaign is about trying to convince the Government, but they are difficult to convince. Since I arrived here, they have not taken notice of anything. We must try to build up Tyneside, and we can do it by ordering a new coal-fired power station, or by at least telling the people of the north-east—the managers of Parsons and the people in the trade unions—that the Government will order the new power station as quickly as possible.

I started by talking about Bates's colliery and I shall close in the same way. I spent 27 years in a colliery of 29 million tonnes and it was a sad day when we lost it, and especially when we lost the review. At the time many things were said about the review and I am sorry that the Secretary of State at the time had to do what he did. I do not know who was running the Government, whether at that time it was the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister, when the Secretary of State took the decision about Bates's colliery. Bates's colliery has now gone. It is a derelict site and will probably be grassed over and made into a park. I invite the Secretary of State for Energy to come and look at Blyth to see its potential. He is welcome to visit my constituency at any time that he wishes.

12.4 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I remind the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) that it is no help to any coal mining community to support failing mines. There is no point in the coal industry maintaining an unprofitable pit that is poorly managed and incompetent. There is no point in supporting a man like Arthur Scargill who maintains the bad practices and an unhelpful work force and who is looking for unprofitable mines and an unprofitable industry. The decline of any community faced by failing mines is slow and inevitable, but it is a reality that must end. It must be clearly understood that Mr. Scargill is no friend either to the miners or to the coal communities.

Mr. Cummings: He is my friend and the friend of many other people.

Mr. Ashby: There is no future for those communities with Mr. Scargill. In 1950 in my constituency, we had about 8,300 miners and 11 mines. By 1981, we were down to about 7,000 miners and nine mines. Now we are down to about 2,800 miners split between two pits, Donnisthorpe-Rawdon and Bagworth in Ellistown. Therefore we have lost about 4,300 jobs in the last six years.

In the 1950s, about 15 per cent. of our communities depended on mining jobs and in some communities it was as high as 30 per cent. In 1981 we saw levels of unemployment of 6·2 per cent. and by 1987 that had risen as high as 12·3 per cent. It is now down to 9·9 per cent. and in some areas the percentage is much lower. We have also seen an increase in long-term unemployment. Those figures speak for themselves and show the difficulties that these communities have faced during the last few years. The reason for that is clearly understood. In an extractive industry there is no alternative but to go when the coal becomes exhausted. In 1981, there was an absence of alternative sources of employment. We also had long-standing problems of a poor environment, and they have been exacerbated by derelict sites that have come about as a result of the closure of these mines. A very worrying problem for us is that by the 1990s it is anticipated that mining will cease in the area, with the loss of a further 2,800 jobs.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when jobs are beginning to go in an area because of a change in employment strata, it is even more important for Government resources to go into that area so that the lost jobs can be replaced with new technologies, new skills and new opportunities? That would enable people who have lived all their lives in a particular part of the country to continue to live there in full employment.

Mr. Ashby: This is a complex matter and is the subject of my speech. I agree with the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham), but it is a combination of two things, and at the end of the day there is no solution but to look to private enterprise. However, it needs some help and some priming from the Government. That help will come from such bodies as British Coal Enterprise Ltd., and also from British Coal itself. Therefore, it is a combination, but I agree that it is important to have directed help from the Government.

We in north-west Leicestershire have been looking to Asfordby. In that context I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham). He was anxious to be here for the debate, but unfortunately he has urgent constituency problems that have kept him away from the Chamber. Asfordby is in the constituency of Rutland and Melton. In north-west Leicestershire we have a very reasonable work force. It is a work force that is worthy of investment.

During the 1984-85 coal miners' strike the work force remained working and it has been at the forefront of turning from the National Union of Miners to the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. Even the NUM is opposing Arthur Scargill as miners now recognise the need for a six-day week to maximise investment. It is a vital feature that, when one has a high investment, one cannot have the investment in machinery standing idle for half the time. British Coal recognises that if it is to be competitive and a forward-thinking industry, it has to look to maximising its investment. Arthur Scargill is flying in the face of reasonable investment in the industry. Most reasonable miners and certainly other Britons recognise and understand that one must maximise investment.

Mr. Meale: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the best use of resources and the best record are seen in British Coal when, since the Government were elected in 1979, 100 pits have closed, 100,000 jobs have been lost and over 60,000 homes with tenants who have given their lives to the industry have been sold?

Mr. Ashby: It was the Labour party that devastated those communities. The Labour Government closed far more coalfields. If the hon. Gentleman had been listening to my speech, he would have heard me say that there is no future for communities which have a declining coal mine, because the end is inevitable. Their future is in a strong industry, and that is what I am seeking to speak to.

One thing that worries me about Asfordby is that assurances were given by British Coal that the first option on jobs there would be given to the miners of Leicestershire. That has been significantly departed from, because it appears that those jobs will now also be open to Nottinghamshire coal miners. I have asked the chairman of British Coal to look through his files and to note that his predecessors gave positive assurances that the Leicestershire coal miners would be offered those jobs, and I have asked for those assurances to be adhered to. Another worrying factor is that there appears to be a transfer of management responsibility for the Asfordby area to Nottingham.

Mr. Andy Stewart: A good decision.

Mr. Ashby: It may be a good decision, but it has an implication for management jobs in north-west Leicestershire and it puts the future of 471 jobs at the headquarters at Coleorton Hall in some doubt. That decision may be right, but it will be worrying for my constituents because of the job implications it will have. The Government have tackled the problems in constituencies such as mine with a great deal of sensitivity and generosity. Faced with the exhaustion of coal in coalfields, the Government introduced a generous redundancy scheme to implement a rundown of those mines.

I have been approached by many miners made redundant under mine closures implemented by the Labour Government who have said that they feel they were let down by the Labour Government because their terms were not as generous as the terms offered by the Conservative Government. In fact, the Labour Government had no schemes. They had no thought for the future and they closed pits left, right and centre. They had no thought for the future of those who lost their jobs. Necessary closures have taken place while the Conservative Government have been in office, but these have been accompanied by generous schemes and a great deal of care, sympathy and sensitivity. It is against that background that we have the carping of Labour Members.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Gentleman should consider the facts that lie behind his remarks. He has referred to the closures that took place when the Labour Government were in office, but he should realise that there was a lot of space, as it were, and many collieries remained. The issue was how best to fill the remaining space. I worked on what was known as the A, B and C system, which hinged on a colliery closing itself as uneconomic.

[Mr. Allen McKay]

The hon. Gentleman has spoken of redundancy payments and it seems that he has not heard about buying out jobs. That is a Coal Board ploy. If the board does not want the trouble of running the colliery, it buys it out.

Mr. Ashby: I have heard a great deal of that sort of nonsense, but it must be remembered that the Labour Government closed more pits than the number that now exist. That is the way in which they treated miners, and there can be no excuse for that.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ashby: I shall not give way, because I know that there are many others who wish to participate in the debate. I shall continue and finish my speech.

Having spoken about the future of the industry in the area which I represent, it must be remembered that the remaining collieries are likely to close in the 1990s. The redundancy scheme has affected predominantly those over 50 years of age, which means that younger people have been left in work. Future closures will mean that younger people will be leaving the industry on slightly less generous terms than those which have prevailed. As we know, the Government scheme has ended. This will result in a challenge to the local economy.

I have referred to the relative absence of alternative sources of employment. This problem must be addressed by every community that is faced with the closure of or rundown of an extraction industry. The resources of any such industry are finite and it is right that local authorities must plan to that end. They know that extraction industries are finite and that extraction will come to an end. They must plan well ahead of any closure. The turnround for any area must be about nine or 10 years. That is the position when any major industry closes. Local authorities should consider diversification at an early stage.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Ashby: I said that I would not give way, and I shall not. I am not giving way again. I shall continue and complete my speech.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Leicester, North-West (Mr. Ashby) has said that he is not prepared to give way, and the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) must not persist.

Mr. Ashby: Local authorities must turn their minds to the diversification of industry. They must make contingency plans about 20 years before a closure is expected.

Many areas of the sort that I represent have had Labour-controlled local authorities. In so many areas such as mine, the local Labour party is dominated by miners. The Labour party in my constituency was miner-orientated and like many other Labour parties, positively discouraged investment in non-mining industries. It had a loyalty, and loyalty is strong in the mining industry, but it was misplaced. The position in my area is no different from that in any other area that faces the same problem.

In recent times, the local Labour party in my constituency has understood the problem, and real improvements have been made. There has been a reduction in unemployment, which now stands at 9·9 per cent. Many new factories have opened, and as a result there have been many new jobs in the constituency.

My local authority is Labour-controlled and like so many other Labour-controlled authorities, it depends on the Liberal party to support it. We know that throughout the country, the Labour and Liberal parties are in cahoots.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Ashby: It has looked for a diversification of jobs and for the provision of new industry. In many ways, it has positively discriminated for jobs and we have been able to work together regardless of our politics. We have been encouraging new industries.

There has been a substantial economic upturn in north-west Leicesterhire and we have been able to take advantage of the growth in the national economy. The national economy has had as much of an influence as the local economy. We have been able to use the national growth to improve the area and a combination of the national economy and local economy has been formidable.

The important fact is that we have been working to establish confidence in the community. We have been talking about successes. We have not been going around talking doom and gloom. We speak of ourselves as a golden triangle of communications. We have the M1, M42 and M6 nearby and there are airports and so on. We have been speaking in positive terms about the advantages in our area and we are trying hard to create an environment that will attract the private sector. The local Labour party recognises the need for the private sector.

We have been looking to provide suitable sites and premises. We have such sites and premises and often they are on ex-Coal Board land. Our consultants report that the private sector will not build advanced factory units and we have to take that into account. I see that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) is not listening to me, but I am talking about the need for a combination of the private and public sectors. There is a need for some local authority investment as a primer for industrial estates and industries in the area. That must be recognised by the Government. However, such expenditure must not be at the expense of other important measures such as social measures, which are necessary in such areas.

The environment is equally important. As has been said, by their very nature pits are dirty places with ghastly spoil heaps and so on. Changes have been taking place but a great deal of help is needed. In the new mines such as Asfordby, great emphasis has been placed on environmental factors. However, we must be vigilant in coping with the problem. My area has not only working pits but derelict pit sites. It also has opencast sites and I agree with so much of what was said by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands). To place opencast sites on top of closed sites is adding to the dereliction. We have to be environmentally sensitive if we are to improve areas such as mine where there are pit closures. We must not add to the problem by having opencast sites in profusion. One site per area is the most that can be coped with.

We have to turn the areas around and make them attractive for investors. We have to prepare the derelict pit sites for a cleaner future. There is a need for close liaison between British Coal, the property owners and local authorities in that respect. We have to think ahead. We have to think positively and co-ordinate our future planning. We need greater Government appreciation of the problems of the environment and we have to realise that the private sector is the only sector that will truly improve the communities. The communities must be nourished and encouraged. We cannot go on preaching doom and gloom, because that only discourages private sector investors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat my plea for brief speeches.

12.25 pm

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): I shall try to be brief, but I hope that all hon. Members understand my constituency's specific problems, which are reflected throughout the whole country. The problems deserve to be set out fairly and squarely in *Hansard*, in the hope that, in some way, the Government will respond. I address my comments to the Under-Secretary of State for Energy in particular, in the hope that he will pass them on, not only to British Coal, but to the Department of the Environment. The specific problems to which I shall refer relate equally to the Department of the Environment.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on taking the initiative and bringing the issue before the House. If the Government are so concerned about what is happening to our coal mining communities, why did they not bring forward such a motion? We have heard from the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) that we should be concerned about the environment. I, too, am concerned about the environment, and so are my hon. Friends who represent north Staffordshire constituencies.

As in south Staffordshire, many pits in our area have closed down, but we face the threat of opencast coal mining, which will bring about one of the biggest environmental problems in our region. Incidentally, that issue has been singled out by the Council for the Protection of Rural England as one of the biggest dangers that we face. I take issue with the Coal Board. Opencast coal is not needed to sweeten high-chlorine coal.

Having said that, and having referred to the fact that we need to take account of many issues connected with coal mining communities — the issues have been most admirably covered by my hon. Friends — I shall concentrate on housing, and, in particular, on the problems that tenants, residents and owner-occupiers face in the Galleys Bank estate in Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent.

For the benefit of those who are not aware of it, in the 1950s the Coal Board built 450 Shindler-type houses in Kidsgrove. In 1979 the Coal Board gave an undertaking to the coal miners, who had spent a lifetime working for the coal industry, that they would be well looked after in their old age. I was dismayed when I read the legal columns of our local newspaper, the *Evening Sentinel*. It was clear that the houses would be sold in job lots at an auction room down in London. Many people in my constituency have never even been to London.

We have just heard from the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West that the Government's view is that the private sector will solve our problems. The private sector and the sale of our former NCB council houses to absentee landlords are the main reasons why we have so many problems at the moment. I take great exception to the comments of the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart). He said that he took great pride in the fact that there was no reference to his constituency in the document issued by Shelter, "Pits and Mortar". Some Opposition Members cannot help that. The Coal Board has paid no attention to the needs of those whose lives have been devoted to the coal industry. I want the debate at least to change that. I wish to make sure that due discussion and consideration are given to the matter.

The sale of the houses took place in London. Only some weeks later was it discovered that, under the housing defects legislation, those homes were defective. British Coal had never informed the tenants of that fact. Tenants thought that their houses had been sold by British Coal on 6 August. They were then told that they would not be sold until 30 September and that they should carry on paying their rents to British Coal. They were then told, no, their houses had been sold off, 20 to a company here, and 20 to a company there.

Those companies, which include such names as Swillow and Bananabliss, which are a bit hard to swallow. Those homes were sold off to absentee landlords, who made no provision for the basics of housing management. They did not make any proper arrangements to issue rent books or to carry out housing repairs. They told elderly people and widows that they must telephone London to report any problems. Many of those people do not have telephones in their homes and could not afford out of their pensions and housing benefit the telephone costs that would have been involved if they had reported the housing repairs.

The position has probably improved somewhat since then, through the efforts of Newcastle council, which has had to spend an enormous amount of money giving support to the tenants and in attempts to get the proper legislation enforced locally. It is worthy of note that that money has not been given by central Government.

Another matter of great importance is the plight of those residents who purchased their homes from British Coal without knowing that they were defective under the terms of the housing defects legislation. Those people have discovered that they have missed the cut-off date, which means that they are facing undue hardship and misery. Not even the number of letters that they have written to British Coal and to the Department of the Environment has enabled them to receive proper compensation for what happened.

I could speak about this subject at great length, but I am aware that many other hon. Members wish to speak. In earlier contributions, especially in that from my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens South (Mr. Bermingham), we heard of the importance of the coalfield communities and it was said that we should build on the many years that generation after generation has put in to improving the quality of life.

About 15 of the houses in my constituency that have been sold to absentee landlords are now empty and are not being relet. To add insult to injury, the new owners — the absentee landlords — have even attempted to carry out illegal evictions. I shall quote from a letter sent by Sir Robert Haslam of British Coal to councillors in my constituency.:

> "All the tenants of the houses sold to private landlords retain full security of tenure, which is unaffected by the change of ownership".

I should like to say a little about local democracy, because two councillors in my constituency, Councillor

[Ms. Joan Walley]

John Lockett and Councillor John Ellis, have worked unpaid day and night, week in week out, to do the jobs of the absentee landlords and to help the people who found themselves not knowing where or who to turn to, and in misery. Those councillors have done a remarkable job, but it is now up to the Department of the Environment, through representations from the Department of Energy, to ensure that all the people concerned get round the table to try to make good some of the harm that has been done.

I do not want the "Pits and Mortar" report to be put in a filing cabinet. Too many reports by voluntary organisations have not received the discussion that they merit. It is an excellent document, and I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley for pointing it out to me.

It was because of my concern that one of the first things that I did when elected to the House in June of this year was to table an early-day motion to highlight the suffering caused by British Coal's sale of such houses and to demand a public inquiry. I want a public inquiry. I do not want just an early-day motion and for us to have today's debate and think that the problem will go away. It will not go away. Tenants, residents, owner-occupiers and local authorities, which are not getting the money that they deserve from the Government, and hon. Members who represent the constituencies concerned, will make sure, with the help of the Coalfield Communities Campaign, that the problem is not ignored.

We want the Government to set up a public inquiry as soon as possible. I should like British Coal to say that genuine hardship was caused to tenants in my constituency and that it will give them something in compensation. If British Coal paid the rents for the five weeks when the tenants did not know who their landlord was, that would not cost British Coal more than £5,000. However, it would be a tremendous boost to coal mining communities. My constituents would then think that somebody cared about what was happening to them.

As for the housing defects legislation, I want an extension of the power to make claims. I do not know why British Coal did not inform tenants that the legislation applied to their homes. I understand that discussions are taking place at the Department of the Environment, and I want the Minister to ensure that the terms of the Housing Defects Act 1984 are widened to incorporate owner-occupiers who at present cannot claim compensation. The Government should make available to local authorities in coal mining areas adequate financial resources so that they are able to rehabilitate or repurchase defective houses.

I do not intend to leave this issue alone. I shall continue to press the Government until I can return to my constituents and say that at last the Government recognise the problems that face not just my constituency but the contituencies of every Opposition Member.

12.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Michael Spicer): One of the problems about speaking at this time in the debate — I understand that it is because the Opposition want me to do so now — is that certain hon. Members whose questions I should have like to answer have left the Chamber. Through the columns of *Hansard*, I apologise to them. I shall do my best to answer the points that they have raised.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) is the first Opposition Member to whom I want to refer. I warmly congratulate him on the eloquent and moving maiden speech that he made on behalf of his constituents. It is very difficult to make a maiden speech, and it is always a relief to have got it off one's chest.

I thank the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) for moving the motion, and I welcome the opportunity that it provides for the House to debate the coalfield communities. However, my hon. Friends the Members for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin) and for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) have said that the coalfield communities cannot be considered without referring to the industry that serves them — the coal industry. We may hear more about this from Opposition Members, but I do not understand why they are so coy about the simple proposition that in order to debate the coalfield communities one has to refer to the coal industry.

Mr. Barron: Why should the Minister be so coy about it? During the year of the strike, and ever since, Ministers have stood at the Dispatch Box and said that the social consequences of colliery closures have nothing whatever to do with the Secretary of State for Energy. We are not being coy about it. We are looking at the problem in the way that the Government have been looking at it for many years.

Mr. Spicer: Reference has been made to the strike. I am not being coy. I intend to deal with the coalfield communities. I have my own ideas about why the Opposition are making such heavy weather of this and why they do not want to discuss the coal industry. In some strange way, they want to avoid debating the coal industry. If I am pressed to say what my own ideas are about that, I shall do so. However, I do not intend to embarrass the Opposition too greatly at this stage by saying why, in my view, they do not want to debate the coal industry. Certainly we want to debate the coalfield communities in the context of some assessment of what is going on in the coal industry. The debate has already vividly illustrated the nature of the crossroads at which the industry currently finds itself.

On the one hand — as has previously been said — enormous strides have been taken to repair the damage caused by the strike in 1985, the effects of which my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) brilliantly described. Since that time, productivity has risen by 45 per cent., and that is contrary to the terms of the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Rother Valley, which talks about falling investment. It is strange that the hon. Gentleman says that we must not talk about investment, when his motion accuses the Government of subscribing to falling investment. Investment in new machinery — quite contrary to the hon. Gentleman's motion — especially heavy-duty equipment, has been maintained at a rate of £2 million every working day. Since 1979 an amount equal — this may interest the House — to one and a half times the present capital valuation of ICI has been injected into the industry.

New pits such as Selby and Adfordby are being developed. Selby is now producing coal at the rate of 16 tonnes per man shift, as against an industry average of——

Mr. Barron: What relationship has this to the coalfield communities?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman need not worry; I shall come on to the relationship between this and the coalfield communities. Indeed, there is a clear relationship between what I am saying and those coalfield communities.

Mr. Cummings: The history of mining in Durham, is that we had 145 pits in 1948, but we now have five. Will the Minister explain the importance of investment in the coastal mines to the scores of coalfield communities in the west of the county? I have come here today to talk about coalfield communities. Investment for the industry is always welcome, but I fail to see the consequential effects upon communities in the west of my county.

Mr. Spicer: Is the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) suggesting that there is no benefit accruing to the coalfield communities as a result of investment in the coal mining industry? I am not in any sense denying that there are separate and additional issues involved, but, first, I wish to establish firmly what is going on as regards current investment and development in the coal industry as a basis from which to discuss the communities. I think that that is a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

Large reserves, not only of deep-mined coal but of opencast coal, are resulting in the production of competitively priced coal. All that means that British Coal now has clearly in its sight the objective of breaking even next year. It all adds up to the prospect of a highly competitive British coal industry facing a secure future. If that comes about, it can only be of benefit to the coalfield communities.

So much for the good news. On the other hand—this may now be touching on some of the raw nerves of Opposition Members — negative and destructive attitudes, championed and personified for instance by the current president of the NUM, still persist. It may well be that the reason why sensible Opposition Members do not wish to focus attention on the coal industry at the moment is that they share a certain embarrassment about this matter.

Mr. Illsley: I am not embarrassed by the president of the National Union of Mineworkers. The Minister should remember that, before the strike, the president of the NUM said that 70,000 jobs would be lost and 70 pits closed. That is about to happen. In a recent Adjournment debate I highlighted the closure of Woolley and Redbrook collieries in my constituency. What Mr. Scargill said before the strike has come home to roost. He was correct.

Mr. Spicer: Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the strike assisted in that process? If we allowed similar attitudes again to dominate the industry, there is little doubt that its potential stability and security would be shattered, this time perhaps for ever, which would cause great damage to the coalfield communities.

British Coal must compete in a tough world market which shows every sign of getting tougher. The price of internationally traded coal has fallen steeply and may decline further with the fall in the value of the United States dollar.

Mr. Barron: What does this have to do with the coalfield communities?

Mr. Spicer: A tremendous amount, as I keep trying to impress upon the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman cannot say that this has nothing to do with our debate on the coalfield communities. The future of the industry is essential to the debate on the future of those communities.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister accept that we are frustrated by his attitude in response to the debate? As my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) said, there were 200 pits in south Wales; there are now 14. I accept that some were closed under Labour and some under Conservative Governments——

Mr. Batiste: Most under Labour.

Mr. Rogers: That is not my argument. It goes to show how stupid Conservative Members are. We should discuss the communities as they exist, not try to apportion blame. Those communities need help now.

Mr. Spicer: I share the hon. Gentleman's frustration, because I, too, want to discuss the present circumstances and future of the coal mining communities. But to do that I must first discuss the future of the coal industry.

There is intense competition from other fuels. Since April last year British Coal has lost about £500 million of potential income because it had to reduce its prices to maintain its business not only with the CEGB but with other customers. British Coal's average price to customers has fallen by 15 per cent. in real terms since March 1985, when the strike ended, and by 6·5 per cent. during the past year.

It must be said with pride that, to a large extent, the industry has managed to absorb those price reductions by increasing productivity and lowering costs. Productivity has increased dramatically—in the past year alone by 15 per cent. Since March 1985, colliery operating costs have been reduced by 23 per cent. As a result, last week British Coal's half-year results showed that its total deficit was lower and that its operating profit, before the payment of interest and restructuring costs, had doubled compared with the previous year. That is all to the great credit of those who work in the industry and to the great benefit of those who live in coal mining areas.

It must be said, however—this relates directly to the motion — that the greater part of the increased productivity has been achieved by re-equipping faces with heavy duty machinery, thus enabling coal to be cut more quickly and efficiently. That investment holds out the promise of even greater productivity. Contrary to the terms of the motion, since 1979 investment in coal has been more than 30 per cent. higher in real terms than during the period of the Labour Government.

If the new machinery is to provide the maximum return, which is one of the objectives that British Coal has been set, working practices must change. That is why we fully support the corporation in its wish to introduce flexible working in new mines such as Asfordby and Margam. Indeed, we see that as part of a wider strategy whereby the industry will need to concentrate on maximising profits and to focus on profitable production and marketing. There will be a growing need for each part of the corporation's operations to show a profit and generate a positive cash flow. There can be no certainty what that will mean for production targets.

Mr. Illsley *rose*—

Mr. Spicer: I should like to continue. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a few moments. I must carry on, because I want to relate my speech to the motion.

[Mr. Spicer]

With a rising demand for coal as the CEGB builds more coal-fired power stations, there will be great opportunities for British Coal, so long as its production is competitive. But I have to tell the House that British Coal still has a long way to go to make itself fully competitive. Because of falling prices, British Coal is likely to have an increased cash requirement and has had to accelerate its restructuring. I am likely, therefore, to have to announce to the House soon a revised external financing limit for this year.

Because of increased redundancy costs and terminal depreciation, the level of deficit grant of £100 million is also likely to prove inadequate. We are talking about Government money and taxpayers' money coming through the coal industry to the communities, which is highly relevant. The deficit grant of £100 million available under the Coal Industry Act 1987 is increasable by order to a maximum of £200 million. Should it prove necessary, we would come to the House with the order for any increase that was required, together with a Supplementary Estimate for any additional payments this year.

Privatisation of the electricity supply industry will be the most important challenge to the coal industry and communities around it over the next few years—

Mr. Rowlands: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spicer: I should like to continue, but I shall give way.

Mr. Rowlands: I am the one hon. Member who referred to restructuring and redundancies, so I feel that I am entitled to ask a question. I suspect that there will be a press release on that aspect of the Minister's speech. Am I right?

Mr. Spicer: Yes.

Mr. Rowlands: Good. In that case, how does the Minister square that with the statement by the Secretary of State for Wales, when he was Secretary of State for Energy, to all Welsh Members only a few months ago, that restructuring and rationalisation were virtually over in the Welsh coalfield, so we did not need a redundancy payments scheme. It is now being reintroduced. Does the Minister admit that there will be another major restructuring of the industry?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is an extension to the redundancy payments scheme. Currently, British Coal receives the most generous redundancy rate of all industries. The hon. Gentleman knows that as well as I do. There is certainly a renewal of the redundancy scheme, and that will be paid out of the restructuring grant.

Privatisation of the electricity supply industry will be the most important challenge to the coal industry over the next few years. Whatever structure we decide for the electricity industry, we believe that the coal industry will continue to be a large supplier to the electricity industry. However, a privatised electricity industry will be free to enter—*[Interruption.]* I am about to say something that is highly important—into commercial arrangements which it believes best suit its needs. Therefore, I cannot predict——

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I may not be the world's brightest, but I can read. The motion deals with the coalfield communities—that is, the communities in both former and present coalfield areas. What the Minister has to say about the proposed privatisation of the electricity industry surely is a matter for a different debate. There are many hon. Members—*[Interruption.]* I seek to make my point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the children are cackling on the Conservative Benches. Perhaps they will shut up. Will you tell the Minister that the right time for him to make his remarks is during an appropriate debate, not this one?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) tabled a wide motion and a wide debate is therefore in order. I have heard nothing out of order so far.

Mr. Spicer: I shall not weary the House by going into the reasons for discussing the electricity industry in the context of the coal communities.

Mr. Barron: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today is set aside for private Members' motions which are of interest to hon. Members. Is it not an abuse for the Minister to read out a press release on electricity privatisation which has nothing to do with my motion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Minister is responsible for his own speech. Hon. Members are taking up valuable time on points of order.

Mr. Spicer: The privatisation of the electricity industry will affect the coal industry, and the future of the coal industry is vital to the future of the coalfield communities.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I shall not give way again.

It is sometimes suggested that we should privatise coal to expand production and so increase jobs in the coalfield communities. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West reminded us that a Select Committee report suggested privatising the coal industry, but we have no present plans to privatise British Coal. We are giving priority to maintaining the present process of re-adjustment in the coal industry. In the meantime, we are committed to the development of a prosperous private sector for coal, which has substantial implications for the coalfield communities.

The licensed sector has expressed some concern about the statutory framework within which it operates. The Government are considering whether to raise the statutory limits applied to the licensed sector. If we decided to present such proposals to the House, legislation would take time. In the meantime, I have been discussing with Sir Robert Haslam the scope for greater flexibility and transparency.

Mr. Barron: What about jobs?

Mr. Spicer: The hon. Gentleman can make his own calculations but certainly there will be jobs. There is no doubt that there would be many more jobs if the private sector were given its head. Within the scope of the present law we want to discuss with Sir Robert Haslam what more can be done. For instance, it might be possible to speed up the issuing of licences and to give clearer guidance to potential licence applicants about the criteria that British Coal applies when deciding whether to grant a licence. I hope that we can reach some form of agreement before Christmas.

In addition, we must consider opencast mines which are worked by the private sector. I do not wish to go too deeply into that, except to remind hon. Members that it costs £1·03 per gigajoule to mine opencast coal, which is perhaps what the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) had in mind when considering the various balances. By comparison, it costs £1·60 per gigajoule on average, for deep-mined coal. Clearly, therefore, opencast coal—whether Opposition Members like it or not—has a part to play in the development of jobs in the coal industry, and because of the mix when it is blended with high chlorine deep-mined coal.

I entirely understand the objections and worries that have been raised about opencast mining. I shall do everything that I can to publicise the good things that British Coal has done to the land as a result of opencast mining, and the jobs that it has brought to the community. I shall also involve myself——

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that there can be difficulties. Is he aware, however, that opencast mining in this country has remained at a consistent level? In 1978-79 it amounted to 13·6 million tonnes, and last year the figure was 13·3 million, so there has been no huge increase in opencast mining since the Government came to power.

Mr. Spicer: That is correct, and I find it rather a sad figure. Nevertheless, I take on board some of the points that have been made about what has been done after opencast activity has taken place. As far as it is within my power to influence the matter, I intend to do so to the benefit of the communities. However, it must be said that some of the instances that have been given today are largely the fault of the local authorities and not that of British Coal. In addition to the substantial levels of investment in the coal industry, to which I have already referred, the Government have been generous in their financial support for the consequential restructuring costs, which amounted to almost £600 million in 1986-87 alone.

As we said in our response to the report by the Select Committee on Energy, a number of Government programmes provide help to mitigate the effects of unemployment. This Government were the first to respond to the special employment needs of coalfield areas, by setting out directly to provide them with new jobs through British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I want to discuss that company, because some spiteful, derogatory comments have been made about it by Opposition Members.

Assistance from British Coal Enterprise Ltd. aims to help the coalfield communities in precisely the way that the hon. Member for Rother Valley intends. The company's purpose is not only to find jobs for men leaving the industry on redundancy. It aims to provide a wide range of jobs—preferrably in manufacturing—that can give employment to all members of the community. It does so by supporting new and diverse businesses and industries and bringing new skills and opportunities to workers.

A measure of the company's success is that it has already committed funds to help to generate more than 20,000 new job opportunities in coalfield areas. Up to the end of October, BCEL had provided £36·5 million towards the cost of about 1,700 individual projects. Opposition Members seem to find that unsatisfactory or disagreeable in some way. BCEL is also funding only those projects that it considers have a good chance of long-term survival.

Mr. Illsley *rose*——

Mr. Spicer: I want to finish what I am saying about BCEL. These efforts should help to ensure that coalfield communities no longer depend on a single industry. If that is part of what the hon. Member for Rother Valley wants, it is also precisely what BCEL aims to do. Unconstructive criticisms such as we have heard from Opposition Members today are of no help to the communities that they profess to support and assist.

The Opposition have criticised the company on the extraordinary grounds that it has failed to publish a list of names of all the ex-miners employed in schemes that it has supported. The House well knows that BCEL is not able to breach the normal rules of commercial confidentiality that govern much of the assistance that has been given. However, where details can be given, they will be made freely available. I have listened to what Opposition hon. Gentlemen and hon. Ladies have said, and I shall see whether it is possible to provide more information in future without breaking those rules of commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that he has to assist not only companies in coalfield areas, but the areas themselves? In St. Helens there are development areas that are supported by other Government bodies and are in a wholly disadvantageous position compared to Liverpool, Warrington, and Stafford Park. Will the Minister take that on board in seeking to give extra assistance to the former miners in the St. Helens area?

Mr. Spicer: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. Indeed, the question of the boundaries of the special assistance areas was raised by several hon. Members. This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. However, as hon. Members know, the Government have decided to maintain the present boundaries. We have very good reasons for that, because it gives some clarity and stability to those planning their investment decisions. We are constantly changing the rules and the boundaries of development areas. That may not do what the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) would like, which is to encourage long-term plans and investment decisions that bring forward jobs.

BCEL recently invited its external auditors to make a general check of its procedures for establishing, monitoring and recording job opportunities created. I am able to tell the House that the company's auditors found that its procedures were sound and were providing them with realistic data. They recommended some minor improvements, which the company has accepted. For example, it was suggested that the monitoring of actual jobs created, as opposed to estimates, should be done on a monthly rather than a quarterly basis. That suggestion has been accepted. I listened carefully to what hon. Members said about that. If hon. Gentlemen want to know more about BCEL's activities in their constituencies, I know that its chief executive will meet them and discuss examples. I shall look at the question of whether more information can be provided without revealing confidentialities.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the Minister to refer to hon. Members as hon. Gentlemen?

[Mrs. Llin Golding]

There are ladies in the House who have been here from the beginning of the debate, and that is more than I can say for some Conservative Members.

Mr. Spicer: I apologise to the hon. Lady if I said that. If I did say it, I hope that I was addressing specific points raised by hon. Gentlemen. At one point in my speech I thought that the point I was speaking about had not been raised by hon. Ladies. Perhaps the hon. Lady was not here at the time, but if she looks at the record she will see that earlier in my speech I referred to hon. Ladies.

The hon. Member for Rother Valley, my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, West and other hon. Members spoke movingly about the effects on local communities of changes in the coal industry. The hon. Member for Easington will agree with my next point. I lived and worked for almost 10 years as a candidate in the coal mining area of Easington, and I know about the spirit and the sense of community and the changes that characterise today's mining areas. There is no doubt that the sense of community in the coal mining areas can be turned to great advantage in attracting industries.

It is this spirit, combined with the technical skills which undoubtedly go with coal mining, which in large part lay behind Nissan's decision to make a major investment in Durham. However, the coal mining industry cannot be totally insulated from wider economic and social changes. The Nottinghamshire miner who commutes long distances from a new housing estate is breaking old patterns for the industry, but he is in tune with modern ways of living.

I believe, and it has been confirmed by today's debate, that Labour Members sometimes seem to wish that the coal mining industry would remain forever captured in the ways of 50 years ago. The Government see British Coal as an essentially modern industry from which electricity, heat, and possibly gas will be derived well into the 21st century, and that is why I urge the House to reject the motion.

1.11 pm

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) on initiating the debate. Judging from the exchanges, I think that all hon. Members appreciate the fact that he chose the topic that he did. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on his maiden speech. He made a very worthwhile contribution and Opposition Members look forward to hearing more from him. Judging from his well-articulated comments, he will be a great asset to us and to the House generally. He is a member of the miners parliamentary group and I believe that that will strengthen his activities in the House.

It is difficult to reply to the debate because I am racing against time and I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, but I can say shortly that the problem of coal communities was highlighted in 1985 when coal communities decided collectively to form the Coalfield Communities Campaign. That membership consists of 68 local authorities—18 communities from Wales; 14 from Scotland, plus one associated member; and 36 from England. I think it goes without saying that that sweep of organisations represents probably the biggest sweep of opinion that exists. It has been called an apolitical organisation. However, that does not mean to say that it has no political views.

Councillor Salt made clear the objects, activities and views of the CCC when he gave evidence to the Select Committee on Energy on 23 April 1986. He was asked by the Chairman of the Committee what its terms of reference were and he replied:

> "Our terms of reference are to carry on consultation on matters of common interest; to secure an effective flow of information between member local authorities, local government associations, the institutions of the EEC, Members of Parliament, the media, Government and Parliament itself and any other interested bodies."

The Chairman then asked Councillor Salt to state the CCC's key objectives. He replied:

> "Our key objectives are a significant increase in employment and job opportunities in our areas and safeguarding existing jobs; increased input of resources and investment from outside the coalfield communities into coalfield communities; legislation to protect and, where necessary, facilitate the improvement of the environment and of the living and working conditions of the peoples within the areas that we represent; and to give full consideration to coal as an energy source, leading to increased use of coal within the EEC and the United Kingdom in particular."

The CCC is fortunate to have someone of the calibre of Councillor Salt to lead it in its campaign.

The CCC has not been just another girning organisation. It has produced high-quality research papers, and its most recent effort is a report on opencast coal. A working party took evidence for eight months before the report was published. It is known already that British Coal's marketing director is not too pleased about its contents. I advise the CCC not to be too perturbed about that. The marketing director has a habit of speaking as if he were the chairman of British Coal. We can take our choice in deciding whether this is vanity or disloyalty. Perhaps he should be reminded of the post he holds and the work for which he is paid.

I have a constituency interest because Councillors Murray and Boyes, two of my constituents, are leading officers and activists of the CCC. They have sent me some documentation to which I shall refer briefly. I do that on the basis that if I change the name I could easily be referring to almost any coalfield community in our land because the problems stretch from Wales right up to Scotland.

The document says:

> "Coalmining has long played a major role in Midlothian's economy. Even 10 years ago when many of the older pits had already closed, the industry still employed around 6,000 people. Miners made up almost 40 per cent. of the male workforce. This was particularly significant in an area with a population of less than 85,000 people.
>
> Today, under 1,400 people are employed in the coal industry . . . In 10 years over three quarters of the coalmining jobs have gone. Two thirds of these job losses—3,000—have actually occurred in the last five years.
>
> The traumatic effect on the declining local economy was reinforced by the general economic recession during the early 1980s. The withdrawal of Assisted Area status from Midlothian has also made the task of attracting new companies to the area much more difficult. The most obvious effect has been the rise in unemployment. The total doubled in three years between 1979 and 1982 and has consistently remained at well over 4,000 during the past five years. This has made an enormous impact in a relatively small district like Midlothian, with the worst effects being felt in the mining communities, where male unemployment remains around 20 per cent.
>
> It has to be recognised that the coalfield communities have specific and unique problems, and comprehensive efforts are being made to expand and diversify the local economy. Joint action by the Local Authorities, the involvement of the

> Scottish Development Agency, the establishment of an Enterprise Trust with private sector locally, and other measures have all been pursued.
>
> Progress has been achieved but it is not on a sufficiently large scale to address the problems of restructuring the economic base, retraining and providing new employment. The will, skill and direction are there — now the proper resources are needed to accelerate this progress."

I could be addressing myself to probably every area represented by my hon. Friends. Therefore, I take the liberty of referring to my area.

This has been a political debate and I want to deal with the politics. British Coal does not seem to be engaged in image building nowadays. I draw the House's attention to what the miners and the public read in their newspapers on 29 July 1987. The headline was:

> "£145,000 Haslam says he is employed on the cheap. British Coal chief paid 100 per cent. more than MacGregor."

The article then went on:

> "Since Sir Robert assumed responsibility, four full-time board members have been appointed at salaries between £65,000 to £70,000. They confirmed that their overall pay had increased by £50 a week. Stung by questions that they were high salaries in a politically-sensitive industry, Sir Robert led his colleagues in a stout defence of their earnings, and claimed that the miners were also well-paid."

I do not chastise anybody who wants to defend his level of salary. I an not concerned about that in this debate.

The article went on:

> "Sir Robert's deputy, Sir Kenneth Couzens, declared: 'Only a madman would accept these terms.' He pointed out that new board members had no security of tenure."

That statement has particular relevance to the work and objectives of the CCC. What security of tenure do miners have in the industry today? What about the coal communities, to which the CCC draws our attention? We have environmental dereliction, and our real unemployment level is amongst the highest in the land. Our kids cannot get jobs. We have a crisis. School leavers conduct fruitless quests for jobs.

I do not apologise for saying that. The article in *The Guardian* of 29 July 1987 angered me and many of my parliamentary colleagues. I am certain of one thing arising from the comment made by the vice-chairman of British Coal. It is not a good idea to make a retired civil servant, however senior, vice-chairman of British Coal. One could make some comment about the madman. It reminds me of the time, years ago, when I was a young editor of our constituency paper. I often wonder what my caption writer might have done with a statement like that. We might have had "Madman in Hobart House", or something like that.

I am reminded of a story that I shall relate to the House. We must have some humour at times, together with seriousness. I am reminded of the story of Lord Manny Shinwell who, incidentally, represented the constituency of my hon. Friend for Easington (Mr. Cummings). When Lord Shinwell was a young man—he was only about 87 years of age—he was cornered by the press in a corridor of the House of Commons. That day, there was a caption in the *Glasgow Herald,* which stated:

> "Stepbrother of Lord Shinwell is considering joining the Tory Party."

The press asked Lord Shinwell, "What do you have to say to that comment?" He reflected for a moment, as a young man of 87, and he said, "Well, insanity runs in every family."

Mr. Beith: Before the hon. Gentleman goes much further in his extraordinary attack on Sir Kenneth Couzens, I point out that Sir Kenneth was of considerable assistance to miners and ex-miners in my constituency who had a serious housing problem. They went to him — I accompanied them at the time — to raise the problem. He listened extremely sympathetically. Thanks to his efforts, the problem has been solved.

Mr. Cummings: I met Sir Kenneth Couzens, along with Sir Robert Haslam, with the Coalfield Communities Campaign in January of this year. Certain assurances were given. Within three or four days, they had reneged on their assurances. We were promised that the auctions would stop. Within three days, the auctions had recommenced in Nottinghamshire. So far as Sir Kenneth Couzens is concerned, I have not been dealing with an honourable gentleman at all.

Mr. Eadie: I probably made a mistake in giving way to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). If he wishes to defend Sir Kenneth Couzens, so be it. I have put on the record what he said. I could deal with the meetings that we had with him in relation to housing. He has not handled housing matters well. The hon. Gentleman's defence can be his own. I wish to get on with my speech. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to praise the vice-chairman of British Coal so be it. We have different views.

The House has debated the Select Committee on Energy report on the coal industry, which was published on 28 June 1987. My hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley referred to the recommendation that was made in paragraph 207 that a Cabinet Committee should be set up to look at ways of helping the coalfield communities. It is fair to say that that recommendation was triggered by the written and oral evidence that was given to the Select Committee by the Coalfield Communities Campaign. If such a proposition was relevant way back on 29 January 1987 when the report was issued, it is even more urgent today.

We must consider the statement that was made by Sir Robert Haslam on 11 November 1987, some of which has been referred to in the debate. I have read all the press releases that were issued, including those issued by British Coal. I shall quote from one press comment because it is not only relevant but is the central thrust of today's debate:

> "Yesterday's bleak statement from Sir Robert based on the industry's half yearly figures could not hide the industry's perilous position. It has closed 66 collieries since the end of the miners' strike more than two years ago and it has reduced its workforce by 83,500 to 137,800 — without any compulsory redundancies — but its sword is still not in its sheath."

The report continues:

> "Sir Robert hid his words behind his hand but the mayhem is to continue. He has given the Government an undertaking that the industry will break even by 1988-89, but to do that there will have to be further redundancies."

Perhaps we had a trailer of that today when the Minister said that he will introduce an order on the external financing of the board later in this parliamentary Session.

The report continues:

> "In a way Sir Robert spelt it all out. 'In order to achieve our break-even objective next year, we will need to take further action to reduce remaining high cost capacity in the next six months . . .' If it is to achieve break even within the next 18 months, British Coal will have to close many more pits and make thousands of miners redundant . . . They are now disappearing at the rate of nearly 30 a year and Sir Robert and his senior colleagues admitted that at least another eight were in the pipeline. Before the end of the year, therefore, the pit total will almost certainly have fallen beneath the 100 total."

[Mr. Eadie]

The caption to the article, which was written on 12 November by one of the most experienced industrial reporters, Keith Harper, was:

"Sir Robert's ticking time-bomb in the pits".

Despite some of the sunshine stories that we have heard, and in the light of what has been said, not by us but by Sir Robert Haslam, the proposition that was made as a result of the 1987 report of the Select Committee on Energy, is even more relevant today. The Minister has made his speech but I hope that he will write to some of us to say that his Department will press for a special Cabinet Sub-Committee to consider the coalfield communities.

We should take this opportunity to consider some aspects of the mining industry and I shall do so quickly. Industrial relations in the industry were never poor. However, a complete botch was made of handling the new code of conduct and disciplinary procedure. If I had the time, I could back that assertion in detail. In too many areas, men are too willing to leave the industry, if they are given the opportunity to do so. The coal industry is far too important to allow that state of affairs to continue. It does not help the Coalfield Communities Campaign to carry out the objectives that I described at the beginning of my speech.

Yesterday I was informed that, as a matter of policy, British Coal is pursuing a form of insidious blackmail on pit closures. If a pit is confronted with partial closure and if the men threaten to use the agreed procedure of referring the matter to independent adjudication, British Coal tells them that if they do so it will not be a partial closure: it will close the entire pit. British Coal is riding roughshod over the agreed consultation and conciliation procedures.

The Minister referred to the investment in the coal industry, but some of that investment has already been abandoned because of the dramatic contraction of manpower and pit closures. This national energy resource — which all hon. Members agree is needed — is being vandalised. Compared with the financial advantage of coal, the Government's blatant preference for nuclear power cannot bear examination. The Government and the Treasury demand a rate of return on new coal mines of 10 per cent., but the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor is to be allowed a real rate of return of 5 per cent. Recent figures for coal research and development show an investment of £1·4 million, whereas research and development investment in the nuclear industry amounts to £173 million. The coal industry will receive £2·8 million in 1988-89, but the nuclear industry will receive £199·1 million.

Nuclear power has not delivered the cheap energy that was promised. The chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, Lord Marsh, acknowledged on television that nuclear power is 7 per cent. more expensive than coal. The coal mining communities rightly feel aggrieved by what is happening today. That is putting it mildly. This is an important debate, and I have welcomed the opportunity to make a contribution to it.

Several Hon. Members *rose* —

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that time is very limited and that many hon. Members still wish to speak in the debate. I suggest to those hon. Members who are called that short speeches can make a great impact and that they will win golden opinions with the House and the Chair.

1.37 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I begin by paying tribute to all those who work in the Kent coalfield. Many of them live in my constituency, where the coalfield is located, but many also live in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) who have asked me, because they are detained elsewhere on urgent constituency business, to say on their behalf how much they would like to be associated with this tribute. In particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South asked that particular reference should be made to, and that particular interest should be taken in, the fact that British Coal Enterprise Ltd. recently set up a venture in his constituency, about which he is very pleased.

The motion is not an accurate portrayal of the position in the coal industry and in the coalfield communities today. We are dealing with an industry that, under this Government, has become very nearly a success story. The price of the product has gone down, relative to inflation, it has made coal more competitive and it has provided new opportunities for coal.

Productivity has increased significantly and that has been achieved as a result of record investment levels. Since 1979 when the Government came to office some £5·5 billion of investment has been put into the British coal industry. Currently, that investment is running at nearly £800 million per annum—equivalent to some £6,000 per employee in the coalfields. Those figures are creditable by any industrial standard.

Therefore, we have the prospect of a thriving coal industry for the first time in many years. It was interesting to look at Lord Robens' book, "Ten Year Stint" a record of the time when he was running British Coal. I discovered from the book that the Labour Government promised 200 million tonnes of production a year, but when they left office in 1970, production was down to 145 million tonnes —more false promises. The coalfield communities have never suffered more than they suffered under Labour.

Our record also compares well with the position in 1978-79. Overall output is only slightly down today on the 1979 level, but overall output per man shift has significantly improved. Output has increased, but not at the expense of safety. In 1979, under the Labour Government, there were 72 fatalities in the coalfields. In 1986-87—the last year for which records have been kept — fatalities had gone down to 15. That is a major achievement.

Mr. Illsley: What about accidents?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) knows that current figures and the way they are kept are not comparable to the way they were kept in the 1970s. Clearly, Opposition Members do not like the truth. Lord Robens identified that truth when he spoke about pit closures:

"In fact, under Labour, we shut pits at a faster rate than when the Conservatives were in office".

More than 200 collieries were shut under the Labour Government—a shameful record. I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) drew attention to that fact.

I believe that there are more opportunities for the coalfield communities under the Conservative Government, not just because we have looked after the coal industry far better than the Labour Party did, but because the economy is sound. Therefore, when British Coal Enterprise Ltd. puts money into new businesses in coalfield areas, those businesses have a much better likelihood of survival than they would under any Labour Government. The fact that we are doing so much more throughout the country for the economy brings me to my constituency and what is happening there.

The other day I was very pleased when the Minister kindly agreed to meet a group of representatives from the NUM. It was good that they had the opportunity to meet the Minister and hear the Government's views. It is extremely important that we should have dialogue with the union. It is especially unfortunate that the NUM is run by someone who cannot engage in such dialogue. He has destroyed mines. He claims that he speaks for the hearts and minds of the miners, but he puts nothing in mineworkers' stomachs.

The strike that damaged the coal industry and the country — Mr. Scargill's strike — also damaged my community in Kent. That was extremely upsetting. Those who supported Scargill lost all the way down the road. They lost money, food, welfare for their families; they lost everything.

I believe that there is a new realism among many miners. Indeed, in order to achieve such realism many of them have had to leave the NUM—they could not go on in that union — and they have set up their own union, which is a realistic union.

I am also concerned about the disruption caused by the current overtime ban. In my constituency, coal production has decreased from 10,000 tonnes a week to 3,500 tonnes a week. Mr. Scargill's overtime ban is damaging the industry yet again. Mr. Scargill's overtime ban will cause investment to stop. There will be no investment in coal mining while Mr. Scargill's overtime ban continues.

Mr. Allen McKay: The hon. Gentleman said that the overtime ban will close collieries, but he should realise that the ban is on the production of coal in overtime. Very little coal has ever been produced in overtime. It is one big con.

Mr. Shaw: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that point, but he will appreciate that the coal industry has high fixed costs and it is important to produce the extra tonne of coal because the fixed costs will not change. The more coal that is produced, the more money will be available for bottom-line profit and investment. That is what the motion is about: whether we shall have investment in the coal industry or whether it will be destroyed by Mr. Arthur Scargill. The Government will not let Mr. Scargill destroy the coal industry.

Mr. Eadie: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not want to mislead the House by talking about Mr. Scargill's overtime ban. There was a ballot of miners, who voted 77·9 per cent.—the highest percentage ever recorded—in favour of the overtime ban. It had nothing to do with Mr. Scargill. It was the result of a resolution passed at the miners' conference in Rothesay, and its instigators were not from Yorkshire but from south Wales.

Mr. Shaw: I thank the hon. Gentleman, and I am flattered by the attentions of the Labour Front Bench. But Mr. Scargill's union is not the sole representative of workers in the industry, and those who voted for Mr. Scargill's overtime ban represent fewer than half the workers. The hon. Gentleman must appreciate that the overtime ban damages not only the pits whose workers are represented by the NUM, but those whose workers are represented by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, because the resources are not available for investment.

Mr. Illsley: Will the hon. Gentleman explain his figures? How did he arrive at the statement that fewer than half the workers in the industry voted for the overtime ban?

Mr. Shaw: Many miners are now members of the UDM, and the fact that many members of Arthur Scargill's union did not support him means that almost half the people working in the industry did not want the ban.

Mr. Batiste: That is right.

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend confirms my figures. Whatever the figures are, we are not concerned with hearts and minds frauds. We are concerned about putting food in miners' bellies. That is what Arthur Scargill is taking away from people.

Dover district council has realised that the world moves on, whether in coal mining or any other industry. It knows that we need new businesses and industries, so it is pushing tourism for all it is worth. I hope—as many people in Kent want—that the pit that was closed at Tilmanstone will not become a rubbish dump. I hope that it will be used by the tourist industry and that jobs for miners and former miners will be created so that we can improve the economy in my constituency.

One thing is certain. The coal industry, the coalfield communities and the people who live and work in them will benefit more from the Conservative Government than they would from a Labour Government.

1.49 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I am not particularly concerned about who caused the devastation in the coal industry, whether it was Labour or Conservative, or Labour and Conservative. There is devastation and a great social problem. We should direct our minds to how we are to tackle and handle that problem. That should be done by hon. Members on both sides of the House, not just Opposition Members.

The north Derbyshire coalfield covers Derbyshire North-East, the constituency that I represent, Chesterfield and Bolsover. In 1949, there were 37 deep mines there, employing 37,500 miners, but now, whatever the reasons, whatever the state of the world economy and technical change, whatever the political decisions, we are left with seven mines employing 7,000 men. Those mines are under threat, with some of the problems that have been discussed today.

From 1951 to 1971, when there was a Labour Government as well as a Conservative Government, there were seven collieries in the area to the south of north-east Derbyshire, near Bolsover, and in the Heath, Clay Cross, North Wingfield, Shirland, Pleasley and Morton—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)?"] My illustrious constituent has other business, but I am sure that I have his full support in what I am saying.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

In the past 10 years there has been an accelerated decline in the area. In 1983, Pleasley pit was closed and in 1984 Westhorpe pit closed with the loss of 640 jobs. Now the pit is being refurbished so that tourists can visit it in the same way as they visit areas such as Beamish. We need financial support for that. Whitwell was shut in 1986. Ireland linked with Markham is now under threat of early closure. Some 400 jobs were lost in the headquarters in Bolsover on that occasion.

Each of the pits that was shut in recent years could have been like Cortonwood and could have been the cause of action being taken because coal supplies were available in the area. In the past year alone, 1,341 jobs have been lost in mining in the north Derbyshire area, out of a total of 2,262 jobs, according to Government figures, which we know have been laundered and manipulated downwards, to try to ignore the true nature of what is happening.

In addition there are associated declines for political, economic, industrial and technological reasons. The railways have declined in the area. At the Staveley railway institute one tends to find only ex-railwaymen. Few railwaymen are employed in the area.

Iron foundries are being closed. In Dronfield in my constituency all that we have left of the oldest malleable iron foundry in the country is the entrance, which is now a monument. The steel industry has declined, not just in the south Yorkshire area, but in Staveley in my constituency. One thousand jobs were lost in the Staveley steelworks between 1980 and 1984.

Our debate goes wider than the coalfield communities. We are discussing what is associated with those communities and the problems of Britain's industrial decline. We must ask how we shall adapt ourselves and try to make improvements in the future.

All told, some 12,000 net losses have occurred in large firms in the north Derbyshire area since 1980. Not just the firms are affected but the numerous associated support industries such as machine producers and services — people working in garages, pubs and shops. Opportunities for young people in the area are no longer available. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that miners were concerned about their being no future for their children. At one time they were concerned about people not working in the pits. A dramatic change has taken place.

What jobs are available and what are the opportunities beyond existing schemes? Substitutes are being provided for the jobs lost in the area. What is the growth industry there? One is the citizens advice bureau, which needs funds to deal with debt problems and troubles with the DHSS. Law societies are established to deal with debt, desperation and DHSS problems. The DHSS itself has expanded. It is like an obstacle course for people who are trying to handle their problems and deal with their conditions.

The one serious growth area in the vicinity is in Sheffield. The Manpower Services Commission there caters for my unemployed constituents and workers coming from places such as Dronfield. It is concerned with YTS and community projects — matchstick jobs for real people. Those are the only efforts that the Government are making.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): The hon. Gentleman talks about matchstick jobs. Real jobs exist. Jobs are available, but the workers are not correctly skilled for them. Opposition Members should accept that training is available for vacancies. They seem to derive spurious pleasure from saying that unemployment is insoluble. I do not accept that.

Mr. Barnes *rose*——

Mr. Patnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barnes: I have not said anything yet.

Mr. Patnick *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman is not giving way.

Mr. Barnes: It is peculiar for the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) to ask me to give way before I have responded to his previous intervention, which I have now forgotten. The hon. Member for Hallam should visit North-East Derbyshire, which is not far from his home, and see for himself the dereliction and the problems which it causes. I suggest that he goes to Chesterfield, catches a No. 53 or 54 bus and travels through Tupton, Grassmoor, North Wingfield and the surrounding area. He would then see deprivation and disgraceful conditions. The area needs grants, assistance and local authority provision.

Mr. Patnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Barnes: No.

Massive dereliction exists in the area. It scars the landscape and causes masses of social problems. Arkwright pit near Bolsover, Ireland pit at the edge of north-east Derbyshire and Renishaw Park pit are threatened with closure. Renishaw Park pit is the subject of early-day motion No. 231. Initially it was given until the mid-1990s by British Coal. It has plenty of stock and great opportunities still exist. If jobs in the area are to go, plans should be made now to replace them.

Now, British Coal has given until March 1989 for the pit to be closed. It has threatened that, if the NUM insists on making use of the colliery review procedure—it was not exactly constructed by the NUM for its own benefit: it was the result of the strike—it will bring forward the date of closure by a year and people will lose jobs next March. British Coal then made the offers and bribes that were described earlier. We are dealing with bribery and corruption, which will create further unemployment in the Renishaw area. Even on the Government's own figures, there is 19 per cent. unemployment in Renishaw, and the neighbouring areas of Killomarsh and Eckington. What is being asked is that another 460 jobs — and the jobs associated with them — should be destroyed. In a short time, unemployment in that area will be doubled. Then the ripple effects will begin to be felt.

What should be done in the future? We have heard much about British Coal Enterprise Ltd. I was involved in the meeting that was described earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover and from which little hope was to be had. The Minister talked about 20,000 job opportunities being created by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. What is a job opportunity, as distinct from a job? The term is thrown about all the time by British Coal Enterprise Ltd. and the Minister. It is some sort of gobbledygook that hides the true position.

The British Coal Opencast Executive also has vast interests in north-east Derbyshire. I was interested to hear the various contributions about opencast mining. The Opencast Executive in north-east Derbyshire plans to add to its current operations in Poolsbrook, New Brimington and Barnabas in Clay Cross; and to go to old mining areas such as North Wingfield, Pilsley, Morton and Stonebroom, which it will re-work, disrupting those communities, which are adjusting after past pit closures. It plans also to move into areas of current mining, so when Arkwright, Renishaw and Ireland in the Staveley area are shut, it moves in right next door to them—sometimes on top of them—and starts to rip up the surface of those areas. The one pit that would then be left—High Moor—has opencast plans directly next to it.

On the western side of the constituency, which shares some of west Derbyshire's characteristics, there is the threat of opencast mining on the Dronfield green belt—it will become the Dronfield black belt—which separates Derbyshire from Sheffield. The National Farmers Union and residents of the rural areas of Barlow and Wingeworth are concerned about developments there, especially given that little is provided now in the way of decent facilities. We should be spending money on housing improvements, health, welfare and the social fabric and infrastructure of the community. That is what the debate should have been about.

2.3 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Thirty or 40 years ago my constituency depended on coal, which was its major industry and the greatest employer in the area. Since then 15 pits have gone, with a loss of about 14,000 jobs. I hope that Opposition Members will take this point in the way that it is intended. Most of those pits were closed by Labour Governments. I do not make that point in a cheap party political spirit, but merely to show that this Government do not have a monopoly of pit closures.

I still have a substantial number of miners in my constituency, who all have to travel considerable distances to the north Derbyshire coalfield or to the Nottingham coalfield to their jobs. Despite the steady loss of employment among miners in my constituency—it is still continuing—uneployment in the area, although still unacceptably high, is only at the national average.

The reason why the area has not been harder hit by unemployment as a result of the steady loss of jobs in the mining industry is that it has been extremely successful in attracting new industries. More important, it has been successful in encouraging people in the area to set up industries. One example is a company called Butterley Brick. One would not think that bricks are a growth area. Brick making is not a high-tech field or something that immediately jumps to mind when one thinks of growth industries. Butterley Brick was in substantial difficulties only a few years ago, and it was taken over by a multinational company called Hanson Trust.

I know that Hanson Trust has become synonymous to many people with asset-stripping and with milking companies dry, but the experience of Butterley Brick is that Hanson Trust came in, put the company on a sound financial footing and promoted the brighter members of the local management team. As a result, Butterley Brick is a highly successful company that is substantially increasing its output and its exports. Above all, it is increasing local jobs.

I have many other examples of local enterprise. We have Thornton's chocolate factory. This company, which has recently moved from Sheffield, produces an excellent range of products and has been increasing its work force. We also have a company called Alida which manufactures plastic bags. In the late 1970s it was in severe difficulties, but as a result of a management buy-out in the early 1980s it has been able to expand and win back the home market, and it has also increased its work force and offers good and well paid jobs. That buy-out was allowed under new legislation introduced by the Government. I could quote many more examples, but for obvious reasons I shall not do that.

We must ask ourselves why these companies have prospered. Why have they maintained, and in many instances created, jobs in an area that has suffered greatly from loss of jobs in the mining industry? They have succeeded primarily because they have had good managements and skilled work forces intent on producing goods that people want to buy. Producing such goods is the best guarantor of jobs.

I am happy to admit that the regional aid that the area received in the 1970s was a major factor in the restructuring of the area. It has not received such aid for some time. I pay tribute to the district council. For most of its life it was under Labour control, although I am glad to say that recently the Conservatives have taken control for the first time. Despite the fact that the district council was Labour for much of its life, it took a constructive and positive attitude towards local industry. That also helped.

Perhaps above all, the reason for the success of industry in this coalfield area is that the work ethic is strong and the area has a good body of skilled workers with a non-militant tradition. In short, it is a good area in which to do business and in which business men like to set up. In such an area people can prosper, and that leads to jobs. If hon. Members were to question the management of successful companies in my area about why they have prospered and been able to replace the jobs that were lost in the mining industry, they would find that most business men would point to Government policies. Some would say that low inflation has helped, while others would point to the economic stability and the steady growth that we have had in the last few years. The Government's general policies of encouraging enterprise have enormously helped those companies.

In common with many other coalfield areas, my area has not been helped by the sky-high rates that have depressed businesses. If the Opposition want to see more jobs in their areas, they should tell their district, county and metropolitan councils to look to the high burden of rates that depress industry and which make it harder for industry to invest and create jobs. Derbyshire has not been helped by the fact that the county council has refused a Government offer of an enterprise zone. At the expense of local people, that takes political antagonism to ridiculous levels.

Another thing that many people in the coalfield areas unfortunately find themselves manifesting is a fundamentally anti-business, anti-profit and anti-enterprise culture. Perhaps that is understandable in the light of the history of exploitation of business in the early days of the mining industry. However, whether it is understandable or not, it is totally out of date in the 1980s, and it is totally counter-productive. If those areas want to attract business and encourage their own people to set up industries and create jobs, they have to get away from those anti-business attitudes, which unfortunately are still too common.

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

What definitely will not help the coalfield areas is to try to continue uneconomic mining. Mines were originally dug to supply economic needs. Those needs and the world have changed. Cheaper coal is available. There is nothing new about that. Mining areas have been restructuring since the turn of the century. Harold Wilson wrote in 1945 in "New Deal for Coal":

> "Taking the country as a whole, probably half the pits are kept in existence by the other half . . . in fact, by the end of 1944, economic laws had ceased to apply in the industry."

In 1945 there were 750,000 men in the mining industry. We now have 150,000. The world has changed, and Labour Governments recognised that, because it was during periods of Labour Governments that the bulk of those jobs were lost.

There is no point harking back to the past. The world has changed, and it will not help the coalfield areas to suggest that we can dig coal whatever the price. In those areas we have to rely on a medium-output, low-price, competitive, productive and profitable coal industry. That is the best guarantee for those remaining within the industry. To go to a high-output, high-price coal industry would just load costs on to other industries, especially energy-intensive industries.

It is no coincidence that many of the most energy-intensive industries are based in the coalfield areas—industries such as brickmaking, pottery and dyeing. When I visited a major dye works in my constituency, one of the main points that a shop steward made was that there was no future for his industry if there were high energy prices, as they would make the industry uncompetitive against foreign competition. By trying to encourage the Government to ensure jobs within the mining industry regardless of the cost of the coal that is dug out, what some Labour hon. Members are saying is that they are prepared to guarantee jobs in the mining industry at the expense of higher energy costs and the loss of jobs in other industries. That is no way to run the economy or the country.

Some Labour Members are out of touch with what many miners think. I can only speak for the miners in my constituency to whom I have talked, but I have found that consistently they want either a productive, competitive, high-paying coal industry that will pay the wages that they deserve for the work they do, or redundancy on fair terms. Some Labour Members sneer at the word "redundancy". Anybody who has been down a mine, even for a day or two, will know that it is still a dirty, difficult and unhealthy job. Anybody who has seen men working day in and day out in seams only 2 or 3 ft high, often during unsocial hours, will know that mining is still not a pleasant job, despite the fact that it has improved.

Mr. Meale: Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I shall not give way, because time is pressing on. One miner in my constituency who received a redundancy payment—incidentally, he immediately got a job in another industry—now has more money than he had ever hoped to see. He even has enough money to invest, and for the first time in his life he has been able to take a holiday abroad with his family. He even took his mother.

Mr. Illsley *rose*—

Mr. Oppenheim: The mining industry is enjoying the best conditions that it has ever had. That must be contrasted with the bleak 1960s, when most of the mining jobs in my constituency were lost. That was the period when miners were sent on their way—often compulsorily, not voluntarily—with a pittance in the form of redundancy pay. Furthermore, many of them lost their concessionary coal into the bargain. It is all very well for Labour Members, who have comfortable jobs and lounge on pleasant green leather seats. They are relatively well paid. It is easy for them to suggest that we send men down dark, dirty holes in the ground to dig out coal at uneconomic prices. I hope that Labour Members will realise that many men do not want to work in the mines any more and that it is pointless to send them down below ground if they cannot do the job economically.

Of course there are problems in the coal area. The way in which we can help mining areas most effectively is by ensuring that we have a strong, healthy, competitive and productive coal industry that is able to pay wages that miners deserve for the hard work that they undertake. If we are to replace the jobs that have been lost, and those that may be lost, we must attract new businesses to the coalfield areas and others to spring up within them. That does not mean pouring Government money blindly into mining areas. Instead, the structure and foundation of these areas need to be changed.

If we are to effect the change that is needed, we must follow through our education and training reforms. For far too long we have seemed to pursue the unobtainable Holy Grail of equality rather than excellence. We are seeing the baleful results of that, with some companies finding it difficult to employ the right calibre of management to run our industries. We must follow through also our rate reform proposals, which will transfer £1 billion from businesses in the south to businesses in the north. We must pursue our policy of growth and stability. Above all, we must see an end to the anti-business sentiment that is so prevalent in many of the coalfield areas. Labour Members cannot sneer at success, pillory profit, attack enterprise and blast business men, only to complain about a lack of jobs in their areas.

The survival of the coalfield areas does not lie in my hands. It is not in the Government's hands, except that many of the reforms that the Government have carried out and are now proposing will help mining areas. At the end of the day, success in restructuring coalfield areas depends on a change of attitudes within these areas. Therefore, the salvation of the areas is in their own hands.

2.18 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): I shall be brief because I have only two or three minutes at my disposal. It has been a wide-ranging debate, and in one respect that is regrettable. I fear that we have not placed our fingers on the real problems behind the motion.

In the few minutes available to me I can do no better than highlight the problems in my constituency. Since 1981, about 11,000 mining jobs have been lost in the Castleford travel-to-work area. There has been little job replacement. There is 16 per cent. unemployment within the travel-to-work area, but that is not the level in mining communities and mining black spots within the area.

Seven pits have been closed in Castleford since the miners' strike, and it is estimated that the unemployment rate is about 30 per cent. It is understood that 42 per cent. of the unemployed are under 24. Political arguments and personalities, such as Arthur Scargill, do not matter. We must concentrate instead on what we can do to assist mining communities that have been virtually wiped out. I regret that I do not have much time to suggest the approach that should be adopted.

With the exception of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), I am the only Member present who spent 15 months of hard work and research as a member of the Select Committee on Energy. Hon. Members on both sides of the Committee attempted to present an honest report and I believe that, to a great extent, we were united. From paragraph 31 to paragraph 144 the Committee addressed itself to the social consequences arising out of the rapid pit closure programme and made certain recommendations. —*[Interruption.]* The Government's response to that report is apparent because they took very little notice of it. In fact, Conservative Members are now taking much more interest in the suit of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) than they are in my contribution.

Even though the Government's response to the Select Committee report was negative—that is not uncommon —I hope that they will rethink and look at areas such as my own, which do not have intermediate status and do not attract any grants from the Government or the EEC. The enterprise trust, which I have never knocked, has had some honest endeavour put into it. However, it has been able to create only four jobs in my constituency. The Government must address themselves to what they are going to do to assist mining communities such as mine. Whatever the economic argument — we shall differ on that—the problems have been created by the pit closure programme and there has been very little thought about alternative employment. The Select Committee recognises that and I hope that the Government will recognise it, too.

2.21 pm

Mr. Barron: I am grateful for the opportunity to mention some of the speeches that have been made. I thank Conservative Members for turning out to listen, if not to the debate, at least to the Minister's speech. It is a pity that the enthusiasm that has been shown at the end of this debate is not shown by the Government Departments that should be providing aid for the coalfield communities to help them overcome the problem of unemployment, especially the unemployment of young people, and the problems of poverty that have been mentioned in many speeches.

I add my warm congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) on his maiden speech. He showed great knowledge of his constituency and I am sure that he will contribute to debates such as this for many years in the great Socialist tradition of south and west Yorkshire.

I thank the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) for his contribution and for his comments on the rundown of the coalfields in the north-east over the years and the need for other industries there.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) gave a good description of the scars on the community when coal mining, especially opencast mining, takes place. He also gave a good description of the replacement industries which try to help overcome the unemployment problems when coal mines are run down. He mentioned the way in which during a recession such as we have experienced under this Government, those replacement industries also disappear, which compounds the unemployment in the Welsh valleys.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) gave a vivid description of what happens to a constituency when coal mining, which has been a major industry for many years, ceases, especially in the way that it did in his area. I am sure that all hon. Members recall that the independent review body said that, because of the social consequences, Bates's colliery should stay open for at least some time. The Coal Board ignored the details of the independent review body's proposals. Against that body's wishes and those of the local community and local authority, the Bates's colliery was closed. That only added to the massive unemployment problem in the constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) highlighted the plight of those who live in Coal Board houses or ex-Coal Board houses, who have what can only be termed long-distance landlords, and the problems that they face in trying to find out who their landlords are and in getting problems solved in defective homes. They find it increasingly difficult to do so.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) demonstrated his great knowledge and experience in the coal industry and of the Coalfield Communities Campaign and what it, as an all-party organisation, has done over the past two years to concentrate the minds not only of local government but of central Government on the plight of coalfield communities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) spoke with great knowledge about the closures that have occurred in his area which backs on to my constituency. He mentioned the scale of job losses in his constituency and said that the non-replacement of jobs in other parts of the region have created tremendous problems.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Gedling) *rose*—

Mr. Barron: I shall not give way. I am speaking now.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) comes from the same coalfield as I do. He has a new-found interest in matters such as coal mines. I cannot remember the right hon. Gentleman making a speech in any coal debate over the past two years. Most coal debates have been instigated by the Opposition. I cannot recall any mining debate being instigated by Conservative Members. The right hon. Gentleman talked about the cost of the 1984 coal strike, and so on. For some strange reason, he did not wish to comment on the statistics that I mentioned about the lowering of regional aid. During the last year of the Labour Government, aid for Yorkshire and Humberside—the area which the right hon. Gentleman and I represent—amounted to £58 million. In 1986-87, under this Government, direct grant to that region has been cut to £21 million, although we have seen a rundown in coal and steel.

It is no good the right hon. Gentleman or the Minister saying that investment in new coal mines means a great future for coalfields and for coal mining. Even with new investment, the coalfields have poverty and unemployment at levels that have not been known in my lifetime. I do not know how many times we have to say that. The motion is about the effects of Government policies on the coal community. It has nothing to do with the coal industry.

Mr. McLoughlin *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

//

The House divided: Ayes 143, Noes 2.

Division No. 76] **[2.28 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Forth and
Mr. Patrick McLoughlin.

NOES

Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Main Question put accordingly:—
The House proceeded to a Division:—

Mr. Meale *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall take the point of order after the Division—at present it is difficult to hear — unless, of course, it deals with the conduct of the Division.

The House having divided: Ayes 4, Noes 135.

Division No. 77] **[2.39 pm**

AYES

Beith, A. J.
Meale, Alan
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Skinner, Dennis

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Roger Gale and
Mr. Tony Marlow.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Irvine, Michael
Janman, Timothy
Jessel, Toby
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New Forest)*
Mans, Keith
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Sackville, Hon Tom

Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thorne, Neil
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Phillip Oppenheim and
Mr. David Ashby.

Question accordingly negatived.

2.50 pm

Mr. Meale: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During a long day discussing the coalfield communities, no one from the Opposition Benches who represents a Nottinghamshire coalfield seat was called. It was important that an Opposition Member with such a seat should be called because today is the day when the Housing Corporation's bid to British Coal to buy 2,000 homes in the Nottinghamshire coalfield finishes. Will the Minister instruct British Coal to sell those homes to the Housing Corporation, which will give—*[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it on the same point?

Several Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall deal with the point of order by the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) first.

I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members on both sides of the House who were not called in the debate. The Chair made no fewer than four appeals for brevity. At the moment, there is no power to impose a time limit, so all that we can do is to appeal. I am sorry that some hon. Members on both sides of the House were disappointed as a result of some long speeches.

Mr. Barron: Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. Is it in order that, when a private Member's motion is debated, which seeks to make the Government give assistance to the coalfield communities that are suffering from unemployment, poverty and so on, the Government should bring in the payroll vote, 80 per cent. of whom have not heard one word of the debate? Is it not a disgrace that private Members' motions can be taken over in that way and that Ministers can stand reading press releases from the Dispatch Box about something unconnected with the motion that was tabled?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for Members of the House to accept the sponsorship of a trade union — the NUM — and then fail to turn up for today's proceedings? Is that not a case of obtaining money by false pretences?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am getting the distinct impression that attempts are being made to carry on the debate, which has finished. I shall take points of order, but they must be genuine.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance and advice. We have had a very important debate today on the coal mining industry. [HON. MEMBERS: "How do you know?"] There have been some notable absentees, including the Opposition Chief Whip and most of the other Opposition Whips. You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that next Thursday there is a motion relating to financial assistance to Opposition parties. Yet again we have seen the Opposition in total disarray. A motion was tabled by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), which was voted on by only two Opposition Members — the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Mansfield (Mr. Meale). Forty-six members of the Labour party represent coal mining constituencies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"]— but only two actually voted. There was total disarray and an own goal was scored. I suggest that the motion to be debated next week should be withdrawn. The Opposition Whips have earned their money by false pretences.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Let me deal with one point of order at a time. The hon. Member for Berkshire, East (Mr. MacKay) seems to be anticipating the speech that he hopes to make on Thursday.

Mr. Beith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Was it entirely in order for hon. Members, both Conservative and Labour, to secure a vote on a motion which was before the House? That having been done, however unwelcome it might have been to the mover of the motion, might it not have been better for him to have had either the courage of his convictions or the competence to prevent his lack of courage from being exposed, rather than leaving it to my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and myself to provide half the votes in the Opposition Lobby.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I can see that the House is enjoying these exchanges, but the debate and the vote are over and done with and we must now get on with the rest of the business before the House.

Mr. Ashby: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance because we have heard that only 20 out of 46 Labour Members representing mining constituencies were present for this very important debate. We have heard about the small number of votes.

Hansard will report some very important contributions from the Government Benches. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be anxious for hon. Members who were not present to have sight this weekend of what was said so that they can address themselves to their constituents, explain why they were not present and deal with the important matters which were raised. Can you arrange for the production of *Hansard* to be expedited so that hon. Members can do that?

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am very relieved to say that the presence or absence of hon. Members at debates or in Divisions has nothing to do with the Chair. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was not criticising *Hansard* and that the *Official Report* will be produced as quickly and efficiently as it usually is.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you inquire into the distribution of Order Papers? It is clear that today's Order Paper was not distributed to Welsh Labour Members because they are noticeable by their absence. As the only Welsh Member of Parliament here, I suggest an inquiry so that hon. Members may be made aware of the subject for debate.

Since the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) voted in favour of the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), perhaps notification of that could be sent to the NUM so that it can decide whether it would like to sponsor them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We have had a good run. I remind the House that we have other business to transact and that an hon. Member is waiting for his valuable Adjournment debate.

Mr. Bermingham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall be extremely brief. This has been an interesting day when we have witnessed kiss and make up in one part of the political scene, and we expect that there might be another split among the Social Democrats.

This is a serious matter affecting Private Members' business. When it came to the vote I found it interesting. Was it not convenient that, on the first vote there happened to be four Tellers waiting on the Government Benches, two of whom you refused—the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and one other? When we came to the second vote, once again there happened conveniently to be four Tellers waiting. After the vote, suddenly hon. Members happened to be making points of order. One in particular, who was not here for the debate—the hon. Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight)—intervened on an almost asinine point. Does not that suggest, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) said a few moments ago, that there has been something of a put-up charade by the Conservative Members this afternoon? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. All I need say in answer to the hon. Gentleman is that I am aware of nothing out of order that has taken place.

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Allan Rogers and Mr. Roland Boyes be discharged from the Select Committee on European Legislation, and Mr. Jimmy Wray and Mr. Jimmy Hood be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

CONSOLIDATION, &c., BILLS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Mr. Peter L. Pike and Mr. Robert Litherland be discharged from the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c, Bills and Mr. Frank Cook and Mr. Graham Allen be appointed to the Committee.—*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 26th November, the Motion in the name of Mr. John Wakeham relating to Financial Assistance for Opposition Parties may be proceeded with, though opposed, for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon; and if proceedings thereon have not been previously disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall then put the Question on any Amendment which may have been moved, and shall then put forthwith the Question on any other Amendments selected by him which may then be moved, and on the Main Question or the Main Question, as amended. —[*Mr. David Hunt.*]

Motion made, and Question put,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 24th November, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), Mr. Speaker shall at Ten o'clock put any Questions necessary to dispose of the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to Common Agricultural Policy reform and Agricultural Stabilisers, and on any Amendments thereto which have been selected by him and which may then be moved. —*[Mr. David Hunt.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Objection taken.

Film Distribution and Exhibition

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

3.1 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am grateful for the opportunity of raising briefly a matter that is of considerable local concern and national interest. This debate stems from the closure of the only picture house in Herne Bay in my constituency — the former Odeon cinema, which later became the Cannon cinema when that company took over the Odeon chain. The Cannon company has hit some financial difficulties and found it necessary to realise its assets. It is an undoubted fact that in recent years attendances at the cinema in Herne Bay have been falling. That is partly due to the lack of reinvestment in modern facilites of the kind that most modern cinemagoers want to enjoy as part of an evening out. The development value of the site in Herne Bay is probably about a quarter of a million pounds, and the annual profits from showing films were — I hazard a guess — no more than £10,000 a year, which is not good return on such an investment.

I do not quarrel with Cannon Cinemas' right to exercise its commercial judgment and close a cinema if it believes that it cannot make the cinema pay. However, it is a pity that the company has had so little regard for audiences —especially young audiences—in Herne Bay.

Just along the coast from Herne Bay is the small seaside town of Westgate-on-Sea, which has the Carlton cinema. It is an independent cinema run by a young entrepreneur who this year has won the independent cinema of the year award. He has made that cinema pay and he satisfies his audiences, as a result of his and his partner's hard work, and of a considerable investment of his own time and money in providing facilities that he believes his audiences want. Clearly he is right, because the audiences go to see the films that he is allowed to show. Having been to the trades disputes council of the Cinema Exhibitors Association he has won for himself the inalienable right to show one in three new films simultaneously with those being shown in Margate—he still cannot show anything before Margate — and he has to show the other two films after Margate.

That practice dates back to the historical alignment of the major movie-making companies with the two major cinema chains — the old ABC and Rank cinemas. As a result of that alignment, the exhibition agreements of most films — and certainly all popular films — contain what is known as a borrowing clause. The clause gives large town exhibitors the right to show a film for up to four weeks before it can be shown in an adjacent small town. That militates heavily against the independent operator, such as my friend in Westgate-on-Sea.

It is relevant to Herne Bay and other towns like it because there is an audience in Herne Bay that wants to go to the cinema and would be prepared to pay for seats so to do, and people such as my friend would be more than willing to run an independent cinema if they could get the films. Because of the barring clause, they cannot do that. As I have said I respect the commercial judgment of Cannon Cinemas. However, if Cannon has the right to close a cinema, then no one should have the right to prevent another operator from coming in and showing the latest films.

Many of the kids of my constituents go to school in Canterbury, where Cannon has a single-screen cinema in which it shows the latest films. Those young people meet their friends in class and, of course, they discuss the latest films. It is not surprising that my young constituents want to be able to compare like with like and to discuss the same films with their friends. For them to be able to do that, they now have to travel to Canterbury and on top of the £2 cinema seat they have to pay £2 for a return bus ticket from Herne Bay to Canterbury. This sort of thing takes place in small towns all over Britain: young people are effectively having the cost of their cinema tickets doubled. Many people say that most films are on video anyway, but as I have said in the past people cannot kiss and cuddle in the back row of a video. There is a social element to cinemagoing that not only the young enjoy.

At present, the single screen in Canterbury blocks one film from a potential exhibitor in Herne Bay. However, Cannon has said that it intends to put four screens into its cinema in Canterbury. The extrapolation of that is that Cannon will be able to block not one but four films.

Cannon and Rank have not thought this through. Where do we go next? Next we will have American multi-cinemas, Maybox and National Amusements installing what are called multiplex screens — 10 screens in one cinema. The buying power of these companies is colossal. At the moment their percentage of exhibition in the United Kingdom is small, but in America it is huge and the big film companies owe them tremendous allegiance. Therefore, those companies will call the tune.

It will not be long before Messrs Ranks and Messrs Cannon, with their four-screen cinemas, find themselves hollering the same cry that the independents are hollering now, and screaming foul. That is because the 10-screen cinemas will be showing films before the four-screen cinemas and Cannon and Rank will find themselves at this huge disadvantage. It will not be long before the good citizens of Canterbury, who are used to having everything first, will find that when AMC or Maybox choose to open 10 screens in Maidstone they will suddenly have to travel from Canterbury to Maidstone to see the films first.

What can we do about this? In fairness to the Cannon management, it telephoned my office and said it did not believe that there was a way forward without the publication of an Office of Fair Trading report. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has made certain recommendations and they have been published. On the strength of those recommendations, the Office of Fair Trading has made certain other proposals in the form of a report that is lying with the Department of Trade and Industry. My message to my hon. Friend and to the House is quite simple. Please can that report now see the light of day before it is too late and before too many more cinemas close?

3.8 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and congratulate him on the timelessness of the debate. He has defended with vigour the interests of his constituents and has raised a major policy issue which I shall address.

I can well understand that the closure of Cannon's cinema in Herne Bay in my hon. Friend's constituency is a sensitive matter as it may affect the leisure opportunities for all sections of the community. Many, though not all,

[Mr. John Butcher]

will be able to go by car or use the public transport links to travel the eight miles or so to view the films that they want to see either at Cannon's twin-screen cinema in neighbouring Canterbury, at the independently run cinema in Margate or at that other excellently run independent cinema—the Carlton at Westgate-on-sea.

Indeed, I add my congratulations to those that my hon. Friend has offered to Mr. Vickers and all his staff at Westgate. To win the industry's "Cinema of the Year" award, as they have done this year for their successful marketing of their films and general high standards, is an achievement to be proud of. Their success will, I hope, attract even more people to attend the Carlton and thus encourage distributors to allow Mr. Vickers earlier access to prints of the films that he wishes to show there.

But primarily the closure—and opening—of cinemas must be a matter for the industry's commercial judgment. I understand that there is interest in reopening the Herne Bay cinema as an independent operation. I wish those discussions good fortune. Other small independent operations at attractive seaside resorts like Herne Bay have proved viable in recent years—I think particularly of Aldeburgh and Cromer—but it is important to identify and exploit the right market niche.

We are at the beginning of an era of considerable change in cinema going patterns. The last couple of years have seen a most welcome increase in the number of people attending cinemas. Making cinemas more attractive places for the public to go is—as the Carlton at Westgate has clearly demonstrated—one of the important steps in maintaining and further promoting the increase in the number of cinema admissions. However, the trend needs to gather considerably more strength before the industry can return to the halcyon days of 200 million-plus admissions a year. Such levels would mean profits for film makers, distributors and exhibitors, and hence more films.

I hope particularly to see more films that families can enjoy together. Although the number of films available for family viewing has changed little in recent years as a percentage of films released, I hope to see more frequent use of the practice of booking family films for matinees with different films run in the evening. I believe that that would increase cinema admissions to the benefit of the distributors, exhibitors and the public alike.

A second major trend that I perceive is people's willingness to travel to obtain the leisure facilities that they wish to enjoy, whether to the amusement park in Margate, which those of the generation of my hon. Friend and myself still know as "Dreamland", to concerts or the theatre in Margate or Canterbury or, increasingly, to a cinema.

I note that the new multiscreen cinemas are beginning to open throughout the United Kingdom. I welcome that trend, because it increases competition in a restricted market. Those cinemas lay considerable emphasis on good parking facilities for their patrons—a trend which my hon. Friend identified as one that affects competition. Their size inevitably requires them to draw audiences from a larger geographical area than has previously been the practice. As has long been the case in the United States, people are proving ready to travel greater distances than was traditional in the past. I know, for example, that many cinemagoers routinely drive 25 miles or more each way to see films at the attractive multiplex cinema in Milton Keynes.

While I accept that there is some loss of convenience to local residents with the closure of the cinema in Herne Bay, and even if the re-opening of the cinema there ultimately proves commercially non-viable, the continuing existence of attractive cinemas nearby in Margate, Westgate and Canterbury, all easily accessible by car or public transport, still allows Herne Bay residents to see the films they want to see.

The debate also provides me with a timely opportunity to describe our progress in considering the follow-up to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of films, which was completed by the commission in 1983. I recognise the concerns which have been expressed by my hon. Friend, arising from the long period for which a definitive Government statement on follow-up to that report has been awaited. I hope that my account of the report's findings and recommendations, and of our subsequent consideration of those conclusions will help to reassure my hon. Friend and those in the film industry, who have a quite understandable interest in the outcome, that the length of time that we and the Director General of Fair Trading have taken to reach the decision has been determined by our concern to reach a solution that more effectively ensures a competitive environment in the distribution and exhibition sectors of the film industry in the foreseeable future.

The MMC's report on the supply of films resulted from a monopoly reference made by the Director General of Fair Trading in December 1980. The MMC found that a complex monopoly situation existed between the major exhibitors, Thorn EMI—now Cannon—and Rank, and the two major distributors, Columbia-EMI-Warner and United International Pictures, which adopted the practice of barring. Barring is a system of exclusivity whereby the order in which cinemas get access to films is predetermined.

The commission took the view that this system of deciding exclusivity produced results that were determined largely by EMI and Rank, and did not achieve sufficient competition during the full period in which films were released. Taking into account factors such as the restriction of competition caused by the alignments, on which the places of EMI and Rank in the system of barring partly depend, the commission concluded that the present system of barring operated against the public interest. It felt that other arrangements should be made to determine exclusivity.

The commission made two recommendations designed to increase competition in the distribution of films to exhibitors. The first was that the current system of barring should be ended, and that distributors and exhibitors should in future conduct their business in such a way that provisions for exclusivity could be negotiated for each film hire agreement on a case-by-case basis.

The commission's second recommendation was designed to improve access of exhibitors, other than EMI and Rank, to popular films. It specified that a cinema should be allowed to exhibit a popular film—that is, a film for which 60 or more prints are, or have become, available in Great Britain—for more than four weeks only if, at the end of that period, it had been made available on normal terms to all other cinemas in effective competition with that cinema.

The publication of the MMC's report in 1983 occurred in a period of very rapid downturn in cinema admissions and receipts. During the consultation period following publication of the report, it was agreed that a pilot scheme should be set up on the effects of the MMC's two main recommendations on barring and on delays in the release of popular films.

In January 1985 it was announced that the director general was being asked to proceed with arrangements for the experiment. After further discussions between officials and representatives of the distributors and exhibitors, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry asked the Director General of Fair Trading to seek from all the exhibitors and distributors concerned the undertakings that were necessary to conduct the experimental scheme.

The scheme was approved in two cities, Glasgow and Manchester, with Liverpool and Birmingham as control areas. It included all cinemas within a 14-mile radius of each of the four city centres. Questionnaires were completed by exhibitors and distributors, both in relation to the control areas of Birmingham and Liverpool, and to Manchester and Glasgow, where the experiment was actually conducted. The trial scheme ran for 52 weeks from 31 May 1985 to 29 May 1986.

The Director General of Fair Trading submitted his report on the results and these were provided to the then Under-Secretary of State for Corporate and Consumer Affairs on 16 March this year.

The period of the experiment coincided with an unexpected general upturn in cinema audiences. The OFT therefore thought it necessary, near the end of the experiment, to ask certain additional questions of the participants and to analyse the replies for inclusion in its report. I hope that my hon. Friend will bear with me while I present ths somewhat lengthy explanation of the background. He has rightly voiced anxiety about the delay.

Since the end of the experiment, we, together with the OFT, have been considering what action should be taken in the light both of the results of the films experiment and of developments in the industry since the MMC's report published in 1983. We have considered carefully the whole gamut of possibilities ranging from taking no action, as there are some signs that the industry has become a little more competitive over the past four years, through to the possibility of divestment, which a somewhat stronger economic climate in the industry might have justified. I stress that our objective remains the maximisation of competition within the film industry, consistent with maintaining healthy film distribution and exhibition sectors in the United Kingdom.

Consideration of these matters has been complex, but I and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State propose to consult the industry shortly on the basis of the report of the Director General of Fair Trading on the experiment. I will, of course, ensure that copies of that report are then immediately placed in the Vote Office and the Library of the House.

It would be difficult to do justice to the experiment's results by attempting to summarise them in a few sentences. They have, however, contributed significantly to our understanding of competitive conditions in the industry. While they do not point conclusively in the direction of any particular course of action, they suggest that following the MMC's recommendations on barring and on the early release of popular films will pave the way for more competitive and flexible arrangements in the industry.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I are therefore minded, on the basis of the report's conclusions to make an order under the Fair Trading Act 1973. First, that might make unlawful any existing or future long-term arrangement between a distributor and a cinema operator to bar other local cinemas from showing the same film concurrently. Secondly, it might place a limit of four weeks on the length of time for which "first run" cinemas may exhibit a popular film, without making it available to competitors.

As I said earlier, we propose, before the end of this month, to begin a short and intensive period of consultation lasting until the end of January 1988 to seek the views of all those with an interest. As a result of the representations we receive, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I will then finalise our views on the action that we intend to take.

I hope that what I have said will demonstrate the Government's concern to secure a more competitive environment in the film distribution and exhibition sectors. I hope too, that it will assist independent cinemas to compete more effectively with the major chains of exhibitors. I and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will look forward to hearing my hon. Friend's views and those of other hon. Members on the action that we are minded to take on the basis of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report.

I hope that in the light of what I have said, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North will feel that he has elicited a statement which will be of some significance to the industry and, in particular, to that vigorous entrepreneur whose interests he has defended so well.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 9 November 1987

PRIME MINISTER

United Democratic Front

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Prime Minister if she will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the letter from the United Democratic Front of South Africa announcing its intention to suspend relations with the British Government; and if she will also publish the reply.

The Prime Minister: To date, I have not received such a letter.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Prime Minister what documents containing classified information concerning national security were found at the home of Mr. Frank Larsen; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on Friday 23 October, at column 1095.

Ministers (Accommodation)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister which Ministers have accommodation provided for them out of public funds; and what has been the total cost in each year since 1979.

The Prime Minister: This information is not held centrally. On the costs of my own office, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave him on 23 February 1987 at columns 53 and 54, and on 22 October at column 846.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCE and CSE (Easington)

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of GCE and CSE passes in the district of Easington for the years 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Dunn: Information for the areas within local education authorities is not available centrally. Results for Durham local education authority and for England are as follows:

	Maintained school leavers (Percentages) Academic year			
	1984-85		*1985-86*	
	Durham	*England*	*Durham*	*England*
1 or more graded[1] results at O level/CSE	86·3	89·8	90·3	89·6
1 or more higher[2] grades at O level/CSE	48·3	52·2	50·3	51·9
5 or more higher[2] grades at O level/CSE	20·1	23·7	18·9	23·5
1 or more A level passes	12·1	13·9	9·0	13·6

Source: School Leavers Survey. Data subject to sampling error.

Notes:

[1] Graded results defined as O level grades A-E and CSE grades 1-5.

[2] Higher graded results defined as O level grades A-C and CSE grade 1.

Core Curriculum

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received regarding the inclusion of economics as a foundation subject in the proposed core curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have received many responses from individuals and organisations regarding time left by the national curriculum for additional subjects, and for topics and themes which are an important part of children's education at school. Organisations which have made such representations on economics and economic awareness include the Economics Association and the Economics Awareness Teacher Training Programme. Copies of those responses have been placed in the Library along with all other responses from organisations to our consultation document.

Schools (Opting-out Provisions)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has had any representations from school governors regarding the length of time proposed for objections by parents to opt-out proposals.

Mr. Dunn: I am not aware of any representations on this issue from school governors.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, when a particular school chooses to ballot all parents on the opt-out proposals, he will make additional funds available to cover the cost of the ballot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Yes. My right hon. Friend will be prepared to assist governing bodies with the cost of such ballots.

St. Andrews University

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the total value of grants paid by the University Grants Committee to St. Andrews university for each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: Total recurrent and capital grants paid to St. Andrew's university on the advice of the University Grants Committee were as follows:

Academic Years	*£000s Cash*
1982-83	13,000
1983-84	12,931
1984-85	13,132
1985-86	14,372
1986-87	14,538

School Leavers (Qualifications)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what qualifications for school leavers are recognised by his Department other than O-levels; what proportion of pupils leaving school qualify in these examinations; what are the proportions for O-level; and if he will publish the most recent statistics for school leavers with a breakdown of the qualifications they gain.

Mr. Dunn: It is open to schools to offer courses leading to whichever qualifications they regard as appropriate. The main nationally recognised qualifications obtained by school leavers at 16 plus are GCE O level and CSE, which will be replaced by the general certificate of secondary education from summer 1988.

The proportions of school leavers in 1985-86 achieving graded results in the O-level/CSE examinations is just over 90 per cent. Further information on these qualifications is published in "Statistics of Education, Volume 2 (School Leavers CSE and GCE)", copies of which are in the Library.

Information from the youth cohort study indicates that approximately 15 per cent. of maintained school pupils in their last compulsory school year attempt examinations other than those offered by the CSE and GCE examination boards, mainly those offered by BTEC, RSA and CGLI.

Departmental Press Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what factors he attributes the increase between 1985-86 and 1986-87 in his Department's expenditure on press advertising.

Mrs. Rumbold: The increase in advertising spending between 1985-86 and 1986-87 was the result of two main factors: (1) setting out the facts about the Government's proposals on teachers' pay and conditions; and (2) attracting new recruits to teaching, particularly in the shortage subjects of maths, physics, CDT—craft design and technology—and business studies.

Rock Ferry School, Birkenhead

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to intervene in the dispute over admission to Rock Ferry school, Birkenhead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the Wirral LEA did not act unreasonably in its allocation of children to this school in September 1987.

Schools Outreach Project

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received in support of his Department funding the Schools Outreach project; and when he expects to decide on the Schools Outreach application for funding for the period 1988 to 1991.

Mr. Dunn: Twenty-three letters of support have been received in the Department. A decision on the proposals will be made as soon as possible.

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to obtain a copy of the European Commission report on teachers' pay; and when he expects it to be published.

Mrs. Rumbold: The European Commission has not yet made the report available to member countries. I understand that it has yet to be translated from Dutch into the other Community languages.

Teachers' Negotiating Rights

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to respond to inquiries made by the International Labour Organisation on the matter of the unilateral withdrawal of teachers' negotiating rights in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's response was sent to the ILO on 23 October. A supplementary response was sent on 29 October covering a copy of the Green Paper "Teachers' Pay and Conditions: A Consultative Document".

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing the income per student received from the University Grants Council by each university in the United Kingdom and from the National Advisory Body for each polytechnic in England and Wales in 1987-88 and how he expects these figures to change in the light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement of 3 November 1987.

Mr. Jackson: Student enrolments for the academic year 1987-88 are not yet known. The funding increases announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement amount to 8 per cent. between the financial years 1987-88 and for 1988-89 for recurrent funding of the universities and 9 per cent. for polytechnics and colleges under local authority control.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the percentage change in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1987-88, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant, change in the level of local authority rates, additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants

Committee between 1980-81 and 1987-88, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Jackson: I shall write to the hon. Member.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Developing Countries (Debt)

75. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to meet Oxfam, War on Want and other aid agencies to discuss the international debt crisis and its impact on developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: I plan to meet the directors of several agencies including Oxfam in the next two months. Debt issues may be discussed.

Overseas Aid

76. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the overseas development budget has been spent on assisting British companies under the aid-trade provision over the last three years.

Mr. Chris Patten: ATP expenditure on grants to developing countries as a proportion of total gross public expenditure on overseas aid was 3·9 per cent. in 1984, 3·2 per cent. in 1985, and 5·8 per cent. in 1986.

77. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the size of the United Kingdom's aid budget.

Mr. Chris Patten: The net aid programme is planned to be £1,305 million in 1988-89, £1,375 million in 1989-90 and £1,420 million in 1990-91. Any costs arising from the debt initiative by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be additional to these figures. The Government are therefore planning for an aid programme that is growing in real terms. This is recognition of the value of a substantial and effective aid programme both to Britain and to developing countries.

79. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the effectiveness of the British aid programme.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am satisfied that we have an effective aid programme. More than ever, with a growing aid programme, I shall endeavour to get the best value for money for every pound spent.

Bangladesh

78. **Mr. Goodlad:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government have provided to Bangladesh to help alleviate the impact of the recent floods in that country.

Mr. Chris Patten: Last week I returned from Bangladesh where I saw at first hand the effects of the recent flooding. During my visit I announced further flood relief assistance from Her Majesty's Government bringing our total response to date to nearly £10 million. I also signed a commodity aid agreement for £20 million which will be available to meet flood rehabilitation requirements, as well as normal import requirements, in the public and private sectors.

Indonesia

80. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in implementing projects financed under the £140 million concessional loans arrangement with Indonesia.

Mr. Chris Patten: I discussed progess on the concessional loan arrangement with Indonesian Ministers during my recent visit. We agreed there was a need to press on with implementation as quickly as possible. To date I have approved six proposals worth £124 million, the most recent being one for £7 million to provide diesel generators. Contracts in respect of two of these six have been signed and are being implemented; the others are at or near the contract negotiation stage or, in the case of the diesel generators, about to go to tender. Other projects which would fully utilise the facility are being considered.

Famine

81. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent initiatives Her Majesty's Government have taken with respect to famine in Africa.

Mr. Chris Patten: So far this year we have committed about £15 million from the bilateral programme for relief purposes in Mozambique, including 30,000 tonnes of food aid. About £10 million has been similarly committed to Ethiopia, including 27,000 tonnes of food aid. We have provided over £1 million of relief assistance to Sudan, and have also assisted Somalia, Botswana, Malawi and Zimbabwe. In addition, some £5·5 million has been provided to help control locusts and other pests.

83. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he will be responding to the worsening prospects of famine in Ethiopia.

Mr. Chris Patten: On 26 October I announced the provision of £2·35 million in emergency relief for Ethiopia. This comprises 10,000 tonnes of food aid at a cost of £1·85 million and £500,000 to help with food distribution. This is in addition to the £1 million of assistance for transport and for refugees which I announced on 5 October.

Voluntary Agencies

82. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further support he plans to provide to British voluntary agencies working in developing countries.

Mr. Chris Patten: I propose, subject to parliamentary approval, to increase our support to voluntary agencies under the joint funding scheme by 50 per cent. next year to £9 million, and our support for the agencies sending volunteers overseas by more than 18 per cent. to £10·6 million. In addition, we remain ready to provide substantial support through the voluntary agencies for emergency and disaster relief.

84. **Mr. Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the level of aid for voluntary agencies through the joint funding scheme for the forthcoming year; and how it compares with present levels.

Mr. Chris Patten: I propose, subject to parliamentary approval, to increase next year's joint funding scheme budget to £9 million. That is an increase of 50 per cent. on this year's original allocation, which I have since increased by £0·5 million in recognition of the importance of the work of British voluntary agencies in developing countries.

Guatemala

Ms Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will suspend aid to Guatemala, in view of that Government's record on human rights.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Guatemalan Government have taken a number of steps to demonstrate their commitment to improve the human rights situation and this improvement has been recognised by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1986, and in March 1987. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to cancel our small aid programme.

Nicaragua

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to oppose European Community aid to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

Mr. Chris Patten: A co-operation agreement between the European Community and the five Central American countries — together with Panama — signed in 1985 contains an undertaking to provide increased aid to Central America. An agreed objective is to encourage regional co-operation and the Community confirmed its intention to grant priority assistance for regional projects. The co-operation agreement is a practical demonstration of the Community's support for a peaceful solution to Central America's problems. The EC also provides food aid for humanitarian purposes.

ENVIRONMENT

Rating Reform

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to revise the rateable value limits for the purpose of enfranchisement under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 *(a)* on the merits and *(b)* in the light of the proposed community charge.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans at this stage to extend the scope of leasehold enfranchisement for houses, but I propose to issue shortly a consultation paper on the implications for the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and other landlord and tenant legislation of the proposed abolition of domestic rates.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an estimate of the effect of a poll tax compared with domestic rates on the proportion of net income in households with incomes of *(a)* £50 to £150 per week and *(b)* £50 to £200 per week; and if he will give the proportion such households are of the total.

Mr. Howard: Based on data from the family expenditure survey in 1985-86 prices, households with a net income of between £50 and £150 per week in England would pay 3·9 per cent. of that income in rates. With the full community charge, this would fall to 3·6 per cent. With net incomes of between £50 and £200, the corresponding figures are 3·7 per cent. and 3·5 per cent. Fourty-three per cent. and 61 per cent. respectively of households fall within these income bands.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will limit the starting age for payment of poll tax to the same age as for entitlement to legal minimum rates of pay.

Mr. Howard: No.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what form of requirement will be placed upon landlords collecting inclusive rent and rates to disaggregate the rent element following the introduction of poll tax.

Mr. Howard: When the community charge is fully in place, domestic rates will have disappeared. The concept of "inclusive rent and rates" will, therefore, no longer apply.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing how his estimates for poll tax for each local authority are influenced by his proposals for a unified business rate, giving figures for poll tax with existing pattern of non-domestic rates and poll tax with a unified business rate.

Mr. Howard: It is a central feature of the new system that authorities spending at the level of their assessed need will be able to levy a common level of community charge, taking account of their income from grant and from the national non-domestic rate. If the uniform non-domestic rate poundage were not to apply — and it too is an essential part of the system — it would be necessary to adjust grant payments in order to preserve the position that variations in authorities' spending above or below the standard community charge were met entirely by residents.

Housing

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a full list of all those instances to date, under the terms of the Housing and Planning Act 1986, where a local authority has transferred management powers to a housing co-operative, housing association, or private landlord; and if he will indicate also all those instances where under the terms of the Act local authority tenants have organised themselves into a co-operative and requested recognition.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are 30 instances of a local authority transferring management powers to housing co-operatives within the terms of earlier legislation. Since the relevant section of the Housing and Planning Act 1986 came into force on 7 January 1987, nine applications have been made by local authorities seeking approval for the transfer of management powers to a housing co-operative, housing association or private landlord, of which two are for renewal of earlier approvals. All these applications are currently being considered under the terms of the 1986 Act and I expect the first approvals to be issued shortly.

The Act makes no provision for local authority tenants to request recognition as a co-operative.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list for the years 1979 and 1987 the number of housing association houses and flats, in villages in England with a population of 800 or below, with *(a)* one bedroom, *(b)* two bedrooms and *(c)* three or more bedrooms, and, of these, how many are (i) occupied, (ii) vacant prior to being let and (iii) vacant prior to being repaired or improved;

(2) if he will list for the years 1979 and 1987 the number of local authority houses and flats, in villages in England with a population of 800 or below, with *(a)* one bedroom, *(b)* two bedrooms and *(c)* three or more bedrooms and, of these, how many are (i) occupied, (ii) vacant prior to being let and (iii) vacant prior to being repaired or improved.

Mr. Waldegrave: Information is not collected for subdivisions of local authority areas.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of homes in England and Wales have central heating.

Mrs. Roe: The most recent available estimate is from the 1984 general household survey, which showed 67 per cent. of households in England and Wales had central heating.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to the percentage of dwellings in England and Wales which lack draught-stripping to doors and windows; and what is the total number of such dwellings;

(2) what is the number and percentage of dwellings in England and Wales that lack cavity wall insulation.

Mrs. Roe: The available figures are based on a sample survey conducted by Audits of Great Britain Ltd. in December 1986. It is estimated that 59 per cent. (11·2 million) of households in England and Wales lacked draught-stripping to doors and windows, although many doors and windows do not need draught-stripping to make them draught proof, and that 55 per cent. (10·4 million) of households had cavity walls that were not insulated.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest regulations regarding loft insulation; and what proportion of homes in the United Kingdom are insulated to this standard?

Mrs. Roe: The current building regulations require a U-value of 0·35 which is achieved by 100mm mat insulation or its equivalent; all new homes are insulated to this standard. It is estimated from a sample survey conducted by Audits of Great Britain Ltd., in December 1986, that 44 per cent. of housholds with access to loft spaces in Great Britain had 4in (approximately 100mm) or more of insulation.

Storm Damage

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to offer compensation from public funds to households in respect of storm damage on items like garden fences which could not be insured.

Mr. Chope: No. Although I have every sympathy for those who have suffered damage, the clearance and replacement of items that are not insured is financially a matter for individual property owners.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his Department's latest estimate of the costs to London local authorities of the storm damage sustained in October.

Mr. Chope: We do not yet have sufficiently reliable information to provide the estimate requested.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the housing investment programme allocation to Wakefield metropolitan district council in order to enable it to fulfil its statutory obligations under the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: Wakefield borough council has already received an additional allocation of £0·230 million this year for housing defects. My right hon. Friend announced on 3 November that £44·7 million will be made available for additional HIP allocations this year for various purposes, including assistance under the Housing Defects Act. We hope to make allocations very soon.

Housing Associations

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide direct assistance to the United Kingdom Housing Trust in line with the Government's commitment to housing associations and in view of the limited role of housing associations to date in the Wakefield district.

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Member may have in mind the proposed purchase by the United Kingdom Housing Trust of dwellings currently in the ownership of British Coal. I have now written to the hon. Member on that matter.

Council Rents

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportions of the council house rent arrears given in his answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 4 November represent *(a)* one payment, *(b)* two payments and *(c)* three or more payments.

Mr. Waldegrave: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council tenants are currently in rent arrears; and of these how many have been in arrears for less than six months.

Mrs. Roe: This information is not collected centrally.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if any steps are being taken by his Department to ensure that all local authorities meet minimum and acceptable standards for the provision of essential services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The Department is always concerned that local authorities comply with their statutory duties.

Basking Sharks

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Nature Conservancy Council first requested that basking sharks be brought within the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; when he expects to announce his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Nature Conservancy Council first requested that the basking shark should be brought within the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in its "Quinquennial" review of species submitted to the Secretary of State in October 1986. The Secretary of State has consulted widely on the recommendations contained in the review and hopes shortly to announce his decision on all the species concerned.

Audit Commission

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will use his powers under section 21(7) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 to prescribe that fees charged to local authority by the Audit Commission shall not be increased by a percentage greater than the increase of the cost of living index over the same period.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend is considering the increased scale of audit fees which the Audit Commission proposes to introduce from 1 November and whether it would be necessary or desirable in the public interest for him to prescribe a scale of fees in place of the scale prescribed by the commission.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what amounts of nuclear waste were discharged into the Irish sea from Sellafield nuclear power station in the periods 1960 to 1970, 1970 to 1980 and 1980 to 1985.

Mr. Moynihan: The liquid effluent arising from Calder Hall nuclear power station forms part of the Sellafield site effluent which is collected in tanks for analysis prior to discharge to the Irish sea. Although analysis is carried out at source, the relevant information on activities discharged is obtained on the collection tanks as a whole.

Information for the period 1960-1985 is shown graphically in the figures shown in the report by Sir Douglas Black on "The Investigation of the Possible Increased Incidence of Cancer in West Cumbria" published by HMSO in 1985. Further information on the discharges from the site for the period 1972 – 1985 is available from the British Nuclear Fuel annual reports on radioactive discharges.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the total identified cost of maintaining the Houses of Parliament for the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Chope: Expenditure charged to the parliamentary works subhead for the maintenance and running costs of the parliamentary estate was £7·612 million for 1985-86 and £7·492 million for 1986-87.

Defective Housing

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if it is intended for his Department to give technical advice to the Walsall metropolitan borough council regarding carrying out repairs to the Wimpey no fines properties in Walsall; and if he will make a statement;

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* It is for Walsall borough council to reach its own decisions on these matters. However, the Building Research Advisory Service can provide technical advice on repairs and improvements to Wimpey no fines properties, should this be requested by Walsall borough council.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if extra financial assistance will be given in the current financial year if requested by the Walsall metropolitan council for repairs to be carried out to the Wimpey no fines properties in the Blakenhall area of the borough; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* My right hon. Friend announced on 3 November that £44·7 million will be made available for additional HIP allocations this year, for various purposes; but no decisions have yet been made on the authorities which should receive them.

Homeless Families

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the comparative public sector costs of housing homeless families by *(a)* the provision of newly built dwellings, *(b)* the provision of dwellings acquired from the private sector and improved for letting and *(c)* the provision of bed-and-breakfast accommodation.

Mrs. Roe *[holding answer 6 November 1987]:* The estimate capital costs per household of direct provision by local authorities in 1985-86 were as follows:

	Greater London £	*Rest of England* £
i. New build	55,700	32,600
ii. Acquisition and renovation	45,900	27,600

Bed and breakfast costs then averaged £30 and £15 respectively per household day.

But there are other ways of accommodating the homeless which are less expensive in public resources. Under the Government's mixed funding scheme to provide interim accommodation for homeless families through housing associations, for example, public sector costs would amount to no more than 50 per cent. and 30 per cent. respectively of the acquisition and renovation costs shown above.

Consultation Papers

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in respect of each of the consultation papers issued by his Department on *(a)* "Finance for Housing Associations", *(b)* the "Private Rented Sector: Legislative Proposals", *(c)* "Right to Buy: Legislative Proposals" and *(d)* "Housing Action Trusts", when the consultation paper was issued; to which organisations and individuals copies have been sent; by what date replies were required; how many replies were received by that date; and, of these, how many favoured the Government's proposals.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 6 November 1987]:* The table provides details about each of these consultation documents.

	Sent out	*Comments invited by*	*Number of comments received*
Housing Associations	18 September	[1]30 October	110
Private rented sector (legislative)	2 October	30 October	108
Right to buy	2 October	30 October	94
Housing action trusts	8 October	6 November	[2]28

[1] For main comments; comments on points of detail by end of year.

[2] As at 4 November.

The documents were sent to all local authorities; each local authority association; leading organisations and bodies with an interest in, or involved in housing matters; and others who expressed an interest in each of these areas. In many instances, the responses received so far are detailed and extensive and are still being evaluated. It is too early to identify the position taken on each issue by all respondents.

Council House Sales

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects his current studies into portable discount schemes for council home tenants to be completed; when he expects the Government to come forward with proposals concerning portable discount schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 6 November 1987]:* The schemes run by the London boroughs of Brent and Bromley have helped council tenants to buy homes of their own, and released vacancies for the homeless. The results of the studies of the schemes are still being assessed, and it has not yet been decided whether a wider scheme should be proposed.

Local Government Employees (Pay)

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to change the method of pay negotiations for other groups of local government employees following the publication of "Teachers Pay and Conditions", Cm. 238.

Mr. Ridley: No.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the age limits laid down in the supplementary benefit rules, his proposed rebate for poll tax will differentiate between people aged 18 to 25 years and people over 25 years earning the same wage and paying the same poll tax.

Mr. Scott: I have been asked to reply.

We expect community charge rebate to be provided through the housing benefit scheme, which from 1 April 1988 will assess needs on largely the same basis as the new income support scheme. The final details, however, have yet to be decided and will be the subject of consultation with the representatives of local authorities.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households will experience an increase of *(a)* 50 per cent. or more and *(b)* 80 per cent. or more in local tax bills under the poll tax proposals; and what proportion these numbers are of those in England.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* If local authorities continue to spend at present levels until the community charge is fully in place, then I estimate that 3·3 million households (19 per cent.) would face a one-off increase of more than 50 per cent. in their combined household bills; 2·2 million (12 per cent.) would face an increase of 80 per cent. or more. This outcome need not arise at all providing local authorities start now to reduce expenditure. There ard signs that many of even the highest spending authorities are starting to do so. In order to allow both local authorities and households time to adjust to the new regime we will be proposing transitional arrangements to moderate the rate of change.

Dr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of work undertaken since the publication of the White Paper "Rates", Cmnd. 9008, on applying to domestic properties valuation for rating purposes based on capital values.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* A note on the effect of capital value rates was placed in the Library by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) on 23 July 1986. I have today placed in the Library a revised version of that note incorporating later house price information.

The conclusions are broadly unchanged.

(i) Because house prices vary more widely between regions than either existing rateable values or incomes, rates based on capital values would be even less well related to the ability to pay.

(ii) The effects would be different for different types of housing. Terraced houses on average would face increases everywhere except the midlands and the north-west. There would be 30 per cent. increases on average for detached houses in the south-east.

(iii) Some individual occupiers would face very large changes in liability. Nearly 15 per cent. of households would have had increases of more than 50 per cent. and 5 per cent. would have bills which had doubled had the change taken place at the end of 1986.

The note also shows that there are large changes in relative capital values on a cyclical basis so that were there to be regular revaluations on a capital basis, there would also be regular large changes in rate bills.

Capital value rates would, therefore, be more unfair, and more unstable than the present rating system. They would lead to large changes in household rate bills unrelated to the use of local services or ability to pay. They would do nothing to alter the fundamental weakness of accountability which exists under the present system and which our proposals specifically address.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Conveyancing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many licences have been issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers.

The Attorney-General: Two hundred and twenty three licences have been issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many persons holding licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers are presently in practice as non-solicitor conveyancers offering conveyancing services to the general public.

The Attorney-General: Seventy-two persons holding licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers are presently in practice as non-solicitor conveyancers offering conveyancing services to the general public.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many solicitors presently hold licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers.

The Attorney-General: Twenty-one solicitors presently hold licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General how many persons holding licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers are presently in the employment of solicitors.

The Attorney-General: Ninety-nine persons holding licences issued by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers are presently in the employment of solicitors.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General to what extent the costs of the Council for Licensed Conveyancers are still being met by public funds.

The Attorney-General: For the period 1 January 1986 to 31 March 1989 the Council for Licensed Conveyancers is in receipt of a total grant in aid of £200,000. For the current financial year £55,000 has been allocated.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the rules already made by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers with concurrence of the Lord Chancellor; and what other rules have been drafted by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers which are presently awaiting the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor.

The Attorney-General: Those rules which have been made by the Council for Licensed Conveyancers with the concurrence of the Lord Chancellor are: the Council for Licensed Conveyancers' Licensing Rules 1987; the Licensed Conveyancers' Training Rules 1986; the Licensed Conveyancers' Practice Rules 1987; the Licensed Conveyancers' Accounts Rules 1986; the Licensed Conveyancers' Accounts (Deposit Interest) Rules 1986; the Accountants' Report Rules 1986; the Licensed Conveyancers' Indemnity Rules 1987; the Council for Licensed Conveyancers' Compensation Fund Rules 1987; the Investigating Committee and Discipline and Appeals Committee Rules 1987; the Licensed Conveyancers' Discipline and Appeals Committee (Procedure) Rules 1987.

The Lord Chancellor has also made the Licensed Conveyancers' Discipline and Appeals Committee (Legal Assessor) Rules 1987.

The rules which are outstanding are: the Council for Licensed Conveyancers' Recognised Bodies Rules 1987; the Council for Licensed Conveyancers' Recognised Bodies Practice Rules 1987, together with various consequential amendments to the rules already made.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Attorney-General what instructions were given by the Crown prosecution service to counsel regarding the attitude to be taken to any request from defence counsel for proceedings involving Mr. Frank Larsen at Lambeth court on 22 October to be held in camera.

The Attorney-General: At the hearing to which the hon. Member refers the Crown prosecution service was not represented by counsel but by one of its own staff. His attitude was neutral: he neither supported the defence application, nor opposed it.

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his statement to the House on Friday 23 October, *Official Report*, column 1095, what happened between 21 September and 7 October to convince the Director of Public Prosecutions that the case could not result in a conviction.

The Attorney-General: On 7 October the director's staff were advised by counsel that there was not a realistic prospect of the conviction of the remaining three defendants. They accepted that advice.

Terrorism (Prosecutions)

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Attorney-General how many times in the last three years a prosecution based on evidence procured by the anti-terrorist squad has been withdrawn by the Director of Public Prosecutions due to lack of evidence.

The Attorney-General: No separate records are kept by the Crown Prosecution Service of prosecutions arising from cases investigated by the anti-terrorist squad. Nor were separate records kept by the Director of Public Prosecutions before the inception of the Crown Prosecution Service. Therefore, it would not be possible to give an accurate answer to the hon. Member's question.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, how much of the Hong Kong exchange fund was used to provide support to the Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation.

Mr. Eggar: Commitments from the Hong Kong exchange fund, in the form of two facilities of HK$1,000 million each, have been made in support of the Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation. These are loan facilities, interest being charged at market rates. By 6 November the first facility has been drawn on by approximately HK$800 million.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to what firms are being sued by the Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation and as to how much they are being sued for; whether any Hong Kong Government officials are alleged to be involved in any of these firms.

Mr. Eggar: The Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation has issued writs against 33 firms alleged to have defaulted. The amount involved is approximately HK$1,800 million. These writs have been issued to protect the position of the guarantee corporation and the number of writs outstanding is liable to change as settlements are made. We are not aware of any Hong Kong Government official having any connection with the firms which are being sued.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to whether any Hong Kong stock exchange or financial futures exchange officials are alleged to be involved in any of the companies under investigation on the Hong Kong stock exchange.

Mr. Eggar: We are not aware of any allegations having been made against such officials, including the directors of the Hong Kong futures exchange, committee members of the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Ltd. and staff employed by each exchange, of involvement with companies currently under surveillance by the Hong Kong stock exchange. Nor are we aware that any such officials are involved with any of the members or member firms which are currently under surveillance by the Hong Kong stock exchange or the futures exchange.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the names of the officials of *(a)* the Government and *(b)* the stock exchange who are alleged to be involved with companies being sued by the Hong Kong Futures Guarantee Corporation; and whether all these firms have been suspended from trading.

Mr. Eggar: We are not aware of any such officials. All firms which are being sued by the Futures Guarantee Corporation have been suspended from trading on the futures exchange.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the list held by the Hong Kong stock exchange officials of brokers in financial difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As far as we are aware, no such list exists. Seven firms have suspended trading at their own request, but not necessarily because they are in financial difficulties.

Colonel Robert Crowther

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the factors which dictated the timing of the end of the tour of duty of Colonel Robert Crowther, the South African defence attaché in London.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 24 July 1987, at column *571*.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the nature of official communications between Mr. William Marsden, an official of his Department, and Mr. Frank Larsen over the past two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There have been no official or other communications between Mr. Marsden and Mr. Larsen.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise at the Security Council of the United Nations the question of amending motion No. 598 on the Iran/Iraq war in such a way as to make clear the responsibility of Iraq for starting the conflict by its invasion of Iranian territory; if he will make a statement; and if he will publish the text of the motion in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Mellor: Security Council resolution 598 was passed unanimously and represents a carefully balanced package which takes into account the concerns of each side in the conflict. The resolution calls inter alia for the establishment of an impartial body to inquire into responsibility for the conflict. The establishment of such a body is one of a number of elements of implemementation of the resolution currently under discussion. It would not be wise to pre-empt the work of the body.

Copies of the resolution have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his current assessment of the conditions which the Government of Iran have accepted as a basis for ending the war with Iraq.

Mr. Mellor: It is not up to the Government of either Iran or Iraq to impose conditions for ending the conflict. Both sides have a legal obligation to abide by Security Council resolution 598. The United Nations Secretary-General is discussing with the two sides implementation of the resolution. These discussions and the detailed positions of the two sides are confidential.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office (Investment)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what study he has made of the annual report of the Post Office Users National Council; and what has been his reponse to the criticism of the short-term view taken by Her Majesty's Government in planning or approving Post Office forward strategy and investment;

(2) what has been his response to the concern expressed in the annual report of the Post Office Users National Council that the planned investment levels in the next few years are too low.

Mr. Butcher: It is primarily for the Post Office to plan its forward strategy and investment, consistent with the general framework within which the Government expect the business to operate, including the long-term strategic objectives and the financial and other targets which we have set. We have considered the criticisms of the operation of the financial framework as it applies to the Post Office which the Post Office Users' National Council makes in its annual report. But, as the council is aware, most recently from my meeting with its chairman and secretary on 21 October, we do not accept the council's view, as set out in the report, that the arrangements for financing the Post Office are damaging and inappropriate to its long-term requirements.

However, I also indicated that the Post Office has not been constrained in recent public expenditure rounds from undertaking the level of investment that it considers necessary over the next few years.

British Airways-British Caledonian Merger

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if, in the light of the proposed British Airways-British Caledonian merger, he has any plans to tighten the safeguards to prevent newly privatised industries from becoming monopolies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: I see no need to introduce additional safeguards of this kind. Whether specific provisions are needed to deal with the possibility of takeover or monopoly abuse is considered in the context of individual privatisations. Except to the extent that any such specific provisions substitute for them, the provisions of competition law apply to privatised industries, as to other private sector businesses.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will take into account the potential impact of a British airline industry dominated by one large carrier operating from both Heathrow and Gatwick, on the East Midlands and other regional airports before making his decision on the proposed takeover of British Caledonian by British Airways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Woodcock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to take into account the interests of consumers in making his decision on the proposed British Airways/British Caledonian merger; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission has now submitted its report on this merger proposal to the Secretary of State. In view of the market-sensitive nature of the report, it is inappropriate for me to comment further until it is published, when an announcement will be made in the normal way on its conclusions and on what action, if any, arises from them.

FIMBRA

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will request Sir Kenneth Berrill of the Securities and Investments Board to reply forthwith to the letter dated 25 September from Commander Colin Cochrane concerning representation of category A firms on the council of FIMBRA.

Mr. Maude: I understand that Sir Kenneth replied on 2 November.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the reply due from his Department to Commander Colin Cochrane, representing category A firms, concerning the representation of category A firms on the FIMBRA council; and whether he will withhold approval via the Securities and Investments Board of FIMBRA until and unless category A firms are represented pro rata on the FIMBRA council.

Mr. Maude: Commander Cochrane wrote to my Department on 29 October and was sent a reply on 30 October. The reply pointed out that it was for the Securities and Investments Board and not the Secretary of State to determine whether, in its view, FIMBRA satisfies the requirements for recognition under the Financial Services Act, and that the commander's views on this matter should therefore be addressed to the board. The letter explained that the Secretary of State's role, now that the recognition function has been transferred, is to consider the competition aspects of FIMBRA's (and other aspirant SROs') rules; and that when he does so he will take into account their effect on all businesses in the relevant sector, small and large.

One of the requirements for recognition of a self-regulating organisation under the Financial Services Act is that the arrangements of the organisation with respect to the appointment, removal from office and functions of the persons responsible for making or enforcing the rules of the organisation must be such as to secure a proper balance *(a)* between the interests of the different members of the organisation ; and *(b)* between the interests of the organisation or its members and the interests of the public. As noted above, it is for the Securities and Investments Board to satisfy itself whether this condition is met in particular cases.

Upholstery (Flammable Materials)

Ms. Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what effect the EEC moves to harmonise the internal market can be expected to have on consumer protection from the use of hazardous flammable materials in furniture upholstery.

Mr. Maude: I am considering remaking the 1980 Upholstered Furniture (Safety) Regulations, as furniture flammability is a significant consumer hazard. I am not aware of any Community proposals in this area.

Under the terms of directive 83/189, member states are required to notify the Commission of proposals for new regulations. A three-month period is then required for consideration of such proposals by the Commission and by member states: if any objection is raised the period of delay is extended to six months. Should the Commission put forward a proposal for a directive on the subject, national action may be delayed for 12 months from the date of notification.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Motorists (Breath Testing)

88. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his policy towards random breath testing for motorists.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Roland Boyes) on 5 November.

Football Violence

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with *(a)* the English Football Association, *(b)* the Professional Footballer's Association or *(c)* any other body over the guidelines which should be applied in considering whether a prosecution should arise from incidents during football matches.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. It is for the appropriate chief officer of police to decide whether criminal charges should be brought as a result of incidents during football matches. Any cases in which charges are made in England and Wales are then referred to the Crown prosecution service.

Bail

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, as a contribution to reducing the prison population, he will issue advice to magistrates to the effect that bail should be offered to those accused of non-violent offences who are currently on remand.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave him on 5 November at column *1051*.

Prisoners (Nationality)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made to ensure that individuals currently in prison are able to register under the British Nationality Act by 31 December 1987 should they wish to.

Mr. Renton: Circular instruction 24/87, a copy of which is in the Library, has been sent to governors of all prison service establishments with supplies of the free information leaflet "Your Right to British Citizenship", and posters to display to draw the attention of all inmates to the leaflet.

Immigration

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has yet reached a decision on the case of Mr. and Mrs. Masoud Taghinejadi in response to the letters to him from the hon. Member for Stockport of 7 September and 22 October.

Mr. Renton: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 4 November.

Mr. Randall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the results of the pilot trial involving the use of DNA techniques in immigration control; and whether the Government will use DNA, without charge to the applicant, as part of their entry clearance procedures.

Mr. Renton: The Department is awaiting the last few test results from cases in the pilot trial, and a report will then be prepared, a copy of which will be placed in the Library. We shall consider what part DNA testing might play in our entry control procedures and how it should be funded when we have studied the results of the pilot trial.

Press Advertising

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what factors he attributes the increase between 1985-86 and 1986-87 in his Department's expenditure on press advertising.

Mr. Hurd: Overall advertising expenditure by the Home Office fell from £4 million in 1985-86 to £3·6 million in 1986-87. The increase in press advertising expenditure (to £1,150,000 in 1986-87, not £1,366,000 as incorrectly given in reply to the hon. Member on 3 November, at columns *622-23*) was balanced by a reduction in television and other media expenditure. This change reflected the judgment of our advertising advisers on the usefulness of particular media for particular campaigns.

Colonel Robert Crowther

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the circumstances in which the anti-terrorist squads sought to interview Colonel Robert Crowther, South African defence attache in London, prior to 17 July.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that Colonel Robert Crowther has not been interviewed by the anti-terrorist branch.

Mr. Frank Larsen

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to when the anti-terrorist squad ceased its inquiries into the activities of Mr. Frank Larsen.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that the anti-terrorist branch ceased its enquiries into the activities of Mr. Frank Larsen on 22 October.

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any Minister in his Department had official communication with Mr. Frank Larsen over the past two years.

Mr. Hurd: No Home Office Minister can recall having any official communication with Mr. Frank Larsen over the past two years.

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the nature of the correspondence taken by the police from Mr. Larsen's home.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General on Friday 23 October at column 1095.

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to which *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* civil servants were questioned by the police in their investigations into the recently abandoned case at Lambeth magistrates' court against Frank Larsen and others.

Mr. Hurd: I understand that six civil servants but no hon. Members were questioned by the police during their investigations into the activities of Mr. Frank Larsen and others.

Entertainment Certificates

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation during the current Session of Parliament to allow local authorities to charge fees for the issue of certificates of suitability for entertainment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Licensing Bill, introduced on 29 October, includes provision, in clause 5, to enable local authorities to charge a reasonable fee on an application for the grant, renewal or variation of a certificate of suitability under section 79 of the Licensing Act 1964.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the increases in productivity in the coal mining industry over the last 12 months *(a)* as a total and *(b)* by British Coal area.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Average deep mined revenue output per man shift during the first six months of 1987-88 compared with the same period in 1986-87 is as follows:

	Tonnes *1986-87*	*1987-88*	*Per cent. Increase*
Scotland	2·45	2·87	17·1
North East	2·84	3·33	17·3
North Yorkshire	3·48	4·28	23·0
South Yorkshire	3·43	3·60	5·0
Central	3·12	3·36	7·7
Nottinghamshire	3·29	3·82	16·1
Kent	1·71	2·06	20·5
Western	3·04	3·52	15·8
South Wales	2·28	2·43	6·6
Total Great Britain	3·06	3·52	15·0

Gas Disconnections

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many disconnections of gas supply there have been in the last 12 months; what the figures were in the two preceding 12-month periods; and what is the average length of time disconnected consumers remain without gas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for British Gas plc. I have asked the chairman of British Gas to write to the hon. Member with the information available.

Nuclear Inspectors

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the numbers of nuclear inspectors per reactor in the United Kingdom, West Germany, France, Sweden, Belgium, Italy and Spain.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am advised by the Health and Safety Executive that in the United Kingdom approximately 80 nuclear installations inspectors deal with 41 licensed commercial power reactors under construction and in operation, and five small research reactors. The number of inspectors assigned to any one reactor is decided on a basis of need.

Figures for overseas countries are not available and can be acquired only at disproportionate cost. The United Kingdom, however, has been instrumental in bringing about an IAEA review of regulatory practices in member states.

Electricity Industry

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to how manning levels in the electricity supply industry in England and Wales compare with those of other European Economic Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Some information is available from annual reports of electricity utilities. But comparisons are not straightforward because of the different ranges of activities undertaken and the extent of use of contractors.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how much of the new electricity capacity planned for by the end of the century is to replace existing capacity.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member. The need to replace existing capacity and the growth in electricity demand result in a requirement for substantial investment in new generating capacity in the years ahead.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what plans have been made for the modernisation of the electricity transmission system; and how much money is allocated to this.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Sizewell B Power Station

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of the capital cost of the Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) on 27 April, at column *16*.

Magnox Stations (Decommissioning)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is his latest assessment of the cost of decommissioning a Magnox station;

(2) what is the time scale for the decommissioning of the Magnox stations;

(3) when he now expects the decommissioning of the older Magnox stations to commence.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter which falls within the management responsibility of the Central Electricity Generating Board. I shall ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Electricity Disconnections

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many households have had their electricity supply disconnected during the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for the electricity supply industry. I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member with the information requested in respect of England and Wales. The question of electricity disconnections in Scotland should be pursued through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

House Insulation

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the total funds available in the current financial year to help people on low incomes insulate their houses.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government provides assistance for this purpose through the Community Insulation Projects, which have to date provided free or low-cost basic insulation service for about 400,000 low income households; and the homes insulation scheme, which provides, alongside the general grant at 66 per cent., a means-tested grant at 90 per cent. restricted to certain categories of low-income household. Government funding for these schemes in 1987-88 is estimated as follows:

	£ million
Community Insulation Projects	45
Homes insulation scheme[1]:	
England[2]	16·5
Scotland	2·1
Wales[3]	2·3
Total[4]	66

[1] Provisions for the HIS in the public expenditure survey.

[2] In addition, a number of English local authorities have decided, with the approval of the Department of the Environment, to use some of their housing investment programme allocations for the purpose of the homes insulation scheme. The Secretary of State for the Environment announced on 3 November his intention to make further capital allocations to local authorities for housing needs, including homes insulation.

[3] Net of local authority administration costs.

[4] Rounded.

Elderly Persons

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proposals he has to help the elderly to use energy more efficiently.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 30 October 1987 to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) at column *447*.

Conservation (Investment Return)

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the rate of return of investment in energy conservation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The rate of return of investment in energy conservation varies by type of conservation measure and sector in which it is applied. My Energy Efficiency Office has published results of assessments of rates of return or payback periods for a wide range of conservation measures in the domestic, industrial and commercial sectors. I am arranging for copies of examples to be placed in the Library of the House.

Sulphur Emissions

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the existing coal-fired power stations that are ~~to~~ be fitted with the technology to reduce sulphur emissions.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The CEGB plans to fit flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) equipment to coal-fired power stations at Drax in Yorkshire and Fiddler's Ferry in Cheshire to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide.

Pressurised Water Reactors

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the average construction time for pressurised water reactors in the United States of America.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information on the construction time of pressurised water reactors in the USA has been published by various organisations.

Detailed information was submitted as evidence to the Sizewell B inquiry by the CEGB and by objectors, and the matter is covered in chapters 67 and 69 of the inspector's report to the then Secretary of State. A copy of the inspector's report is in the Library.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications he has received from the Central Electricity Generating Board for the construction of pressurised water reactors; and when they were received.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has received two applications from the Central Electricity Generating Board for the construction of pressurised water reactors. The application for the first, Sizewell B, was received on 30 January 1981 and consent was granted on 12 March 1987. The application for the second, Hinkley Point C, was received on 27 August 1987.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what further steps are being considered for the construction of pressurised water reactors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: It is for the Central Electricity Generating Board to submit applications for new power stations in England and Wales. The board is at present investigating a number of possible sites for further nuclear development, including Wylfa and Trawsfynydd in north Wales, Winfrith in Dorset, Druridge in Northumberland and Dungeness in Kent.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the criteria used for the setting of both domestic and industrial tariffs on electricity prices by area boards.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The criteria for setting electricity tariffs are set out in the electricity statutes. As it is the responsibility of the industry to fulfil its requirements in the statutes, I have asked the chairman of the Electricity Council to write to the hon. Member.

British Coal Houses (Wakefield)

Mr. Lofthouse: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the progress of the negotiations between British Coal and the United Kingdom Housing Trust over the sales of the remaining 850 British Coal houses in Wakefield metropolitan district.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The sale of British Coal houses is a matter for the corporation. I will ask the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if the Energy Efficiency Office has estimated the annual savings on fuel bills that could be achieved in the public sector from investment in improved energy management and usage, which can be expected to have a pay back period of less than five years; and if he will apportion the prospective savings for each of the major sectors and Departments of State.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Energy Efficiency Office estimates that the annual bill for energy consumed in public sector buildings is about £2 billion. Available evidence indicates that the scope for saving through improved energy efficiency could amount to £400 to £500 million a year. It is also estimated that roughly half the savings opportunities in all sectors can be realised through cost-effective investment and half through successful good housekeeping practices.

I regret it is not possible for the Energy Efficiency Office to provide a comprehensive and consistent breakdown of prospective savings in individual public sector bodies.

SCOTLAND

Illegal Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of convictions in Scotland for procuring an illegal abortion in each year since 1957.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is given in the table:

Persons with charge proved of procuring an illegal abortion

Year	*Numbers*
1957	—
1958	2
1959	4
1960	3
1961	1
1962	7
1963	5
1964	2
1965	1
1966	3
1967	2
1968	2
1969	5
1970	4
1971	—
1972	4
1973	—
1974	—
1975	—
1976	2
1977	2
1978	—
1979	—
1980	1
1981	—
1982	—
1983	—
1984	—
1985	—
1986	—

Prisoners (Schizophrenia Psychosis)

Mr. Goodlad: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of those convicted of crimes in Scotland in each of the last five years had ever previously been admitted to National Health Service mental illness hospitals with a main diagnosis of schizophrenia psychosis.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not available.

School Boards

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of submissions he has had on his proposals for school boards and the number opposed to the ceiling powers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We have received some 6,500 submissions by the deadline date of 3 November. Many take the form of detailed comments on the proposals and it would not be possible to classify them in the form suggested.

Community Centres

Mr. Ron Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received representations from the chairman of Craigroyston community centre about the proposed privatisation of community centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received no such representations.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total numbers of pupils on school rolls and the pupil to teacher ratio in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in the Glasgow, Central constituency area for each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on schools in Glasgow, Central constituency can be obtained from Strathclyde regional council.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many pupils in the Glasgow, Central constituency have obtained places in higher or further education in each year since 1979; and if he will express that number as a percentage of the age group for each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not readily available.

AIDS

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the estimated number of carriers, cases and deaths due to HIV for Scotland and Fife, by age and sex, for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The numbers of AIDS cases and deaths in Scotland in 1985 and 1986 reported to the Communicable Diseases (Scotland) Unit are set out in the table.

	AIDS cases		*Deaths*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1985	4	—	1	—
1986	6	1	7	—

It is estimated that, at the end of 1986, there were 30,000 to 40,000 carriers of HIV infection in the United Kingdom, but the proportion of this range who were located in Scotland has not been estimated. Of those persons who had been tested for HIV infection in Scotland, the numbers found to be HIV positive are set out in the table below:

	Number
Persons tested and found to be positive from 1982 up to end of 1985	536
Persons tested and found to be positive in 1986	473
	1,009

Details of the ages of the persons concerned and of the numbers of each sex found to be HIV positive are not available. Since the figures of AIDS cases and deaths for particular regions may be very low, and their publication may in consequence endanger medical confidentiality, geographical breakdowns are not published. Geographical breakdowns of numbers of persons tested and found to be HIV positive in 1985 and 1986 are not available.

Development Areas

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest level of unemployment for those areas in Scotland still retaining development area status.

Mr. Lang: The level of unemployment on 10 September 1987 in each of the travel-to-work areas in Scotland which have development area status is shown in the table.

Travel-to-work areas	*Percentage Unemployment Rate*	*Unemployed Claimants*
Arbroath	19·5	1,622
Bathgate	17·4	8,603
Cumnock and Sanquhar	28·2	4,352
Dumbarton	20·0	5,458
Dundee	15·2	14,742
Glasgow	16·9	106,002
Greenock	19·3	9,047
Irvine	22·1	10,845
Kilmarnock	17·1	5,374
Lanarkshire	18·6	29,966

Stracathro Hospital Junction

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the flyover improvements at Stracathro hospital junction will be commenced; what further obstacles remain to be overcome; and what further approvals are required before the project can commence.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The economic appraisal of the scheme is currently under consideration. Once this has been completed the Scottish Development Department should be in a position to publish the draft statutory orders for the scheme. As with all trunk road projects, start dates are subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance.

School Leavers (Qualifications)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what qualifications for school leavers are recognised by his Department other than O-levels; what proportion of pupils leaving school qualify in these examinations; what are the proportions for O-level; and if he will publish the most recent statistics for school leavers with a breakdown of the qualifications they gain.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Scottish Education Department does not formally recognise specific qualifications. It is for the users of the certificates, such as employers or educational institutions, to determine the degree of recognition that they are prepared to give to the various qualifications held by school leavers. In Scotland, the great majority of school pupils seeking qualifications take Scottish certificate of education (SCE) ordinary, standard or higher grade examinations. Other examinations, such as the certificate of sixth year studies, general certificate of education (GCE) O-levels and A-levels, certificate of secondary education (CSE) and the SCOTVEC national certificate, are taken by some pupils.

Available information on the qualifications held by Scottish school leavers is published annually in an SED statistical bulletin, copies of which are held in the House of Commons Library. The most recent edition is No. 10/E2/1986.

Protected Birds

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce a compensation mechanism for crofters or farmers who suffer financial loss as a result of the presence of protected birds but whose land is not designated part of a site of special scientific interest.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are currently considering a number of representations on this matter including representations from the Scottish Crofters Union and a number of hon. Members. I shall let the hon. Member know the outcome of our consideration in due course.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of RDG and RSA expenditure for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 at *(a)* current prices and *(b)* constant prices for 1987.

Mr. Lang: Total net expenditure by the Scottish Office on RDG and RSA — as defined for the public expenditure White Paper in 1986-87 is £206 million, £212 million at estimated 1987 prices. Current net provision for 1987-88 is £120 million—£119 million at estimated 1987 prices. As regards later years, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will announce his plans for spending on programmes within his responsibility in December.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of Scottish Development Agency spending in 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 at *(a)* current and *(b)* constant prices for 1987.

Mr. Lang: The information for 1986-87 and 1987-88 is as follows:

Year	*Outturn prices £ million*	*1987 prices £ million*
1986-87	130·9	136·8
1987-88 (estimated)	136·0	136·0

My right hon. and learned Friend will announce his plans for public expenditure on programmes within his responsibility in the usual way in December.

Parole Board

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement regarding his future policy on parole and the future of the Parole Board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has already made clear his intention to institute a thorough review of the workings of the parole system in Scotland. He is at present considering the best means of giving effect to that intention and a full statement will be made in due course.

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many months it now takes from the date on which a prisoner is referred to the Parole Board to the date on which a decision is made on that case; and if he will also list the time taken in each of the past seven years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A case would normally be referred to the Parole Board only towards the end of the review process. Once the Parole Board has made a recommendation the prisoner can expect to be informed of the Secretary of State's decision within three weeks. This has not varied over the past seven years.

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many cases have been considered by the Parole Board in each of the last seven years;

(2) how many prisoners have been referred to the Parole Board for information only in each of the last seven years to the nearest date;

(3) how many prisoners have been granted parole by the Parole Board in Scotland in each of the past seven years to the nearest date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is published in the annual report of the Parole Board for Scotland for 1986, copies of which are available in the Library. Information on the number of cases considered by the Parole Board and the number recommended for parole is set out in table one of appendix B of the report; information on the number of life sentence cases referred for information only is set out in table two.

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many prisoners appearing before the Parole Board in each of the past seven years have been refused parole on the second or subsequent consideration of their case;

(2) how many prisoners appeared before the Parole Board, having been refused parole on the first consideration of the case in each of the past seven years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not readily available and could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Harry Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average length of sentence now being served by prisoners appearing for parole before they are finally paroled; and what was the average length of sentence in each of the past seven years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on time spent in custody prior to release is set out, in respect of persons released from life sentences, in the table at appendix D of the annual report of the Parole Board for Scotland 1986, copies of which are available in the Library. Similar information in respect of persons released from fixed term sentences is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Forestry

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement concerning the environmental objectives of United Kingdom forestry policy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the Forestry Act 1967, as amended by the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985, the forestry commissioners have a duty in discharging their functions to endeavour to achieve a reasonable balance between the development of afforestation, the management of forests and the production and supply of timber; and the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest.

National Health Service (Expenditure)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing expenditure on hospital and community health services and its comparison with hospital and community health service inflation for each health board in Scotland since 1977 on the same basis as table F in paragraph 214 of the Scottish Health Service Planning Council's SHARPEN report.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Paragraph 214 of the working document on Scottish health authorities' review of priorities for the 1980s and 1990s, which is at present under consideration by the Scottish Health Service Planning Council, explains that the index of pay and prices used in table F is one which is compiled by DHSS for the hospital and community health services in England, and that it can serve to give some broad indication of the effect of pay and price changes in the equivalent services in Scotland. However, since the mix of staff and other inputs purchased by individual Scottish health boards varies, it would not be meaningful to apply the DHSS index to individual boards' recurrent expenditure.

Stoneyetts Hospital

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals Greater Glasgow health board has submitted to him about the future of Stoneyetts hospital; how he has responded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Greater Glasgow health board has not submitted any proposals to my right hon. and learned Friend about Stoneyetts hospital. The future of the hospital will depend on the outcome of the board's strategic review of its psychiatric services, about which a consultative document has recently been issued.

State Security

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations *(a)* the Crown Office *(b)* the procurators fiscal have received from BBC Scotland about the restitution of documents seized in relation to Zircon, on Sunday 1 February; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Between 18 March and 2 September the Procurator Fiscal, Glasgow, received four letters of representation from the solicitors acting for BBC Scotland. There have been no representations direct to Crown Office.

I have nothing further to add.

Restart

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been interviewed in the Glasgow, Central travel-to-work area under the restart scheme; and how many have, following that interview, been refused benefit by the independent adjudication officer.

Mr. Cope: I have been asked to reply.

Information on interviews is not available in the precise form requested. However, in the employment service areas which include the Glasgow travel-to-work area, Glasgow, Lanark, Ayrshire, Dumfries, Galloway, Renfrew, Dumbarton and Argyleshire, 172,659 people have been interviewed since 1 July 1986 when the national restart programme began. Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under longstanding legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

The numbers of such decisions which follow a restart interview cannot be separately identified within the total number of decisions which follow from referrals to adjudication officers from unemployment benefit offices.

Cabotage

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the effects of the eventual introduction of cabotage in 1992 in the heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle industries in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today, and to the statement I made to the House on 28 October in replying to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Brown).

The introduction of cabotage under conditions of free and fair competition will provide increased business opportunities in Europe for United Kingdom goods and public service vehicle industries. These opportunities will be available to Scottish operators as to the rest of the United Kingdom. I expect that they will make the most of them.

DEFENCE

United States (Secretary for Defence)

Mr. Baldry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the Secretary for Defence of the United States of America.

Mr. Younger: I have frequent meetings with my United States colleague. I next expect to meet the American Defence Secretary at the NATO defence planning committee meeting in December.

Conventional Forces (Balance)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the balance of conventional forces between the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the Warsaw pact countries.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I would refer my hon. Friend to paragraphs 107-109 and annex A of volume 1 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1987" (Cm 101-I).

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by what means the United Kingdom Government have calculated the size of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic's stockpile of chemical weapons.

Mr. Ian Stewart: For reasons of security, it would not be prudent to disclose the means by which we calculate the size of the Soviet Union's stockpile of chemical agents and weapons.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications of the United States of America's contingency plan for the deployment of United States binary chemical munitions in Europe for the siting of such weapons in the United Kingdom in times of crisis.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member on 3 November 1987 at column *625*.

Montebello Agreement

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on all measures taken to date by Her Majesty's Government arising from the Montebello agreement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have nothing to add to the reply given to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) on 23 July 1987 at column 390.

NH90 Helicopter

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to the United Kingdom of the NH90 joint European helicopter project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 30 October at column *485*.

Low-level Flying

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of military low-level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in each year since 1974, calculated by the pre-1985 method of logging movements between low flying areas.

Mr. Freeman: The information, calculated on the basis requested, is as follows:

Low-level sorties (ie below 2,000 feet) as calculated by pre-1985 method

	Number
1974	71,000
1975	78,000
1976	77,700
1977	76,000
1978	76,000
1979	108,860
1980	122,850
1981	131,840
1982	130,310
1983	128,000
1984	133,500
1985	134,247
1986	142,971
[1]1987	98,935

[1] Figure up to 30 September 1987.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a monthly breakdown of the figures for low-level military training sorties over the United Kingdom since 1974.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not available prior to 1979. Before 1985, sortie numbers were not recorded directly but calculated from movements. Also some monthly figures for 1983 and before were estimates, which were corrected on aggregation. Details for the years 1979-87 are as follows:

Month	*Year*		
	1979	*1980*	*1981*
January	411	10,034	9,271
February	8,291	8,373	10,208
March	8,555	9,884	11,854
April	7,424	11,045	10,105
May	n/a	11,716	11,196
June	n/a	11,602	14,124
July	9,989	12,229	12,830
August	8,011	7,976	10,005
September	10,642	10,714	11,551
October	9,881	11,156	12,476
November	10,850	9,365	11,431
December	8,828	8,756	6,790
	1982	*1983*	*1984*
January	9,567	9,794	8,954
February	9,456	12,197	9,112
March	14,992	12,265	11,505
April	10,759	11,802	12,972
May	12,116	12,520	12,967
June	11,827	15,010	13,715
July	11,443	15,109	13,678
August	10,366	10,482	10,532
September	10,950	9,768	9,973
October	10,339	11,585	12,421
November	11,053	10,201	9,929
December	7,477	8,614	7,761
	1985	*1986*	*1987*
January	9,723	11,532	8,222
February	10,436	12,264	12,527
March	12,973	10,145	12,515
April	12,793	14,863	13,006
May	12,534	13,366	14,364
June	13,158	13,413	13,787
July	14,267	17,519	14,071
August	11,634	10,229	11,959
September	11,338	12,847	12,954
October	12,849	12,950	—
November	12,993	12,968	—
December	7,064	9,068	—

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the military low level training sorties flown over the United Kingdom in each year since 1974 took place wholly or partly between the hours of 11 pm and 7 am.

Mr. Freeman: We aim to complete low-level flying training before 11 pm wherever possible because we recognise that aircraft noise can be particularly intrusive at night, and we authorise no more activity than is absolutely necessary. The information requested is not, however, available, because military low-level flying is categorised either as day or night flying, and the latter category includes all flying during the period between sunset plus 30 minutes and sunrise minus 30 minutes.

Records of low-level flying at night, under this definition, are available from April 1984, and the proportion of night flying is as follows:

	per cent.
1984	[1] 3·8
1985	5·2
1986	4·9
1987	[2] 4·8

[1] For period 1 April to 31 December.

[2] Up to 30 September 1987.

A much smaller proportion of all low flying would have been authorised to take place between 11 pm and 7 am.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-level military training sorties flown by British military aircraft outside the United Kingdom in each year since 1974.

Mr. Freeman: We do not keep records of the total number of low-level military training sorties flown by British military aircraft outside the United Kingdom, and it would require disproportionate effort to obtain this information.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-flying sorties were undertaken over the United Kingdom in each year since 1985 by *(a)* C-141, *(b)* C-5, *(c)* B-52, *(d)* FB-111, *(e)* KC-135 and *(f)* KC-10 aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Central records of low-flying sorties by these aircraft types are not kept and therefore details could not be provided without disproportionate effort.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many Skyguard radars are to be deployed to monitor adherence to low-flying regulations; and which Royal Air Force unit will be responsible for their operations;

(2) if the Skyguard radars being deployed to monitor adherence to low-flying regulations will also be used to provide mobile electronic countermeasures training facilities for low-flying aircraft;

(3) when the first Skyguard radars will be deployed to monitor adherence to low-flying regulations.

Mr. Freeman: Skyguard radars are currently in service with 2729 Squadron Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment to provide short range air defence (SHORAD) for RAF Coningsby. One system is also based at RAF Spadeadam for use as a threat simulator in electronic warfare training. The possibility of using a Skyguard system to monitor the heights of low-flying aircraft was the subject of a recent trial. The equipment's potential in this role will not be clear until the results of the trial have been fully assessed.

No. 2729 (City of Lincoln) Squadron

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes are currently being made, or are planned, to the personnel and equipment establishment and role of No. 2729 (City of Lincoln) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment.

Mr. Freeman: No changes are planned or currently being made to the personnel and equipment establishment and role of 2729 (City of Lincoln) squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment.

El Salvador (Military Cadets)

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government provide training to El Salvadorean military cadets.

Mr. Freeman: There are, at present, no members of the Salvadorean armed forces undergoing training at Ministry of Defence establishments in the United Kingdom.

Bullying and Brutality

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether, in the light of further evidence, he will set up an inquiry headed by a High Court judge to investigate the problem of bullying in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have considered very carefully with my military colleagues the merits of an independent inquiry into the incidence of bullying. We have concluded that responsibility for such matters must rest primarily with commanding officers and the chain of command, supported as necessary by the special investigation branch of the Royal Military police. I continue to be kept very closely in touch with the investigations currently in train.

Type 23 Order

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those yards invited to tender to the four type 23 order recently announced.

Mr. Sainsbury: The invitation to tender for up to four type 23 frigates has been sent to Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd., Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd., Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. and the VSEL-Cammell Laird Group.

Departmental Civilian Personnel

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilians are employed by his Department in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Clwyd, how many civilians are active in his Department's establishments in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Clwyd as contract cleaners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The total number of full-time equivalent civilian staff, excluding casual staff, employed by the Ministry of Defence on 1 October 1987 was 145,919 of whom 140,524 were based in the United Kingdom. Of these 5,947 were based in Wales and 1,236 in Clwyd.

The information requested on contract cleaners is not available; the numbers employed by the contractors concerned is their responsibility.

Swinnerton Camp

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those training exercises at Swinnerton training camp involving the use of radioactive contaminants which have been participated in by American military personnel.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is not our practice to give details of such exercises.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the training exercise at Swinnerton training camp next week involves *(a)* the use of radioactive contaminants and *(b)* American military personnel.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This is a routine exercise to test one of our contingency plans. It is not our policy to confirm or deny the use of radioactive contaminant in any particular exercise. No American military personnel will be taking part in the exercise, but some United States observers will be present.

General John Singlaub

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which British Army barracks United States General John Singlaub (rtd) visited in the last three years; and which serving British officers he met.

Mr. Freeman: Information on visits to every Army barracks by such private individuals is not held centrally and could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Household Cavalry (Hunting and Polo)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will give his estimate of the amount of duty-time spent by those Household Cavalry officers who participate regularly in hunting and polo in duty time on those activities;

(2) if he will give an estimate of the proportion of duty-time spent hunting and playing polo by soldiers in the Household Cavalry, as divided between officers and men.

Mr. Freeman: The amount of time spent by officers and soldiers of the Household Cavalry on each of their many and varied duties is not separately recorded. Hunting may be included as part of training in equestrian skills. Polo, as a mounted sport, also has undoubted equestrian training value, but although certain fixtures may be played within duty time, this sport is regarded principally as a recreational activity. Neither hunting nor polo is pursued in duty time to the detriment of any other more pressing military task.

Army (Equestrian Skills)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the relevance of equestrian skills to the United Kingdom's professional Army.

Mr. Freeman: In my reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 27 February 1987, at columns *212-13*, I listed the corps and units holding Army horses. Those serving or likely to serve in those units require equestrian skills. In addition, encouraging participation in sporting activities is an important part of maintaining the well-being and physical efficiency of service personnel: equestrian skills are recognised as playing their part in this.

Contracts (Boeing)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on contracts arranged with the assistance of the strategic defence initiative participation office, involving the participation of British academic and industrial researchers in collaborative projects with Boeing Company, under the offset agreements.

Mr. Sainsbury: Several such business arrangements between Boeing and British academic researchers, other research organisations and companies are at various stages of pre-contract discussion, negotiation and preparation, or evaluation.

EMPLOYMENT

National Dock Labour Scheme

85. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will review the future of the national dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government made clear in the last Parliament that they had no plans to change the operation of the scheme. That remains the present position.

62. **Dame Peggy Fenner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made towards the abolition of the dock work labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government made clear in the last Parliament that they had no plans to change the operation of the dock labour scheme. That remains the present position.

Dockers (Take-home Pay)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has as to the average weekly take-home pay of dockers employed in each port who are not employed in the dock labour scheme.

Mr. Nicholls: I regret that this information is not available.

Health and Safety

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors were employed by the Health and Safety Executive during each of the past 10 years; and how many he expects to be employed on 1 January 1988.

Mr. Nicholls: The total number of inspectors employed by HSE during each of the past 10 years is as follows—1 April figures;

	Number
1977	1,352
1978	1,389
1979	1,424
1980	1,435
1981	1,404
1982	1,323
1983	1,276
1984	1,242
1985	1,266
1986	1,231
[1]1987	1,204

[1] On 1 April 1987 37 industrial air pollution inspectors were transferred from HSE to the Department of the Environment.

Figures for 1 January 1988 are not available.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from Leicester concerning the growth of sweatshops and of safety abuse.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many complaints he has received from the *Leicester Mercury* during the past 12 months concerning alleged safety infringements in local businesses; and what steps have been taken as a result thereof.

Mr. Nicholls: The local office of the Health and Safety Executive in Leicester has recently received 28 complaints about local businesses from the *Leicester Mercury*. Those complaints relating to health and safety matters will be investigated as soon as possible. Complaints about other matters have been referred to the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979 to the latest available date *(a)* the number of inspectors in each Health and Safety Executive Inspectorate, *(b)* the number of employees covered by each Health and Safety Inspectorate, *(c)* the number of inspectors per thousand employees covered by each Health and Safety Inspectorate and *(d)* the total numbers of (i) inspectors employed, (ii) employees covered and (iii) the number of inspectors per thousand employees covered by the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Fowler *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: The number of inspectors in each HSE inspectorate; the total number of HSE inspectors; the approximate number of employees covered by all HSE inspectorates and the approximate number of HSE inspectors per thousand employees are as follows:

(1 April figures)	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	[1]*1987*
1. Number of Inspectors[2] in:										
(a) Factory Inspectorate	689	702	683	621	598	574	600	563	564	554
(b) Agricultural Inspectorate	189	187	176	166	159	154	160	160	162	154
(c) Mines and Quarries	115	113	113	110	103	100	93	82	84	78
(d) Nuclear Installations	89	85	91	94	98	101	102	99	100	109
(e) Industrial Air Pollution[4]	45	47	46	46	42	37	41	40	—	—
Total of HSE Inspectors (including specialists)[3]	1,424	1,435	1,404	1,323	1,276	1,242	1,266	1,231	1,204	1,184
2. Approximate Number of Employees Covered by HSE Inspectorates (million)	17·2	16·4	16·0	15·5	15·5	15·0	15·1	15·1	n/a	n/a

(1 April figures)	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*¹1987*
3. Approximate Number of Inspectors per Thousand Employees	0·083	0·087	0·088	0·085	0·082	0·083	0·084	0·082	—	—

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[1] To 1 October.

[2] Before April 1986 some inspectors now classed as specialists were categorised as general inspectors.

[3] Figures relate to inspectors employed in HSE as a whole, including specialists, and those inspectors employed outside their 'own' inspectorate.

[4] Her Majesty's Industrial Air Pollution Inspectorate transferred to the Department of the Environment on 1 April 1987.

Figures are not available for the number of employees covered by each HSE Inspectorate.

Job Advertisements (Age Requirements)

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received requesting the prohibition of job advertisements that specify age requirements.

Mr. Lee: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many school leavers in Cleveland have remained unemployed for one year, two years and three years or more, respectively, since 1980.

Mr. Lee: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Mr. Holt: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many men in Cleveland over *(a)* 40 years and *(b)* 50 years have been unemployed for *(a)* five years and *(b)* three years; and what is the average length of continuous unemployment for men aged over (1) 40 years and (2) 50 years in Cleveland.

Mr. Lee: Following is the latest information available:

Male unemployed claimants in Cleveland county—July 1987

	Aged 40 and over	*Aged 50 and over*
Number unemployed for over five years	2,955	1,645
Number unemployed for over three years	4,952	2,830
Median duration[1] (uncompleted spells)	106 weeks	111 weeks

[1] The median duration is the time spent unemployed exceeded by 50 per cent. of those unemployed on the count day. Mean durations of unemployment are not available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much unemployment has fallen in the last 12 months.

Mr. Lee: The following information is in the Library: on 10 September 1987 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom had fallen by 462,702 over the last 12 months.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, with regard to the 1986 labour force survey, if he will outline in detail, showing data for the northern region separately *(a)* the numbers out of work in each major occupational group and *(b)* the proportions of the economically active population that these figures represent.

Mr. Lee: The 1986 labour force survey estimates are as shown in the table.

Unemployed Persons[1]	*Great Britain*		*Northern Region*	
	Unemployed (Thousands)	*As proportion of Economically Active (Per cent.)*	*Unemployed (Thousands)*	*As proportion of Economically Active (Per cent.)*
Total[2]	2,820	10·60	202	14·10
of which: Persons who left job within last 3 years	[3]1,719	6·70	121	0·90
of which: occupation in previous job				
Codot Major Group				
1. Professional and related supporting management and administration	48	2·80	—	—
2. Professional and related in education, welfare and health	80	3·50	—	—
3. Literary, artistic and sports	26	8·20	—	—
4. Professional and related in science, engineering, technology and similar fields	28	2·60	—	—
5. Management	83	3·70	—	—
6. Clerical and related	205	5·10	—	—
7. Selling	144	7·90	11	9·70
8. Security and protective service	26	5·60	—	—
9. Catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services	238	7·70	16	8·60
10. Farming, fishing and related	61	13·20	—	—

Unemployed Persons[1]	*Great Britain* *Unemployed (Thousands)*	*Great Britain* *As proportion of Economically Active (Per cent.)*	*Northern Region* *Unemployed (Thousands)*	*Northern Region* *As proportion of Economically Active (Per cent.)*
11. Processing, making, repairing and related (excluding metal and electrical)	131	7·70	—	—
12. Processing, making, repairing and related (metal and electrical)	175	7·10	20	8·90
13. Painting, repetative assembly, product inspecting, packaging and related	129	11·90	—	—
14. Construction, mining and related NIE	139	15·30	12	21·70
15. Transport operating, materials moving and related	129	8·90	—	—
16. Miscellaneous	74	19·30	—	—
Broad Grouping				
Managerial and professional	265	3·50	12	3·60
Clerical and related	200	5·20	—	—
Other non-manual	142	7·10	10	8·40
Craft and similar occupations	334	7·90	32	12·60
General labourers	67	0·21	—	—
Other manual occupations	706	9·50	51	11·90

[1] Those without a job who were looking for work in the survey reference week.

[2] Includes 1,100 thousand in Great Britain (80 thousand in Northern region) who had never had a job or left their last job three or more years ago (not asked about previous occupation.

[3] Includes 4 thousand in Great Britain who had had a job within last 3 years but did not state that occupation.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total employed labour force in each quarter since January 1970; what has been the total working population in each quarter over the same period; what has the former been as a percentage of the latter throughout this period; and what has been the size of the change in both the employed labour force and the total working population each quarter since 1970.

Mr. Fowler *[pursuant to his reply, 21 October 1987, c. 742]:* The figures are set out in the following table. Both the employed labour force and the working population have now been increasing for 17 successive quarters. The employed labour force has increased by 1·36 million since March 1983.

Employed Labour force and Working Population in Great Britain

Seasonally Adjusted *Thousands*

		Employed Labour Force	*Quarter Change*	*Working Population*	*Quarter Change*	*Employed Labour Force as percent of Working Population*
1970	Q1	24,282		24,843		98
	Q2	24,183	−99	24,752	−91	98
	Q3	24,187	4	24,761	9	98
	Q4	24,183	−4	[2]24,776	15	98
1974	Q1	[1]23,944	−239	24,530	−246	98
	Q2	23,961	17	24,637	107	97
	Q3	23,787	−174	24,498	−139	97
	Q4	23,773	−14	24,559	61	97
1975	Q1	23,935	162	24,748	189	97
	Q2	23,947	12	24,698	−50	97
	Q3	24,055	108	24,785	87	97
	Q4	24,210	155	24,877	92	97
1973	Q1	24,505	295	25,081	204	98
	Q2	24,511	6	25,051	−30	98
	Q3	24,541	30	25,014	−37	98
	Q4	24,559	18	24,980	−34	98
1974	Q1	24,507	−52	25,008	28	98
	Q2	24,578	71	25,099	91	98
	Q3	24,669	91	25,226	127	98
	Q4	24,612	−57	25,206	−20	98
1975	Q1	24,509	−103	25,203	−3	97
	Q2	24,481	−28	25,317	114	97
	Q3	24,426	−55	25,389	72	96
	Q4	24,353	−73	25,463	74	96
1976	Q1	24,285	−68	25,462	−1	95
	Q2	24,261	−24	25,482	20	95
	Q3	24,263	2	25,475	−7	95
	Q4	24,278	15	25,516	41	95
1977	Q1	24,285	7	25,531	15	95
	Q2	24,282	−3	25,574	43	95

		Employed Labour Force	*Quarter Change*	*Working Population*	*Quarter Change*	*Employed Labour Force as percent of Working Population*
	Q3	24,299	17	25,621	47	95
	Q4	24,297	−2	25,618	−3	95
1978	Q1	24,369	72	25,653	35	95
	Q2	24,407	38	25,664	11	95
	Q3	24,503	96	25,741	77	95
	Q4	24,658	155	25,836	95	95
1979	Q1	24,699	41	25,881	45	95
	Q2	24,767	68	25,916	35	96
	Q3	24,844	77	25,957	41	96
	Q4	24,886	42	26,014	57	96
1980	Q1	24,824	−62	26,052	38	95
	Q2	24,706	−118	26,088	36	95
	Q3	24,470	−236	26,117	29	94
	Q4	24,205	−265	26,176	59	92
1981	Q1	23,966	−239	26,058	−118	92
	Q2	23,754	−212	26,028	−30	91
	Q3	23,630	−124	26,038	10	91
	Q4	23,489	−141	25,995	−43	90
1982	Q1	23,435	−54	25,983	−12	90
	Q2	23,329	−106	25,944	−39	90
	Q3	23,202	−127	25,907	−37	90
	Q4	23,061	−141	25,858	−49	89
1983	Q1	22,997	−64	25,841	−17	89
	Q2	23,039	42	25,947	106	89
	Q3	23,165	126	26,077	130	89
	Q4	23,293	128	26,217	140	89
1984	Q1	23,399	106	26,363	146	89
	Q2	23,492	93	26,461	98	89
	Q3	23,574	82	26,608	147	89
	Q4	23,715	141	26,783	175	89
1985	Q1	23,802	87	26,890	107	89
	Q2	23,879	77	26,977	87	89
	Q3	23,917	38	27,021	44	89
	Q4	23,951	34	27,077	56	88
1986	Q1	23,964	13	27,154	77	88
	Q2	23,987	23	27,181	27	88
	Q3	24,041	54	27,188	7	88
	Q4	24,117	76	27,199	11	89
1987	Q1	24,225	108	27,225	26	89
	Q2	24,359	134	27,233	8	89

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[1] Estimates for self-employed prior to 1971 were updated using national insurance cards. From 1971 estimates are updated using labour force survey. See *Employment Gazette*. February 1983. pps 55-56.

[2] These figures allow for changes in the coverage of the unemployment statistics from 1971 onwards. Figures before 1971 include those registered as unemployed at employment offices, whereas the figures used from 1971 onwards relate to claimants at unemployment benefit offices, estimated on the current definition.

Regional Tourist Boards

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of *(a)* county councils and *(b)* district councils have made a financial contribution to their regional tourist board.

Mr. Lee: Thirty-nine out of 40 county councils and 286 out of 332 district councils make financial contributions through membership of their regional tourist boards.

Women's Employment Rights

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether, in the light of the recommendations of the Women's National Commission, he will drop his proposals regarding employment protection rights for part-timers and pregnant women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I met the Women's National Commission on 5 November to discuss these proposals. We will be considering carefully the points they put.

Benefit Refusals

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of individuals who have been refused benefit as a result of the decisions of adjudication officers in each of the past six years in Dumbarton constituency.

Mr. Lee: Figures are not available by constituency of the number of claimants to unemployment benefit—to whom I take the hon. Member to be referring—who are refused unemployment benefit as a result of the decision of an adjudication officer.

However, in the 12 months ended 30 September 1987, the total number of disallowances made by adjudication officers arising on claims to unemployment benefit in the adjudication office area of Govan, which includes the Dumbarton constituency, was 12,902.

Figures relating to the last six years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in Scotland and in the Fife, Central constituency who have been refused benefit through the decision of an independent adjudication officer, following a restart interview, in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 November 1987]*: Any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

The numbers of such decisions which follow a restart interview cannot be separately identified within the total number of decisions which follow from referrals to adjudication officers from unemployment benefit offices.

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which sections of the Sex Discrimination Act 1976 do not apply to people on the job training scheme.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: I have made a designation order under section 14(2)*(d)* of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 which applies all relevant sections of the Act to trainees in the job training scheme and new job training scheme. Those trainees are therefore in the same position with respect to the provisions of the Act as trainees in YTS.

Teachers (Unemployment Benefit)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many teachers are at present drawing unemployment benefit at each office and have declared themselves available for work.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available. Department records are not collated to identify the number of unemployed claimants in industrial occupations who have declared themselves available for work.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action is taken by his Department in respect of those people claiming unemployment benefit who declare themselves to be available for work in occupations where there are known manpower shortages in the area where the claimant resides.

Mr. Lee: All claimants to unemployment benefit, a fundamental condition for the receipt of which is that they must be available for work, are encouraged to make full use of jobcentre services so that they can be helped to secure suitable vacancies. In addition, both jobcentre staff and claimant advisers in UBOs make every effort to ensure that vacancies are brought to the attention of claimants whose skills are in particular demand locally.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many claimants receiving unemployment benefit in the Greater London travel-to-work areas have indicated that they are available for work in occupations relating to the operation of buses and trains.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available. Department records are not collated to identify occupational information on unemployed claimants.

Jobcentres (Greater London)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many vacancies have been notified to jobcentres in the Greater London travel-to-work areas by London Regional Transport and British Rail at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lee: This information is not available as no central record of vacancies held at jobcentres from individual employers is kept by the employment service in London. To keep such a record would not be cost-effective. I cannot therefore provide the information required except at disproportionate cost.

Settle-Carlisle Railway

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he is currently considering any schemes for the repair and development of the Settle to Carlisle railway using funds from the Manpower Services Commission and workers on community programme schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: J. Jarvis and Sons plc has been invited to conduct a feasibility study on the Settle-Carlisle corridor to consider its employment, training and enterprise potential and, if appropriate, to identify a range of self-contained projects which could be undertaken using the community programme. The Manpower Services Commission has contributed £5,000 towards the cost of the study and the completed report is expected by the end of January 1988.

Mr. John Craig

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive from the Under-Secretary of State for Employment a reply to his letter, dated 14 October, regarding Mr. John Craig of 53 Shore Street, Port Glasgow and other former employees of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Lee: I will be writing to the hon. Member shortly.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors have been recruited to the nuclear installations inspectorate in the current year.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1 January 1987 13 nuclear installations inspectors have joined the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate. Further recruitment is presently under way.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new staff are required to bring the nuclear installations inspectorate up to the numbers planned for 1987-88.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

Twelve nuclear installations inspectors are required to bring numbers up to the level planned for 1 April 1988. A continuous recruitment competition is in progress and five candidates are expected to take up post shortly. Further appointments are expected early in the new year.

Benefits (Glasgow, Pollok)

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the total number of claimants in the Glasgow, Pollok constituency who have been refused benefit through the decision of an independent adjudication officer, following a restart interview, in each month since the commencement of the restart scheme.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 October 1987]:* As my hon. Friend made clear in his reply on 26 October at column 32, any refusal of benefit subsequent to a restart interview follows not from the interview itself but from the decision of an independent adjudication officer operating under long-standing legal rules adopted by successive Governments.

The number of such decisions which follow a restart interview cannot be separately identified within the total number of decisions which follow from referrals to adjudication officers from unemployment benefit offices.

Coal Industry (Injuries)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will hold an inquiry into why major injuries in the coal industry per 100,000 man shifts have trebled in the last seven years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* There are no plans to call an inquiry. Major injury rates over the last seven years are not comparable as two legislative changes widened the definition of major injury to include new categories of injury and these increased the number of accidents reported. The first change was on 1 January 1981 when the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (NADO) came into force and the second on 1 April 1986 when the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 (RIDDOR) came into operation. A more accurate reflection of the accident rate is provided by fatal and total accidents which were unaffected by these changes. The coal mining fatal accidents rate has fallen in this period from 0·08 in 1980 per 100,000 manshifts to 0·05 in 1986-87. The total accident rate has also fallen from 72·66 in 1980 to 45·22 in 1986-87.

Job Training Scheme

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men single parents are receiving child-care payments whilst participating on the job training scheme;

(2) whether he has any plans to expand the experimental scheme to the whole of England, Scotland and Wales whereby single parents on the job training scheme can receive payments for child care costs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* The experimental scheme in question began in 10 areas during September. At the end of October, six women who are single parents were receiving child care payments. No men were receiving child care payments. The provision will be evaluated in the new year. It would not be appropriate to make decisions on the future of the scheme until that evaluation is complete.

Restart

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons, nationally and in each region, have been selected for interview under the restart programme in each month since the programme started, and cumulatively up to the latest date: and of these how many had their benefit stopped; how many were placed in a job; how many were placed in a training scheme or programme; and what percentage each of these represents of the total number selected for interview.

Mr. Fowler *[pursuant to his reply, 23 October 1987, c. 922]:* The number of people selected for interview under the restart programme in each month since the programme began is shown in the table.

The aim of the restart interview is to help an unemployed person into employment by selecting the best way open to them from the wide range of employment, training and job search opportunities available. Around nine out of 10 of those interviewed are made offers which might lead ultimately to employment and 70 per cent. agree to pursue the offer made to them at their restart interview. We do not know how many of those selected for interview are ultimately placed in a job or in a training scheme or programme.

No one can lose their benefit entitlement solely as a result of attending a restart interview.

Regions	*1986 June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sept*	*Oct*	*Nov*	*Dec*
South East	2,665	12,683	15,815	1,360	11,515	21,532	18,105
London	9,042	13,163	19,638	14,865	20,392	26,844	25,871
South West	420	4,114	7,183	5,802	6,720	10,728	8,324
West Midlands	7,586	15,726	12,740	16,620	28,493	29,770	20,056
East Midlands	1,126	7,593	11,046	8,221	11,875	18,371	18,013
Yorkshire and Humberside	—	8,698	13,826	13,290	14,070	19,940	14,346
North West	1,640	23,886	26,490	22,308	25,553	32,985	28,784
Northern	4,539	8,546	11,622	19,925	10,772	16,387	12,313
Wales	660	7,706	8,802	6,366	7,685	11,128	9,114
Scotland	3,601	12,981	14,193	13,066	15,000	20,495	18,215
GB Total	34,291	114,153	135,674	111,823	152,075	208,180	173,141
GB Cumulative	34,291	148,444	284,118	395,941	548,016	756,196	929,337

Regions	*1987 Jan*	*Feb*	*Mar*	*Apr*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug*	*Sept*
South East	12,872	29,203	12,407	162,423	22,735	25,477	30,898	22,516	21,588
London	14,376	34,456	15,265	19,785	24,440	28,566	37,164	27,752	32,356
South West	5,279	14,765	7,733	8,477	11,851	13,802	17,583	14,627	13,853
West Midlands	28,281	14,948	11,645	19,956	26,093	31,590	36,477	26,720	27,283
East Midlands	9,677	21,259	15,293	17,074	22,010	30,746	30,377	21,627	23,206
Yorkshire and Humberside	13,100	28,585	18,398	14,978	20,043	21,324	35,103	24,972	24,807
North West	18,382	37,568	22,413	21,753	36,163	41,953	48,425	35,757	33,409
Northern	7,575	17,944	10,179	11,148	16,384	16,909	20,615	16,739	16,861
Wales	6,687	17,609	8,345	9,419	12,758	16,168	16,868	12,602	12,176
Scotland	11,837	29,208	21,917	20,522	30,034	29,132	34,252	27,111	27,533
GB Total	128,066	245,545	143,595	305,535	222,511	255,667	307,762	230,423	233,072
GB Cumulative	1,057,403	1,302,948	1,446,543	1,755,078	1,977,589	2,233,256	2,541,018	2,771,441	3,004,513

Action for Jobs Campaign

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the *Liverpool Echo* about its action for jobs campaign; what plans he has to deal with the problems it is highlighting; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* I have received a letter from the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post* and *Liverpool Echo* to which I will reply.

On 2 November I launched the action for jobs campaign which highlighted many enterprise, training and employment opportunities available in the region generally, including Liverpool.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by port the number of dockers employed in the dock labour scheme for each year since 1970.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is as follows. The figures given are as at the end of each year.

Number of Registered Dock Workers

Ports	*1970*	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*
Newcastle	153	148	94	84	84	85	78	82	80
Dunston	20	15	13	11	10	10	10	10	10
North Shields	136	150	114	124	119	93	88	86	86
South Shields	153	172	124	120	114	112	88	87	85
Blyth	87	79	73	67	66	66	65	63	58
Sunderland	70	79	68	73	72	70	69	74	71
Seaham	13	10	10	13	13	13	13	16	15
Middlesbrough	895	817	753	843	769	740	798	901	903
Hartlepool	197	133	177	160	147	144	138	127	112
Hull	2,783	2,771	2,283	2,133	2,124	2,071	1,994	1,979	1,960
Goole	343	342	326	302	312	304	298	292	296
Grimsby	1,241	1,229	1,132	1,047	1,060	1,009	929	944	922
Immingham	103	109	106	104	108	104	101	109	102
Boston	175	169	169	166	146	142	138	135	132
Wisbech	30	25	25	21	21	21	21	21	21
King's Lynn	132	124	114	106	106	104	103	93	87
Yarmouth	111	107	98	111	91	91	90	89	86
Lowestoft	33	28	25	27	27	27	27	27	24
Ipswich	135	130	135	125	143	129	128	128	138
London	16,573	15,986	12,656	11,586	11,504	9,825	9,251	8,480	8,105
Rochester	311	275	278	282	272	240	221	239	236
Sittingbourne	—	—	30	42	44	40	39	41	38
Queenborough	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheerness	170	191	341	395	392	387	380	373	372
Whitstable	33	31	17	15	16	16	10	14	16
Southampton	1,994	1,725	2,070	2,024	2,331	2,087	2,030	1,951	1,856
Poole	46	45	55	63	61	58	57	64	62
Weymouth	92	75	40	35	35	35	35	37	37
Plymouth	84	84	78	77	71	70	69	67	67
Fowey	60	59	57	59	59	56	56	56	57
Par	57	57	48	50	50	47	45	43	39
Charlestown	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2
Falmouth	12	11	8	8	8	8	8	7	11
Truro	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	4	—
Penzance	12	12	12	12	11	11	11	11	11
Hayle	9	9	6	5	5	5	5	—	—
Bristol	1,374	1,305	1,164	1,278	1,291	1,264	1,256	1,341	1,321

Ports	*1970*	*1971*	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*
Sharpness	88	77	91	95	94	91	97	97	95
Gloucester	18	18	16	18	15	15	15	14	14
Newport	459	443	396	357	381	342	318	304	294
Cardiff	340	393	393	411	421	401	390	372	360
Barry	203	193	175	170	194	179	168	161	158
Port Talbot	122	111	92	75	75	75	72	71	67
Swansea	397	394	363	350	342	290	282	268	265
Liverpool and Birkenhead	10,449	10,427	8,466	7,550	7,486	7,326	6,575	6,402	5,982
Bromborough	36	37	33	35	34	32	27	26	26
Garston	312	274	229	198	197	188	175	161	187
Salford	1,447	1,163	1,050	822	813	814	790	742	698
Partington	23	21	19	16	16	16	16	15	15
Ellesmere Port	166	146	134	149	147	146	144	141	135
Runcorn	143	143	148	159	149	144	140	137	139
Weston Point	82	80	81	88	88	82	81	79	77
Preston	308	275	178	201	200	198	161	161	137
Fleetwood	214	207	204	236	233	224	217	209	199
Whitehaven	23	26	23	23	23	20	20	20	19
Workington	35	32	31	30	29	24	27	27	26
Silloth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Barrow	31	36	31	23	20	—	—	—	—
Ayr	34	34	30	32	32	24	23	21	21
Irvine	8	8	6	5	5	5	5	5	4
Ardrossan	62	62	46	48	47	37	37	36	41
Hunterston	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greenock	99	100	138	155	179	166	160	159	156
Glasgow	1,302	1,139	705	595	590	504	483	480	476
Aberdeen	416	400	338	375	375	336	330	328	315
Dundee	134	126	122	150	135	111	145	147	109
Methil	43	40	34	34	33	33	33	31	30
Kirkcaldy	23	23	21	16	17	17	16	15	14
Burntisland	22	22	17	11	11	11	11	10	10
Grangemouth	458	395	299	347	339	306	289	318	334
Leith	402	293	275	241	245	237	220	218	213
National	45,542	43,645	36,888	34,590	34,654	31,884	30,122	29,168	28,034

Ports	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Newcastle	79	78	27	26	19	11	11	—
Dunston	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
North Shields	85	83	84	82	71	59	59	55
South Shields	84	86	86	86	84	72	69	57
Blyth	63	63	61	61	60	63	59	53
Sunderland	71	70	70	63	61	53	46	34
Seaham	16	16	15	14	14	16	15	14
Middlesbrough	869	816	670	558	549	542	504	499
Hatlepool	109	107	99	93	89	87	84	77
Hull	1,915	1,742	1,425	1,299	1,011	838	818	773
Goole	288	284	243	226	214	192	189	169
Grimsby	969	909	775	769	762	698	522	51
Immingham	102	101	93	92	90	87	246	237
Boston	127	125	111	102	101	100	100	90
Wisbech	21	20	18	17	17	16	15	14
King's Lynn	86	84	75	67	67	66	59	55
Yarmouth	84	82	85	85	86	98	98	100
Lowestoft	27	26	26	26	26	36	36	34
Ipswich	137	136	131	131	130	122	122	122
London	7,106	5,793	4,575	3,790	3,135	2,744	2,648	2,049
Rochester	222	184	180	166	165	187	198	182
Sittingbourne	38	28	28	28	28	27	29	29
Queenborough	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheerness	371	368	346	341	324	322	322	314
Whitstable	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	—
Southampton	1,739	1,676	1,373	1,143	1,140	973	765	694
Poole	85	84	84	83	81	81	79	84
Weymouth	37	38	33	33	35	36	28	21
Plymouth	66	66	46	46	43	43	42	36
Fowey	57	56	55	55	52	50	50	50
Par	41	40	39	39	37	34	33	33
Charlestown	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Falmouth	43	11	11	11	9	9	9	8
Truro	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Penzance	11	11	11	11	9	9	10	10
Hayle	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bristol	1,209	1,142	719	717	611	609	602	494
Sharpness	95	93	76	76	67	68	67	51

Ports	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Gloucester	9	9	5	5	5	5	5	5
Newport	286	379	327	324	311	294	289	250
Cardiff	336	334	285	253	244	227	193	180
Barry	156	147	112	81	72	71	86	69
Port Talbot	61	58	56	54	57	55	52	43
Swansea	245	231	197	191	167	140	121	107
Liverpool & Birkenhead	5,202	4,614	3,402	2,331	2,151	1,916	1,862	1,617
Bromborough	26	24	24	21	23	19	—	—
Garston	185	182	179	173	169	151	137	133
Salford	655	564	248	66	37	32	32	24
Partington	15	14	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ellesmere Port	132	127	106	95	97	99	99	91
Runcorn	136	122	93	86	47	46	46	44
Weston Point	73	70	56	50	36	—	—	3
Preston	136	30	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fleetwood	162	161	148	107	104	94	94	89
Whitehaven	19	19	18	16	19	19	19	19
Workington	26	26	26	26	22	16	16	16
Silloth	—	—	3	3	3	3	2	3
Barrow	—	6	6	8	16	17	17	8
Ayr	21	21	21	17	17	17	17	17
Irvine	4	4	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ardrossan	40	40	30	30	28	28	26	19
Hunterston	—	—	25	25	25	19	18	18
Greenock	153	161	131	116	115	99	99	98
Glasgow	418	410	233	130	98	67	65	62
Aberdeen	300	277	248	260	258	245	238	186
Dundee	114	111	110	108	127	130	107	103
Methil	29	28	25	25	25	25	25	23
Kirkcaldy	14	13	11	11	6	6	5	5
Burntisland	10	10	10	10	9	10	10	9
Grangemouth	326	292	226	196	184	155	154	144
Leith	201	190	170	168	136	134	131	125
National	25,770	23,110	18,219	15,340	13,813	12,505	11,922	10,485

NORTHERN IRELAND

Conway Mill Education Project

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funding has been withdrawn or not renewed for educational initiatives at the Conway Mill education project; what were the reasons for the withdrawal or non-renewal of such funds; and what plans exist to provide alternative educational resources to replace any withdrawn.

Dr. Mawhinney: Educational funding has been withdrawn by the Belfast Education and Library Board in accordance with the Government's policy as stated in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on 27 June 1985, at column *451*.

Alternative provisions are now being made in a nearby school.

Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give figures on the waiting lists in the areas covered by the following district offices: Downpatrick, Kilkeel, Banbridge, Newry district 1 and Newry district 2.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I am advised by the chairman that at 30 September 1987 the total numbers on the waiting lists and the numbers in the priority group A were as follows:

District Office	*Numbers on Waiting List*	*Numbers in Priority Group A*
Downpatrick	593	56
Kilkeel	110	35
Banbridge	413	97
Newry District 1	434	26
Newry District 2	299	29
Total	1,849	243

Prisons

Sir John Biggs-Davison: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement about the seizure of Bibles distributed in Her Majesty's prison Maze by Cardinal O'Feaich;

(2) if he will explain the rules governing the playing of Gaelic and other sports in Her Majesty's prisons in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Stanley: The matters raised by my hon. Friend are the subject of a civil action in the county court in which judgment has not yet been given. It would not be appropriate for me to comment.

Border Incursions

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) on how many occasions since 15 November 1985 Gardai or troops from the Republic of Ireland have crossed the frontier into the United Kingdom; and what representations were made by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of the Republic of Ireland in respect of these incursions;

(2) on how many occasions since 15 November 1985 the Royal Ulster Constabulary and United Kingdom troops have crossed the frontier into the Republic of Ireland; and on how many occasions since 15 November 1985 the Government of the Republic of Ireland have protested to Her Majesty's Government about these occurrences.

Mr. Stanley: I understand how easy it is for members of the security forces operating near the border to make mistakes and accidentally stray outside their respective jurisdictions in the fight against the terrorists who are the common enemy. However, since 15 November 1985 and to date (5 November) the Government have brought to the attention of the Republic of Ireland 16 occasions on which members of the Irish security forces have allegedly crossed the border into Northern Ireland. Of these, the Irish authorities have admitted two, 13 have been denied and one is under investigation. During the same period the Irish Government have brought to our attention 84 occasions on which members of our security forces have allegedly crossed the border into the Republic of Ireland. Of these, the British authorities have admitted 52, 28 have been denied, one is under investigation, and three could not be pursued because of insufficient information.

Kilroot Project

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the implications of proceedings with the completion of the Kilroot phase II project; and if he is now able to announce the likely start date for the installation of plant and the expected completion date of conversion work.

Mr. Viggers: Evaluation of a number of future electricity generation options, including Kilroot phase II, is expected to be completed shortly. Decisions will be taken as quickly as possible, consistent with careful consideration of results.

Fuel Supplies (Disconnections)

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number of consumers disconnected by Northern Ireland Electricity in each quarter from the quarter ended 30 June 1981 through to the quarter ended 30 June 1987.

Mr. Viggers: The number of disconnections for debt during this period is as follows:

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987*
Quarter ended							
30 June	855	783	298	414	493	716	638
30 September	634	218	231	401	401	687	—
30 December	743	356	284	440	469	654	—
31 March	667	298	335	344	495	562	—

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to indicate the number of disconnections by Northern Ireland Electricity per year as a percentage of average domestic credit consumers for each of the years from the year ended 31 March 1987.

Mr. Viggers: The supply of electricity within Northern Ireland, and disconnection of supply, is the responsibility of Northern Ireland Electricity.

The information requested is as follows:

Year Ended	*Percentage*
31 March 1986	0·39
31 March 1987	0·54

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information is available to indicate the numbers remaining disconnected by Northern Ireland Electricity for the year ending 31 March 1986 and 31 March 1987;

(2) what information is available to indicate the numbers remaining disconnected by Northern Ireland Electricity as a percentage of average domestic credit consumers for the year ending 31 March 1986 and 31 March 1987;

(3) what figures are available to indicate the number of consumers remaining disconnected for *(a)* more than one month and *(b)* more than three months in each of the years ending 31 March 1986 and 31 March 1987.

Mr. Viggers: Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

"Ulster Year Book"

Mr. John David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the "Ulster Year Book" was not published in the current year; when the next publication is planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland why the "Ulster Year Book" has not been published since 1985; what consultations take place in deciding the date of publication and with whom; and if he will ensure publication this year.

Dr. Mawhinney: The "Ulster Year Book" last appeared in 1985, and there are no plans for further editions.

In taking the decision to cease publication, my Department had regard to the value for money principle and to two factors in particular:

(i) the substantial cost of publication, particularly in terms of staff time, which could not be justified for a publication of which only 500 copies were actually purchased when last published;

(ii) the availability today, in many other forms, of the statistical and descriptive information contained in the year book; these were not available for much of the period during which it was published.

Roadworks (Comber)

Mr. John David Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the present roadworks scheme at Comber, County Down, is due to be completed.

Mr. Needham: The reconstruction of Bridge street, Comber, was completed on 16 October 1987.

Education Statistics

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each education and library board in Northern Ireland pupil to teacher ratios, per capita costs and O and A-level pass rates.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: Figures relate to the 1985-86 school year and are as follows:

Education and Library Board	*PTR for all Grant-aided Schools*	*per capita cost £*
Belfast	17·0	1,300·49
Western	19·0	1,115·11
Northern-Eastern	18·5	1,145·30
South-Eastern	19·0	1,100,15
Southern	19·2	1,084·58

Details of the highest qualifications obtained by school leavers in 1985-86 are as follows:

Education and Library Board	*Per cent. with 1 or more A levels*	*Per cent. with no A levels[1] but 1 or more higher grade O levels*
Belfast	31·0	29·4
Western	21·6	33·3
North-Eastern	20·8	36·6
South-Eastern	20·2	35·7
Southern	23·6	35·4

[1] GCE O-level grades A-C and CGE grade 1

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests have been made by prisoners serving sentences in Northern Ireland for transfer to prisons in Britain since 1968; and how many transfers have been made as a result of these requests.

Mr. Stanley *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: Reliable records are available only in respect of applications for transfer since June 1973. There has been a total of 113 such applications since then, of which 57 were granted. A number of prisoners have made more than one request.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farmers (Grants)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grants are available to farmers *(a)* to maintain ancient hedgerows and *(b)* to plant new ones.

Mr. Gummer: Under the present farm capital grant scheme, the agriculture improvement scheme, grant is available for the provision, replacement or improvement of hedges, including hedgerow trees. The rates of grant are 60 per cent. in the less favoured areas and 30 per cent. elsewhere.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much grant has been paid out to date under the agriculture improvement scheme for the provision, replacement or improvement of *(a)* hedges, *(b)* walls, banks and dykes built of materials traditional to the area in question and *(c)* gates, stiles and footbridges on public rights of way.

Mr. Gummer: I regret that this information is not available in the form requested. The following are estimates of grant paid in the United Kingdom under the agriculture improvement scheme since 1 April 1986:

	£ million
Hedges and associated gates, stiles and foot bridges	1·4
Traditional walls, banks and dykes and associated gates, stiles and footbridges	1·1

Gates, stiles and foot bridges on public rights of way are not separately identified.

Grants for hedge planting and laying are also available under the agriculture and horticulture development scheme.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grants are available to farmers *(a)* to maintain ancient stone walls and *(b)* to erect new ones.

Mr. Gummer: Under the present farm capital grant scheme, the agriculture improvement scheme, grant is available for the provision, replacement or improvement of walls built of materials traditional to the locality. The rates of grant are 60 per cent. in the less favoured areas and 30 per cent. elsewhere.

Pesticides

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy not to invoke the protection of the Official Secrets Act in relation to information supplied to his Department by chemical companies in connection with tests on pesticides and other hazardous substances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Donald Thompson: It is the Government's policy to make as much information as possible about pesticides and other substances available to the public. We use a variety of means including the reports of the expert, independent committees which advise Ministers on the safety of such substances. These are supplemented by arrangements for public access to summary evaluations and full study reports of pesticides, under certain safeguards. For food additives reports list references for published data. For unpublished data, arrangements have been made since the beginning of this year for them to be lodged with the British Library for public reference.

Fishing Grounds (Pollution)

Mr. Wray: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research his Department is currently sponsoring into the problem of pollution in the fishing grounds lying between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Gummer: My Department carries out extensive monitoring and research in the Irish sea to assess the effects on fishery resources and food pathways to man of both radioactive and non-radioactive discharges. These studies include assessment of water quality, the chemistry of contaminated sediments, the distribution of fish diseases, and the monitoring of fish and shellfish quality. Results indicate that discharges have no significant impact on fish stocks in the Irish sea.

Lambs (Skipton-Ilkley)

Mr. Curry: To ask the Minister of Agiculture, Fisheries and Food what are the results of his Department's further safety checks on lambs in the Skipton-Ilkley area.

Mr. Donald Thompson: Further to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 6 November, I have now arranged for further monitoring to be carried out in this area. Results of the monitoring of 185 live sheep and lambs from eight flocks in the Keighley, Ilkley, Otley and Skipton areas fall in the range of 0 to 310 Bq/kg total caesium with an average lying around 60 Bq/kg. This is well below the action level of 1000 Bq/kg for restriction on slaughter that we have applied in Cumbria. In addition, forage has been sampled. Thirteen grass samples have been taken from this area and the Harrogate area, all yielding results lower than 50 Bq/kg total caesium. Heather—from seven areas—and bilberries—from two areas—give higher results, up to 500 and 216 Bq/kg respectively though mostly much lower.

Finally, six milk samples from five areas have been analysed; in all cases the caesium levels were less than 20 Bq/litres. None of these results gives cause for concern. Further sampling and analysis is in progress and the results will be reported as soon as they become available. I will publish all results in detail when complete, and deposit them in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

86. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy towards value added tax on public transport fares.

Mr. Lilley: The Government's policy is to zero-rate passenger transport on the basis set out in group 10, schedule 5 to the VAT Act 1983.

87. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the European Court of Justice to announce its decision in the case taken by the European Economic Community Commission on 15 September against the United Kingdom regarding the levies of value added tax on new households, gas, electricity, water, sewerage and other services.

Mr. Lilley: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave to his question answered on 2 November at column *511*.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the net cost to the Exchequer in a full year if capital gains tax were abolished and replaced by the taxation of gains made in less than one year at income tax rates.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The yield of capital gains tax would be reduced by more than 90 per cent. There would be a comparable reduction in the yield of corporation tax on companies' capital gains if gains on assets held for over a year were exempted.

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what extra revenue would result if all the indexation on capital gains tax was dropped.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About £600 million at the level of capital gains expected to be realised by individuals and trusts during 1987-88, as estimated for the 1987 Budget. If this change extended to companies' capital gains, there would also be an extra yield of corporation tax of some £500 million.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue lost to the Exchequer in a full year if inheritance tax applied only to estates of over half a million pounds at a flat rate of 50 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 80 per cent. of the yield would be lost in a full year at 1987-88 levels.

British Petroleum Share Offer

Mr. McTaggart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total cost of advertising the BP share offer.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost to the Government of advertising the BP share offer is currently estimated to be about £18¼ million (excluding VAT).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether BP shares purchased by the Bank of England will be liable for the second and third instalments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether net purchase of BP shares by the Bank of England will be opened up to all part-paid shares, whether sold on or not; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to announce the end date for the repurchase arrangement for BP shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the advertisement about the Bank scheme printed in the national press on 6 and 7 November.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total possible liability of the Bank of England in its commitment to repurchase BP shares; if he will specify which department of the bank will finance the repurchase; where the money will come from and what charges will be payable by Her Majesty's Government for the service.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The theoretical maximum liability would arise if the Bank of England repurchased the 2,126 million partly paid shares in the original offer. On the other points, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Islington, South (Mr. Smith) on Thursday 5 November.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Inland Revenue plans to investigate the large bed-and-breakfast deals in BP shares intended to establish tax losses for capital gains tax purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I cannot comment on the tax affairs of individual companies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he proposes to place any limits on the extent of share repurchase in the event of the market price of part-paid shares falling below 70p; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No; the arrangement is available for all partly paid BP shares.

Mr. Gould: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what price per share Her Majesty's Government are now committed to pay for the BP rights issue.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: The subscription price for the new BP shares was £3·30 per share.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what special arrangements for advisory services he proposes for small shareholders who applied for BP shares before the closing date at a price higher than that available on the market.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: Small shareholders should seek general advice on their BP shareholdings from their own financial advisers. Small shareholders of part-paid BP shares will be eligible to take part in the special arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 October at column 540.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the loss incurred by underwriters and sub underwriters, less commission, and less allowances for bonus shares and interest on the instalments who sell block shares to the Bank of England as against the privatising price on Friday 30 October.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: The difference between the part-paid underwritten price of 120p and the Bank offer price for part-paid shares of 70p is 50p per BP share. The opening price of part-paid BP shares on 3 November was 81p. United Kingdom primary underwriters will receive aggregate underwriting commission of 0·018 per cent. and the United Kingdom sub-underwriters will receive 1 per cent. sub-underwriting commission at the fixed offer price of 330p for the underwritten shares: overseas underwriters received combined underwriting and selling commissions of 1·058 per cent. Any loss realised by any underwriter or sub-underwriter will depend on a combination of factors including commissions but particularly the price at which it sells any shares (if at all). Underwriters and sub-underwriters are not eligible for bonus shares.

Copies of the underwriting agreements have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether it is his intention to allow applicants who applied for a small number of BP shares at a price higher than the market price and who then try and cancel the cheques and applications to be sued.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: When they signed their application forms, applicants agreed not to revoke their application. Any applicants who have stopped their cheques will be asked to pay.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect of his decision to provide a floor for the BP share price on the willingness of foreign investors to buy the shares and on the proportion of BP shares held overseas.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 3 November 1987]*: The purpose of the arrangements made with the Bank of England announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29 October at column 540 is to ensure that there are orderly aftermarkets in BP shares. An orderly aftermarket will allow both overseas and domestic investors to take investment decisions on their merits.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the sums spent on advertising the BP share issue through *(a)* individual newspapers, *(b)* local radio stations, *(c)* television companies and *(d)* other media.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 30 October 1987]*: The total cost to the Government of advertising the BP share offer is estimated to be about £18·25 million (excluding VAT) of which about £5·9 million is for newspaper advertising, including publication of the prospectus, about £6·5 million for television advertising, and about £0·95 million for other media. The balance is mainly for production costs. There was no advertising on local radio stations.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total cost to date of advertising and publicity associated with the sale of BP shares.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 November 1987]*: The total United Kingdom marketing cost to the Government in the BP share sale is estimated at about £39 million (excluding VAT).

Savings Interest

Mr. Nicholas Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he plans to introduce legislation to enable him to deduct an amount equivalent to employee's national insurance contributions from interest on savings.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have no such plans at present.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Knox: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions there were in each of the past 11 years for tax evasion; and how many of these resulted in convictions.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Information concerning the Inland Revenue is available only in respect of the number of persons prosecuted. The details are:

	Number of persons prosecuted	*Number of persons convicted*
1976-77	326	317
1977-78	172	166
1978-79	188	180
1979-80	150	142
1980-81	189	172
1981-82	176	146
1982-83	142	134
1983-84	159	148
1984-85	239	233
1985-86	321	309
1986-87	326	314

These figures include convictions obtained by the police for tax frauds in connection with the construction industry tax deduction scheme. The numbers relating to this category were:

	Number
1976-77	149
1977-78	48
1978-79	22
1979-80	10
1980-81	15
1981-82	7
1982-83	3
1983-84	5
1984-85	8
1985-86	63
1986-87	89

These figures supersede those supplied in written replies to my hon. Friend on 25 July 1986 at columns *662-3* and to the hon. Member for Tyne Bridge (Mr. Clelland) on 2 March 1987 at columns *521*.

The details in respect of VAT prosecutions are:

	Prosecutions	*Convictions*
1976-77	77	76
1977-78	142	135
1978-79	107	103
1979-80	95	86
1980-81	100	97
1981-82	98	94
1982-83	124	123
1983-84	145	142
1984-85	165	158
1985-86	238	231
1986-87	196	189

Sub-Saharan Africa

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been achieved in debts relief for sub-Saharan Africa following the recent annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Mr. Lilley: The United Kingdom has already converted aid loans to grants for 14 sub-Saharan African countries at a cost of £280 million and other countries are following suit. To date, six African countries have been granted longer grace and repayment periods by the Paris Club. Discussions with other creditors on interest rate reductions on officially guaranteed rescheduled debt are continuing.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide details of the amounts attributed to each of the factors mentioned in the Autumn Statement which resulted in his increasing by £510 million his January 1987 estimate of the 1987-88 United Kingdom net contribution to the European Economic Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Autumn Statement projection of net payments to Community institutions represents an entirely new forecast of all elements in our contributions to and receipts from Community institutions. The main reasons for the increase in the projected outturn for 1987-88, compared with the estimate in the last public expenditure White Paper, include a shortfall in agricultural receipts of a little over £200 million, higher than expected payments of agricultural levies and customs duties (£86 million), the payment on 1 August of a VAT adjustment in respect of earlier years (£84 million), and a £140 million payment of customs duties and agricultural levies advanced from next April to next March (and hence from 1988-89 into 1987-88).

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what manner the value added tax base of EEC contributions by the United Kingdom, referred to in the Autumn Statement, was reassessed; if a comparable reassessment of the value added tax base of other member states was also made by the Commission; and by what amount the United Kingdom value added tax contributions were increased in consequence of this reassessment.

Mr. Brooke: The Government make forecasts of the VAT base in both the United Kingdom and the Community as a whole in order to project the United Kingdom's likely VAT payments and VAT share in future years. The forecast for the United Kingdom's VAT base used when preparing the Autumn Statement projection of net payments to Community institutions was revised upwards quite substantially (compared with that underlying the projection in the last public expenditure White Paper) to take account of the buoyancy of VAT receipts in 1986 and 1987, and the likely growth of consumers' expenditure in the United Kingdom. Only relatively small changes were made to the forecast of the Community's VAT base. The increases in our projected VAT payments before abatement compared with those assumed in the last public expenditure White Paper are £3 million in 1987-88, £74 million in 1988-89 and £266 million in 1989-90.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer why he has revised upwards in the Autumn Statement his January 1987 estimates of the net contribution to be made by the United Kingdom to the EEC in the years 1988-89 and 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The main reason why the Autumn Statement projection of net payments to Community institutions in 1988-89 and 1989-90 is higher than that in the last public expenditure White Paper is that we have revised downwards our assumed share of agricultural receipts from 8½ per cent. to 6½ per cent., reducing receipts by over £300 million in each of the two years. In addition, we have revised upwards the estimate of our VAT payments before abatement (by £74 million in 1988-89 and £266 million in 1989-90), as well as our likely payments of agricultural levies and customs duties in both years. The underlying deterioration in our net payments in 1989-90 is partly offset by an assumed increase in our Fontainebleau abatement of around £250 million.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if employees paying poll tax for live-in employees will be entitled to charge such payments to business expenses.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes. An employer who pays the community charge for an employee as part of his remuneration package will normally be able to claim a deduction for tax purposes.

Information Services

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by grade the personnel currently employed in the information division within Her Majesty's Treasury.

Mr. Brooke: On 1 November 1987, the personnel employed in the information division within Her Majesty's Treasury were:

Grade	*Number*
Grade 5	1
Grade 6	1
Grade 7 (Principal Information Officer)	2
Senior Information Officer	3
Senior Executive Officer	1
Executive Officer	1
Administrative Officer	4
Administrative Assistant	1
Personal Secretary	2
Typist	1

In addition, one Grade 6 (Chief Information Officer B) is assigned to Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency.

Residential Property

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any proposals to bring forward a tax on residential property.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has no such proposals.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present cost to central Government of maintaining lists of rateable values.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* Inland Revenue valuation officers are charged with the statutory duty of maintaining valuation lists of the rateable values of properties for each rating authority in England and Wales. This function involves them in all the valuation aspects of current rating and the running costs are about £56 million annually at current prices (Supply Estimates 1987-88, Class XIX, Vote 7).

Diplomats (Local Authority Services)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the contributions paid by each grouping of foreign diplomats to the cost of local authority services for the latest convenient period; how contributions are fixed; and what arrears are outstanding from any grouping.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 5 November 1987]:* I regret that this information cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Share Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the percentage decline in the share price of BP, other oil companies, and ICI from 8 October to 29 October which led him to place a floor under the BP price.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 3 November 1987]:* The reasons for establishing arrangements, to be operated by the Bank of England, to ensure that there are orderly aftermarkets in BP shares were given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his statement on 29 October at column 540.

The information requested about share price is:

Company	*Share price £ 8 October—29 October (SEAQ and NYSE close for United Kingdom and United States prices respectively)*		*Percentage change in price*
1. BP	3·67	2·59	−29
2. Shell	13·50	10·38	−23
3. Texaco	24·14	17·18	−29
4. Burmah	5·52	3·68	−33
5. Britoil	3·20	2·06	−36
6. Exxon	28·36	23·88	−16
7. British Gas (part-paid)	1·72	1·45	−16
8. ICI	16·38	9·89	−40

Dividend Income

Mr. Gordon Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each year since 1979 the number of persons reporting dividend income to the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* The number of single people and married couples reporting receipt of dividend income to the Inland Revenue in each year since 1979-80 is estimated to be in the region of 1½ million. The number of such reports depends upon the number of taxpayers who are asked to complete tax returns. Fewer taxpayers have been asked to complete tax returns in recent years. Since liability to income tax at the basic rate on United Kingdom dividend income is satisfied at source, an operational need for tax offices to know about the receipt of dividend income arises at present only in possible cases of liability to higher rate tax, restriction of age allowance, repayment of tax and certain other limited circumstances.

It is estimated from a Treasury-Stock Exchange survey that early this year there were 8½ million people holding shares—almost three times the number in 1979.

Property Relief

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an estimate of the cost to public funds of extending 50 per cent. property relief to all unquoted company shareholdings.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 28 October 1987]:* The cost of extending the 50 per cent. inheritance tax business relief to all unquoted company share holdings is estimated at £1 million-£2 million in the full year.

Poverty and Unemployment

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has that disincentive to work results from the poverty and unemployment traps.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 26 October 1987]:* I have been asked to reply.

There is little doubt that the poverty and unemployment traps can influence decisions on work. In particular, the academic literature suggests that benefit levels can affect the time spent unemployed and that tax rates influence hours of work. The degree of such influence is a matter of continuing academic debate, but in general it appears that it varies according to a number of factors including age, gender and marital status. Up-to-date information on some of these issues will be obtained from a study the Department is currently conducting of people who became unemployed in the spring of 1987.

TRANSPORT

London Regional Transport

12. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish his guidelines to London Regional Transport concerning future fare levels.

Mr. David Mitchell: New objectives for LRT will be announced shortly.

13. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to hold a meeting with the chairman of London Regional Transport to discuss the future of London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: I meet the chairman of London Regional Transport from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

20. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about fare rises on London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since LRT announced its new fare levels from January 1988 the number of representations received by my right hon. Friend has been nil.

56. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce his new set of financial and performance objectives for London Regional Transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Very shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the costs of removing graffiti from London Regional Transport buses, trains and property in each of the last three years.

Mr. David Mitchell: London Regional Transport estimates that in the current year the cost of cleaning graffiti from Underground trains and structures will be about £750,000 million and that the cost in 1986-87 was about £500,000 million. No estimates are available for 1985-86. The cost of vandalism including graffiti to buses and structures owned by London Buses is estimated to be £1·75 million in 1987-88 and 1986-87, and £1·5 million in 1985-86.

Bus Services (Deregulation)

15. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the operation of bus services since deregulation.

16. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the operation of bus services since deregulation.

22. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the operation of bus services since deregulation.

54. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the effects of bus deregulation in urban areas.

Mr. David Mitchell: After some initial teething troubles when the policy was first implemented, representations have now declined to a trickle as operators have responded to the opportunities and the public have become accustomed to the new services.

47. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the first year of deregulated public passenger transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Deregulation has got off to a very good start. As we envisaged, competition has caused operators to reduce costs while maintaining, and in many cases improving, the level of services. There are more operators than a year ago, bus mileage is up, the level of subsidy has been reduced, and the industry is now in a much better position to face the future.

57. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make a further statement about bus deregulation in London.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am currently discussing with the chairman new objectives for London Regional Transport for the next three years. I expect those objectives to include further reference to our policy of extending the benefits of deregulation to bus users in London.

National Bus Company

55. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many companies have bought more than one National Bus Company subsidiary.

Mr. David Mitchell: Four.

61. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many National Bus Company companies have been sold.

50. **Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff or management buyouts have been approved in the sale of National Bus Company subsidiaries.

35. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress of the sales of National Bus Company subsidiaries.

Mr. David Mitchell: Forty-nine of the National Bus Company's 72 subsidiaries have now been sold, 29 of them to management or employee teams.

NBC's report and accounts, which were published on 27 October, forecast that all sales will be completed well before the statutory deadline of January 1989, and that total proceeds will substantially exceed the book value of assets sold.

I congratulate NBC on the excellent progress it has made.

Network SouthEast

17. **Mr. Snape:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level and quality of services in British Rail's Network SouthEast.

Mr. David Mitchell: Over much of the south-east services are either meeting or approaching the quality of service targets. But there is room for improvement. I am monitoring the situation closely. Satisfactory standards on certain routes are dependent upon projected investment being completed.

45. **Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take on the findings of the inquiry conducted by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into Network SouthEast.

59. **Mr. Robin Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he proposes to take on the findings of the inquiry conducted by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into Network SouthEast.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am discussing the report with British Rail, which will be making its formal response in the new year.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

18. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the programme of redundancies recently announced by British Rail Engineering Limited; and if he will make a statement.

21. **Miss Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has met the chairman of British Rail to discuss the programme of redundancies recently announced by British Rail Engineering Limited; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to discuss with the chairman of British Rail the recently announced redundancies by British Rail Engineering Limited; and if he will make a statement.

62. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has discussed the programme of redundancies recently announced by British Rail Engineering Limited with the chairman of British Rail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: No. The redundancies recently announced by BREL are management matters for them and the British Railways Board. The British Rail chairman has kept us informed of BREL's plans.

East Coast Main Line

19. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of British Rail about the future of the east coast main line.

Mr. Channon: None.

49. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the east coast rail electrification programme.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of British Rail from time to time to discuss a number of matters.

Roads (Maintenance Expenditure)

23. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the level of local authority expenditure on road maintenance.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In 1986-87 we increased provision for local road maintenance by 15 per cent. and in 1987-88 by 13 per cent., but local authorities budgeted to spend £148 million less than planned in 1987-88. The spending plans for 1988-89, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last Tuesday, includes £1,264 million for local highway maintenance, the same as for 1987-88. This will enable local authorities to increase their spending on roads maintenance by 13 per cent.

33. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the trend in expenditure on the capital maintenance of national roads since 1978-79.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Expenditure has increased from £46 million in 1978-79 to £220 million in 1986-87, an increase of nearly two and a half time in real terms. As well as keeping pace with current deterioration, we are catching up on the backlog of renewal work arising from earlier years.

Trees

24. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many trees his Department has planted since 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have planted 13 million trees and shrubs in this period along our motorways and other trunk roads.

Roads (Design Costs)

25. **Mr. Redwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the effects of fee competition for costs of design and supervision of roads.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On average there has been a 25 per cent. reduction on the standard fee rates previously applying. This should mean that we will save about 15 per cent. on the total preparation and supervision costs for projects allocated through competitive tendering.

Motorways (Speed Limits)

26. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review speed limits on motorways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The current normal maximum motorway speed limit was fully reviewed in 1984 and 1985. It was concluded that the 70 mph limit achieved the right balance between safety and the need for efficient and convenient travel. We have no plans to change the current normal maximum limit.

Transport Act 1985

27. **Mr. Boateng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to review the working of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department will shortly be issuing a consultation document describing possible adjustments to the registration system suggested by experience during the first year of deregistration.

Air Traffic Control

28. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to accelerate the modernisation of the United Kingdom air traffic control systems.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for managing and planning the improvement of the national air traffic services. Its latest corporate plan projects an increasing rate of investment in air traffic services over the next five years.

51. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning the safety standards of air traffic control at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Safety standards of air traffic control at Heathrow airport are the responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority who implements them in accordance with the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. We have full confidence that in discharging these duties the Civil Aviation Authority aims to achieve the highest levels of safety.

44. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the ability of United Kingdom air traffic control systems to meet the demands of United Kingdom civil aviation.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 26 October at column.*58*.

Taxis

29. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to amend the present powers of local authorities to limit the number of taxi licences in their area.

Mr. David Mitchell: No.

Non-Passenger Train Services (Halifax)

30. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about British Rail's non-passenger train services through Halifax in Calderdale.

Mr. David Mitchell: None, but if the hon. Member is aware of a problem perhaps she will write to me.

Motorways

31. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make a statement as to his programme of investment in the motorway network.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since 1979, we have invested over £1·5 billion on new motorway construction schemes adding 285 miles to the network. Our forward programme provides further investment of some £1 billion in new motorway construction. These schemes will add a further 200 miles to the network when completed.

We intend that future renewal should keep pace with deterioration and provide for elimination of the backlog of repairs, built up during the 1970s, by the early 1990s. We expect to spend £128 million this year and similar amounts in future years.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the total amounts spent on repairs to the motorway system in England and Wales in each of the financial years from 1974-75 to date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is not available for years prior to 1979. Figures for expenditure on structural repairs to motorways in England from 1979 onwards are given below. The motorway in Wales is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales.

Financial year	*Expenditure £ million*
1979-80	23·7
1980-81	49·4
1981-82	74·4
1982-83	95·3
1983-84	93·9
1984-85	122·9
1985-86	86·1
1986-87	[1]115·0

[1] Estimate.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what circumstances motorway lanes are closed, ostensibly for repairs, when no repairs are actually taking place.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Some lane closures are kept on overnight or during bad weather when no work is taking place if conditions are such that removal would endanger either workmen or road users. There are also cases in which work is proceeding but is not apparent, such as when concrete is hardening. The Department's instructions to its agents emphasise the need to minimise coning off and to complete the works and reopen lanes as soon as possible.

Public Transport (Fares)

32. **Mr. Litherland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has issued advice to local authorities on the level of fares set by those authorities for public transport.

Mr. David Mitchell: Advice is contained in circular 5/85 concerning the Service Subsidy Agreements (Tendering) Regulations 1985.

Isabella Colliery, Blyth

34. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to issue a grant under the British Railways Act 1974, section 8, to upgrade a section of railway known as Isabella colliery, Blyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My Department is still awaiting adequately detailed information from British Coal. Until that is available, I am unable to judge the financial case for grant.

Lighthouse Tenderships

36. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the commissioners of the Northern Lighthouse Board concerning lighthouse tenderships.

Mr. David Mitchell: The board's lighthouse tender requirements—and those of the other general lighthouse authorities—were reviewed earlier this year by Arthur Young Management Consultants. They reported in June and my Department is discussing the implementation of their recommendations with each of the authorities.

European Air Fares

37. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the latest progress towards a freezer market in European air fares.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope that the EC aviation package, which includes measures to liberalise air fares, will be adopted at the next meeting of the Transport Council, scheduled for 7 December. We are doing all we can to achieve this.

British Airways (Merger)

38. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the implications for civil aviation policy of the proposed merger between British Airways and British Caledonian.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proposed merger was referred by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which has now submitted its report and recommendations to him. Members of Parliament, several airlines, other interested bodies and members of the public have made representations to my right hon. and noble Friend both before the referral and subsequently.

Cars and Motor Cycles (Headlights)

39. **Mr. Nicholas Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy not to approve recommendations that drivers of cars and motor cycles should have their headlights on during the day.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motor cyclists are difficult to see in traffic. Research clearly shows that they are more easily visible if they use one or more of the conspicuity aids available. We therefore recommend the use of dipped headlamps in daylight. For car drivers the advice is the same in conditions of poor visibility, not at other times.

Air Safety

40. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on current standards of air safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Aviation safety is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. Despite the increase in the number of air traffic movements over the past years, the number of incidents involving public transport aircraft in risk-bearing air misses has declined from 32 in 1977 to 12 in 1986.

Manchester International Airport

42. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the passenger growth at Manchester international airport in the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Civil Aviation Authority statistics show that the number of terminal passengers at Manchester airport increased by 19 per cent. in the period August 1986 to July 1987, compared with the previous 12 months.

British Rail

43. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the Government cash subsidies for British Rail for each year respectively, from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. David Mitchell: The figures for Government support for the British Railways Board taken from the final claims for grant in compensation for the public service obligation under EEC regulation 1191/69 and section 3 of the Railways Act 1974 and for level crossings grant under EC regulation 1192/69 from 1979 to 1987-88 are as follows:

	£ million
1979	498·1
1980	591·4
1981	766·6
1982	835·6
1983	873·0
1984-85	1088·9
1985-86	839·7
1986-87	733·4
1987-88	814·5

1984-85 is a 15-month period reflecting a change in the British Railways Board financial year. The figures for 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88 remain provisional; final claims have not yet been agreed. All figures are cash.

64. **Mr. Holt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will next be meeting the chairman of British Rail; and what will be discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: I shall be having a discussion with Sir Robert Reid next week to discuss British Rail performance generally.

A642 (Oulton-Woodlesford Bypass)

46. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the progress made on the development of the A642 Oulton and Woodlesford bypass to the south of Leeds.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An announcement will be made shortly about the outcome of the east of Leeds study. The study area includes the A642 from the M62 to the A1.

Channel Tunnel

48. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had discussions with British Rail or Eurotunnel on the planning of through routes from regions such as south Wales to European Community capitals after the Channel tunnel is opened.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. The planning of Channel Tunnel rail services is a matter for British Rail. Section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act requires British Rail to prepare a plan by the end of 1989 setting out the measures it proposes to take in order to disperse rail traffic to different parts of the United Kingdom. British Rail intends to consult as widely as possible with interested parties in the preparation of this plan, and it has already collaborated with Eurotunnel on a regional survey of business opportunities.

London Underground Ltd.

52. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to privatise London Underground Ltd.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at the moment.

M25

53. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the most recent figures for the volume of traffic using the M25 since it was completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest figures available are for September. The table below shows the average weekday flow for each section of the road.

M25 Traffic flows

Section	*16-hour weekday flow*
1-2	[1]81,400
2-3	[1]65,500
3-4	59,000
4-5	63,000
5-6	82,000
6-7	90,000
7-8	101,000
8-9	91,000
9-10	95,000
10-11	114,000
11-12	126,000
12-13	[1]119,400
13-14	140,000
14-15	130,000
15-16	129,000
16-17	116,000
17-18	120,000
18-19	124,000
19-20	104,000
20-21	108,000
21-22	89,000
22-23	97,000
23-24	102,000
24-25	95,000
25-26	91,000
26-27	86,000
27-28	89,000
28-29	77,000
29-30/31	[2]64,000

[1] Manual counts taken on one day in April and May 1987.

[2] August average weekday flow (the automatic counting loop was out of action in September).

Roads (London)

58. **Mr. Chapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about plans and progress on new roads and an improved roads system within the metropolis.

63. **Mr. Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to relieve traffic congestion on roads in London for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The White Paper "Policy for Roads in England 1987" (Cm. 125) lists over 30 major trunk road improvement schemes in London with an estimated cost of about £1 billion. This includes about £600 million for improving the road system around docklands and in east London. Other major priorities are completing comprehensive improvement of the North Circular road and the A40 Western avenue.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport opened the A20 Sidcup bypass last week. The A406 south Woodford-Barking relief road and the Rochester way relief road are due to be completed early next year.

We are about to begin work on the second stage of the four London assessment studies.

A number of other studies are in hand, including a review of low cost, high value schemes with emphasis on accident prevention.

London boroughs are carrying out 30 major local road schemes costing over £300 million supported by transport supplementary grant, including seven new schemes costing £60 million added this year.

Road Links (Bristol)

60. **Mr. Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to improve road links between the south coast ports and Bristol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have nothing to add to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on Tuesday 3 November at column *655*.

Pacer Trains (Sunderland-Newcastle)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of British Rail the problems of running pacer trains between Sunderland and Newcastle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: It would not be appropriate to do this since it is an operational matter for British Rail.

A629/A650 (Airedale Route)

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a further announcement about the section of the A629/A650 Airedale route between Cottingley Bar and the Shipley eastern bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An announcement will be made as soon as possible. Alternative options are still being examined, following the public consultation exercise.

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a further announcement about stage 3 of the A629/A650 Airedale route.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I hope to publish draft orders for stage 3 of the Airedale route early in the new year.

Motorway Safety

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further action he intends to take to improve safety on motorways.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motorways are Britain's safest roads carrying 14 per cent. of all traffic and accounting for only 2 per cent. of accidents.

We have a continuing research and development programme into safety fences and barriers, and we are closing cross over points where they are not essential.

Better control, communication, and signalling are being installed. We are monitoring systems of automatic incident detection.

We have developed fog detectors and are installing them on a trial basis on particular fog prone sections to warn motorists. We are experimenting with "Keep your distance" and "Keep left except when overtaking" signs to improve driving discipline, and planning an experiment with 70 mph signs on a short stretch of motorway to study its effect on drivers.

The Department will support the 1988 national motorway safety campaign by the police. We are discussing with the police wider use of mandatory speed limits at roadworks and experimenting with new technology for monitoring traffic.

The rate of injury accidents on motorways has fallen by one third over 15 years.

Most motorway crashes and collisions are caused by excessive speed, inadequate space between vehicles, inattention, alcohol and fatigue.

North Committee

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will consider the recommendations of the North committee on road safety; and what further consultations he expects to make on this subject.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As soon as we receive the review's report, which we hope will be by the end of the year. We do not have specific plans for further consultation yet.

Double Decker Buses (Hirings)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the maximum weight restrictions and maximum passenger capacity over and above the maximum seating capacity of a double decker bus hired out for private charter; and how these limits are enforced.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The carrying capacity of a bus or coach used for hire or reward as a public service vehicle for both seated and standing passengers, as determined in accordance with regulations by one of the Department of Transport's certifying officers, must be marked on the vehicle. It is an offence to carry more passengers on a PSV than it has been certified to carry, except that three seated children, each of whom was under 14 at the beginning of the school year, may count as two passengers. Standing passengers are not allowed on the upper deck of a double-decked PSV. Enforcement is a matter for the Department's traffic examiners and the police.

The potential maximum operational weight of a PSV is taken into account by the certifying officer when determining its carrying capacity, so that under normal circumstances a PSV should never exceed whichever is the lower of either its maximum design weight or the national weight limits. Enforcement by means of in-use weight checks, other than the checks carried out at certification, has not been considered necessary.

Intersections (Congestion)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies he has undertaken to relieve congestion of traffic at road intersections where hold-ups regularly occur.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Studies are frequently undertaken to investigate the cause of traffic problems on the trunk road network, including congestion at interchanges, and to consider possible solutions. The scale and type of study carried out depends on the particular problem. A comprehensive list of studies previously undertaken is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Roads (Durability)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what comparisons have been undertaken of the durability of United Kingdom motorway and dual carriageway roads with those in other countries within the EEC.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Studies of this kind are of limited value. There are differences in climate and traffic characteristics. Attitudes to the economic appraisal of highway construction and maintenance also differ. We maintain, with our European partners, a continuous exchange of information on the design, construction and maintenance of national roads, including factors affecting durability.

London City Airport

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is intended that the British Aerospace 146 aircraft will be licensed to fly to London's City airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Runway limits and maximum permitted noise levels rule out the use of London City airport by BAe 146 aircraft. Changes to these constraints would require a planning applications.

Traffic Commissioners

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied that his Department employs enough traffic commissioners to ensure that local commercial bus services operate in accordance with registration particulars and other statutory requirements.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am satisfied that the traffic commissioners, who are appointed by the Secretary of State, are sufficient in number and have adequate resources to carry out their independent statutory duties.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken to strengthen the vehicle inspectorate since the enactment of the Transport Act 1985; and whether the Act has led to any increase in the need for corrective action by the inspectorate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This year the vehicle inspectorate will do an extra 13 per cent. more work on public service vehicles, some of which will be corrective action.

Public Service Vehicle Drivers

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his Department monitors the driving hours, breaks and rest periods of part-time public service vehicle drivers who may also undertake other driving or non-driving employment; and whether he is satisfied with the effectiveness of this monitoring.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Driving hours, breaks and rest periods of all PSV drivers, whether full-time or part-time, are subject to regular checks by the police and traffic examiners. Traffic examiners make roadside checks and also visit operators' premises to check tachograph charts and drivers work records. Batches of tachograph charts are also checked by the tachograph screening equipment in traffic area offices or computer bureaux. Any irregularities discovered are followed up and reported for possible prosecution.

About 100,000 PSV drivers tachograph charts will be checked in 1987-88 which is substantially more than the number checked in 1986-87.

Uncontrolled Air-space

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which commercial passenger airline flights regularly traverse uncontrolled United Kingdom air-space south of a line from the Severn to the Wash; and if he will name the airlines and airports concerned.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible, through the national air traffic services, for all aspects of United Kingdom air-space management. The authority has told me that the information requested is not readily available and could not be provided except at disproportionate expense.

East Leeds (Traffic)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report on traffic in east Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received the report of the consultants. We hope to make an announcement soon.

Eurocity Express

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the Civil Aviation Authority as to why a dispensation was given to Eurocity Express to fly two Dash-7 aircraft from London City airport without certification of airworthiness; if these aircraft are still using the airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Civil Aviation Authority, which is wholly responsible for aviation safety regulations, has told me that Eurocity Express Dash-7 aircraft were not given a dispensation to fly from London City airport without certification of airworthiness. Both aircraft were and are appropriately certificated.

Settle to Carlisle Line

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make an announcement on the future of the Settle to Carlisle railway line.

Mr. David Mitchell: In due course.

Seafarers (Criminal Convictions)

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether seafarers convicted while at sea for merchant shipping offences, and whose fines are consequently paid by shipping companies where such an offence is considered minor, will have a right of appeal against criminal record where future livelihood may be at stake.

Mr. David Mitchell *[holding answer 6 November 1987]*: Offences committed against the Merchant Shipping Acts are treated by the courts in the same manner as all other crimes of whatever magnitude and the rights of appeal against conviction are the same.

Dock Labour Scheme

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list at the latest available date by port the number of dockers employed under the dock labour scheme for whom no work exists.

Mr. Nicholls: I have been asked to reply.

I regret that this information is not available in the form requested. The fact that a docker is declared to be surplus does not necessarily mean that no work exists.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. M. C. Ward

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services why the entitlement appeal lodged by Mr. M. C. Ward of Old Victoria, Sicklesmere, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, in November 1986 has still not been dealt with; and if he will take steps to improve the arrangements for typing statements of case in his Department, in view of the fact that a statement of Mr. Ward's case, prepared by his Department, was ready for typing on 6 January but was not actually typed until April.

Mr. Portillo: Further medical evidence is required to deal with Mr. Ward's appeal. It will be obtained as quickly as possible, but is likely to take some time. I very much regret the delay in typing the statement of case. The typing difficulties at the time have now been resolved, and work is up to date.

Means-tested Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the numbers of people who, but for child benefit, would be entitled to means-tested benefit; and what would be the number of their dependants.

Mr. Scott: On the basis of benefit rates from April 1988 and expected claiming patterns it is estimated that around 500,000 families with 1 million dependent children would, but for child benefit, be entitled to income-related benefits.

Banstead Mental Hospital

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans are envisaged for the future use of the Banstead mental illness hospital.

Mrs. Currie: Banstead was one of the first of the large Victorian mental illness institutions to close in 1986 when patients were either moved to community placements or other hospitals.

The North West Thames regional health authority is now in the process of seeking a buyer for the site and buildings.

Any disposal of the Banstead hospital site is the responsibility of the North West Thames regional health authority. For further information the hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the authority.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the proposal in the forthcoming housing benefit regulations not to allow users of community alarms for the elderly to claim benefit for the cost.

Mr. Portillo: The draft regulations for the reformed housing benefit scheme, laid before Parliament on 3 November 1987, ensure that housing benefit will continue to be available to help with the cost of emergency alarm systems provided in rented accommodation, where the accommodation is particularly suitable for and occupied by elderly, sick or disabled people.

Retirement Pension

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate the average weekly state basic retirement pension in payment in 1979-80 and payable after the uprating in 1988-89, respectively, giving the number of retirement pensions in payment during these two years.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is included in the table. These figures differ from basic retirement pension levels because they include awards of retirement pension at less than 100 per cent. The average amount of basic retirement pension for women includes both pensions based on their own contributions, and pensions based on their husbands' contributions. The figures exclude pensioners living outside Great Britain.

	Average amount of basic RP-MEN £	*Number of men paid a basic RP (Thousands)*	*Average amount of basic RP—Women £*	*Number of women paid a basic RP (Thousands)*
November 1979-November 1980	23·13	3,049	19·94	5,474
April 1988-April 1989 (estimate)	40·80	3,225	38·40	6,123

Children (Hearing Impairment)

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out in the *Official Report* the figures for children and young people who have suffered from *(a)* meningitis, *(b)* mumps or *(c)* measles for each of the years from 1981 to 1986; how many subsequently suffered from a permanent hearing impairment; and how many of these were identified as a result of routine audiological tests.

Mrs. Currie: The notifications for measles and acute meningitis are as set out. Mumps is not a notifiable disease and figures are not therefore available for it. However, mumps is known to lead to approximately 1,200 hospital admissions a year in England and Wales.

We do not collect statistics on hearing impairment as a result of these diseases, but a recent study demonstrated that hearing impairment as a result of bacterial meningitis occurred in 5 to 30 per cent. of cases.

Notifications of Infectious Diseases 1981-1986
England and Wales

		1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
Measles:							
0-14	Male	26,200	46,400	50,400	30,200	47,600	39,400
	Female	24,800	43,800	48,200	28,600	45,300	37,500
15-24	Male	475	1,051	1,485	1,006	1,197	1,658
	Female	437	828	1,041	644	1,091	1,193
Acute Meningitis:							
0-14	Male	519	461	462	470	547	840
	Female	341	348	334	325	387	622
15-24	Male	112	87	92	95	126	158
	Female	106	90	100	87	109	159

Source: OPCS.

Oswestry District General Hospital

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has about proposed closure of Oswestry district general hospital by Shropshire health authority; and if he will sanction extra finance to avert the potentially deleterious effect on health services for the constituents of the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West.

Mrs. Currie: I understand that Shropshire health authority is considering a number of proposals related to the opening of the new hospital at Telford in 1989. Any proposal involving the closure or change of use of an existing hospital must be subject to the usual consultation procedures. If the community health council objects to the closure, it can only be affected with the agreement of the regional health authority and Ministers. At that stage we would consider carefully all the representations that had been made to us.

Storm Damage

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps he is taking to fund the Brighton health authority to meet the £750,000 million cost of repair to buildings following recent hurricane storm damage which cannot by law be covered by insurance;

(2) what steps he is taking to fund the Brighton health authority to meet the cost of approximately £250,000 million of repair or replacement of its computer system following recent hurricane storm damage.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to compensate the Maidstone district health authority for the damage to National Health Service property incurred in the recent hurricane.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friends to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 4 November.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received about storm damage to National Health Service property in the South East Thames regional health authority area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Questions about storm damage in the South East Thames regional health authority area have been received from four hon. Members, and a further three right hon. or hon. Members have written to Ministers. The chairman of the regional health authority has also written.

As explained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 4 November, information is being assessed and we shall be considering the position in the light of that assessment. I would take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the staff in the National Health Service and others whose efforts during that night and subsequently helped to minimise the effects on patients and services in very difficult and frightening conditions.

Hospital Staff (Attacks)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for the total number of attacks by members of the public on National Health Service staff in hospitals for each region for the last five years; and if he will give the figure for each region for each of the last five years.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not held centrally.

AIDS

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the estimated number of carriers, cases and deaths due to infection with HIV, by region, age, and sex, for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Newton: Cases of AIDS and positive results of HIV antibody tests are reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre for the United Kingdom, excluding Scotland. The Department of Health publishes monthly breakdowns of AIDS cases by patient characteristics and by region, and quarterly breakdowns of positive HIV antibody tests. Copies are in the Library.

It is not possible to make accurate estimates of the numbers of people infected with HIV for the reasons given in my reply of 26 October to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) at column *191*.

Medical Service Cases

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what penalties have been imposed on general practitioners in medical service cases examined by family practitioner committees; how many general practitioners involved in medical service cases have previously been involved in such cases; and how many of these cases have been referred to the British Medical Association for disciplinary action;

(2) how many medical service cases have been dealt with by family practitioner committees nationally; and in how many of these cases allegations against doctors were found to be proven.

Mrs. Currie: Family practitioner committees may recommend to the Secretary of State that a medical practitioner found in breach of his terms of service *(a)* be warned to comply more closely with his terms of services in future; and/or *(b)* that an amount should be withheld from his remuneration.

In 1986, the Secretary of State disposed of 1,138 reports of formal investigations. Three hundred and nine practitioners were found in breach of their terms of service and the Secretary of State directed withholdings in 64 of these cases. Records are published in table 5.14 of the "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics", a copy of which is the Library. Figures are not available for the number of breach cases in which warnings are issued.

Information about the number of general medical practitioners who have been involved more than once in medical service committee cases is not analysed routinely; however, where a breach is established a practitioner's earlier record in this respect is ascertained and may be taken into account.

The General Medical Council is the regulatory body for general medical practitioners. The council is normally notified in cases where the Secretary of State directs a withholding.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will authorise the release of details concerning medical service case No. MS233, examined by the Cheshire family practitioner committee; and if he will also release details of any previous cases that the doctor in this case has been involved in.

Mrs. Currie: No. The Service Committee Regulations require that service committee reports should be sent only to the parties to the investigation and to the Secretary of State. As the reports often contain details of a confidential and personal nature, it would be in the interests of neither the complainant nor the practitioner for reports to be released.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance has been issued regarding National Health Service staff becoming involved in private nursing homes to which patients, originally under their care, are transferred.

Mrs. Currie: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 29 October at columns *416-17*.

Maternity Benefits

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women received any kind of maternity benefits since October 1986.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available in the precise form requested, but, from 21 October 1986 to 22 September 1987, 334,875 claims to maternity allowance were received.

In the period from 1 October 1986 to 29 September 1987, 270,565 awards of maternity grant were made. Maternity grant is no longer payable in respect of births occurring on or after 6 April 1987.

Information on the number of single payments for maternity needs from October 1986 to April 1987 is not available. Maternity payments from the social fund replaced single payments for maternity needs from 6 April 1987; 92,224 maternity payments from the social fund were made from 6 April 1987 to 22 September 1987.

Information on the number of recipients of statutory maternity pay since its introduction in April 1987 is not yet available. Statutory maternity pay replaced maternity pay, which was also paid by employers directly to their employees and was administered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment under the employment protection Acts.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women received any kind of maternity allowances or benefits for each year since 1975 to 1985.

Mr. Portillo: Information is not available in the precise form requested, but in the 12 months ending 31 March in each year the following awards were made:

Maternity grant

	Thousands
1975	637
1976	634
1977	582
1978	587
1979	622
1980	659
1981	[1]654
1982	[2]606
1983	653
1984	662
1985	667

Maternity allowance

	Thousands
1975	217
1976	253
1977	244
1978	277
1979	317
1980	351
1981	[1]365
1982	[2]330
1983	330
1984	316
1985	324

[1] Figures shown are for the calendar year 1 January 1980 to 31 December 1980. Figures for quarter ended 31 March 1981 are not available.

[2] Estimated figures.

Supplementary benefit single payments for maternity needs

	Thousands
1981	61
1982	101
1983	142
1984	188
1986	188

Note: Information on supplementary benefit single payments for maternity needs is taken from the Annual Statistical Enquiry (ASE) which was conducted in December of each year from 1981 to 1984 and relates to the number of payments made in the proceeding 12 months by those in receipt of supplementary benefit at the time of the inquiry. As a result, the record does not include all single payments made during the year. There was no inquiry in December 1985. The 1986 figures are taken from the ASE conducted in February that year and relate to payments made in the previous 12 months. Discrete information on supplementary benefit single payments for maternity needs prior to 1981 is not available.

In addition, between 1977 and 1985 employers were liable to pay qualifying employees maternity pay. This was administered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment under the employment protection Acts.

Local Offices (Staffing)

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of staffing levels at the local offices in Rusholme, Chorlton and Sale, broken down by type of work; how this compares with the position six months ago and 11 months ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The table details the number of staff in post on 1 November 1987, 1 May 1987 and 1 December 1986, at Rusholme, Chorlton and Sale local offices, and reflects organisational differences between the offices.

Rusholme

	1 November 1987	*1 May 1987*	*1 December 1986*
Supplementary Benefit			
Allowances	46·0	46·0	45·0
Pensions	7·0	6·0	6·0
Single Payments	12·5	8·0	8·0
Visits	4·5	7·0	7·0
Appeals	5·0	3·0	2·5
Take-up campaigns—Social Security reforms implementation[1]	13·0	9·0	0·0
Direct Payments	5·0	10·0	11·0
Enquiries and Complaints	1·0	0·0	0·0
Fraud	8·0	8·0	7·0
Board and Lodging Control	3·0	3·0	3·0
Unemployment Review[2]	0·0	0·0	2·0
Transfer of casepapers—recall of order books	2·0	1·0	1·0
Liable Relatives	6·0	6·0	6·0
Contributory Benefits			
STB/LTB/Disablement Benefit	22·5	27·0	23·0
NI Contributions	11·0	12·5	13·5
Other			
Personnel/Common Services	13·0	11·0	11·0

	1 November 1987	1 May 1987	1 December 1986
Training/Local Information	5·0	4·0	3·0
Finance	9·0	9·0	8·0
Overpayments	2·0	2·0	2·0
Senior Management	2·0	2·0	2·0
	2·0	2·0	2·0
Totals	177·5	174·5	161·0

[1] Decision taken to set up new section to specialise in take-up campaigns and reform implementation.

[2] Unemployment Review ceased to be a responsibility of the Department from April 1987.

Chorlton

	1 November 1987	1 May 1987	1 December 1986
Supplementary Benefit			
(i) Allowances/Social Security Reforms implementation	35·0	29·0	29·0
(ii) Pensions	5·0	5·0	5·0
(iii) Visits/Special Case Officer	4·0	4·0	4·0
(iv) Liable Relative	3·0	3·0	3·0
(v) Appeals	2·0	2·0	2·0
Reserve cover for (i)—(v)	2·0	2·0	2·0
(vi) Miscellaneous/Reception	7·0	7·0	7·0
(vii) Single Payments	5·0	4·0	4·0
(viii) Training/Local Information Officer	3·0	2·0	2·0
Reserve cover for (vi)—(viii)	2·5	1·0	1·0
(ix) Fraud/Special Investigation	5·0	5·0	5·0
(x) Board & Lodging Control	2·0	2·0	2·0
Contributory Benefits			
(i) NI Contributions & Compliance	7·0	7·0	7·0
(ii) Reception	1·0	0·0	0·0
Reserve cover for (i)—(ii) & (ix)—(x)	2·0	2·0	2·0
(iii) STB/LTB	6·0	7·0	7·0
(iv) Training/Overpayments	1·0	1·0	1·0
(v) Pensions/Disablement Benefit	5·0	5·0	5·0
Reserve cover for (iii)—(v)	4·0	4·0	4·0
Other			
(i) Finance	7·5	7·0	7·0
(ii) Premises/Common Services	9·0	8·0	8·0
Reserve cover for (i)—(ii)	2·0	2·0	2·0
Management	7·0	7·0	7·0
Totals	127·0	116·0	116·0

Sale

	1 November 1987	1 May 1987	1 December 1986
Supplementary benefit			
Allowances/Reception	44·0	37·5	37·5
Visits/Liable Relative	17·5	16·0	14·0
Fraud/Special Investigation	9·0	9·0	8·0
Training/Single Payments/NHS Direct Payments/Appeals *(a)*	0·0	28·5	25·5
Appeals/Single Payments/NHS Direct Payments *(a)*	14·0	0·0	0·0
Training/Operational Strategy[1]	5·0	0·0	0·0
Contributory Benefits			
NI Contributions and Compliance	15·5	14·0	13·0
STB/SDA/Disablement Benefit	30·5	25·5	25·5
Pensions & Overpayments (including Supp. B)	27·5	26·5	25·5
Other			
Finance/Common Services	24·5	24·5	24·5
Management	11·0	11·0	10·0
Totals	198·5	192·5	183·5

[1] Re-organisation of section into two separate parts.

Abbreviations: STB—Short Term Benefits; LTB—Long Term Benefits; SDA—Severe Disablement Allowance.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of staffing levels of *(a)* the Chorlton, *(b)* the Rusholme, and *(c)* the Sale offices of his Department dealing with appeals at present, six months ago and 12 months ago; and if he will give details of the other sections to or from which any personnel have been transferred.

Mr. Portillo: The staffing levels dealing with supplementary benefirt appeals for each of the offices are as follows:

	1 November 1987	*1 May 1987*	*1 November 1986*
Chorlton ILO	2	2	2
Rusholme ILO	5	3	2·5
Sale ILO	3·5	3	3

Since 1 November 1986 Chorlton ILO has not transferred any posts to or from the appeals section.

Since 1 November 1986 Rusholme ILO has transferred one post from the visiting section and one post from the single payment section to the appeals section. A part-time appeals officer has taken up full-time work in the appeals section.

Since 1 November 1986 Sale ILO has transferred a part-time post from the supplementary pensions section to the appeals section.

Abbreviations: ILO — Integrated Local Office

Social Security Reform

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many old-age pensioners now receiving housing benefit will lose rights after the change in the social security system in April 1988.

Mr. Portillo: The estimated number of pensioner households (defined as those where either partner is aged 60 or over) who would be entitled to housing benefit, but for the changes next April, is 700,000.

South East Thames RHA

Mrs. Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the administrative and travelling expenses incurred as a result of the South East Thames regional health authority's move to Bexhill;

(2) how much money the South East Thames regional health authority spent in rent on empty premises after the authority's move to Bexhill; and why.

Mrs. Currie: South East Thames regional health authority moved from its rented premises in Croydon to a purchased property in Bexhill. The RHA is required by the terms of its lease to pay rent until such time as the lease is disposed of or runs out.

There has been an intensive marketing exercise to dispose of the remainder of the lease and this is continuing. Further details may be obtained from the chairman of the South East Thames regional health authority.

Mrs. Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the reasons for the South East Thames regional health authority's change from resources allocation working party to the ACORN system of funding; and how this will affect the funding of the Maidstone district health authority.

Mrs. Currie: The resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula was developed to determine target allocations of funds to regional health authorities. It is open to regions to modify this approach to take account of local needs and circumstances in setting targets for district health authorities. South East Thames regional authority has refined its application of the RAWP formula by using ACORN (a classification of residential neighbourhoods) after consultation with districts. It did so because it considered this provided a more sensitive measurement of relative need for health care including social deprivation.

The overall effect on Maidstone, in cash terms at 1986-87 levels, will be to reduce its growth expectations over the period 1986-87 to 1993-94 from £2·6 million to £880,000, but the regional health authority has agreed to adjust the timing of these changes to assist Maidstone from 1988-89.

Mrs. Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money the South East Thames regional health authority has invested in information technology; what were the reasons behind the choice of system; when the system chosen was first marketed; what is its expected life span; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: This information is not held centrally. The regional health authority operates a number of information technology systems and my hon. Friend may wish to approach its chairman for available information on the money invested and the other details requested.

Abortions

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 29 October, at column *415*, how many abortions in England and Wales performed upon resident women in the latest year for which figures are available were performed on women aged 41 years and over at 18 weeks or more gestation; and how many of these abortions were performed *(a)* for reason that the mother was carrying a seriously handicapped child, *(b)* in emergency to save the life of the mother and *(c)* for social reasons under Ground 2 of the Abortion Act.

Mr. Newton: The information is shown in the table:

Notifications of abortions performed on women aged 41 and over residents of England and Wales at 18 weeks or more gestation by statutory grounds (mentions), 1986

Statutory Grounds[1]	*Number (mentions)*
2	54
4	41
5	—

[1] The statutory grounds in the Abortion Act 1967 include: Ground 2 the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

Ground 4—there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

Ground 5 — in emergency to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of abortions at 18 weeks or more gestation in England and Wales in the latest year for which figures are available was performed on overseas women; and what percentage of such abortions at 18 weeks or more gestation was performed in non-National Health Service facilities.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 26 October 1987]*: The number of abortions at 18 weeks or more gestation carried out in England and Wales in 1986 was 8,276. Of these, 3,565 (43 per cent.) were to women usually resident in countries other than England, Wales or Scotland; and of the 3,565, 3,562 (99·9 per cent.) were performed in non-National Health Service facilities.

Telephone Exchange for the Deaf

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what further progress has been made in securing the future of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf telephone exchange for the deaf; what representations he has received on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received regarding the telephone exchange for the deaf of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf in Gower street; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he intends to meet British Telecom concerning the future of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf's telephone exchange for the deaf; and when he will make a decision on its future funding and extension.

Mr. Scott: Officials from this Department met representatives of British Telecom, the Manpower Services Commission, the Department of Trade and Industry and OFTEL on 3 November to discuss the telephone exchange for the deaf. Further information is being provided by the Royal National Institute for the Deaf and a meeting is being arranged with its officials. In the meantime the Manpower Services Commission has offered to extend its present support until the end of February. We have received representations on this matter from 162 right hon. and hon. Members and 53 other people, and have also received two petitions.

NHS Property (Insurance)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to change the rules governing the insurance of National Health Service property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: No.

Citizenship Registration

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be in a position to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East, dated 7 October, regarding claimants and fees for registration as British citizens.

Mr. Portillo: I will give the hon. Member a reply to his letter dated 7 October within the week.

Single People

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest estimate of the numbers of single people aged 18 to 59 years living with parents or relatives.

Mr. Portillo: The number of single people aged 18 to 59 years living with parents or relatives is estimated to have been just over 4 million in England and Wales in 1981, the latest year for which information is available.

Rate Rebates

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the take-up of rate rebates.

Mr. Portillo: A report was placed in the Library on 11 May 1987 presenting take-up estimates for housing benefit in 1984. These are the latest estimates. Full explanations are included of the methods and assumptions used in the estimates.

Washington Community Hospital

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he expects building to start on the proposed community hospital in Washington;

(2) when he plans to commence building the proposed new district hospital to serve the people of the Houghton and Washington constituency.

Mrs. Currie: The timing of major capital developments is for the relevant regional health authority to determine in the light of local priorities and available resources. I understand that the Northern regional health authority is currently undertaking a detailed review of its capital programme and will be making firm decisions later this month. The hon. Member may therefore wish to write to the chairman of Northern regional health authority for further information.

Brighton Office

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers and value of single payments paid by his Department's Brighton office for the most recent five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Portillo: The numbers and value of single payments made by the Department's Brighton local office are not available for any period before 10 May 1983. Figures for the period from then until 20 October 1987 are given in the following table:

Single payments made by Department of Health and Social Security Brighton local office—10 May 1983 to 20 October 1987

Period	*Number of payments*	*Amount (£)*
10 May 1983 to 10 April 1984	3,643	237,771
11 April 1984 to 9 April 1985	4,901	366,497
10 April 1985 to 8 April 1986	7,771	515,248
9 April 1986 to 7 April 1987	9,004	739,080
8 April 1987 to 20 October 1987	4,316	438,875

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what method will be used to establish priorities for the social fund administered by his Department's Brighton office for the first year of operation.

Mr. Portillo: This is a matter for the office's social fund officers to determine in the light of the guidance and directions. A copy of the social fund manual which sets out the guidance and directions is in the Library.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his best estimate of the number of loans and grants which will be made from the social fund by his Department's Brighton office during the first year of operation.

Mr. Portillo: The number of payments that will be made from the loans and grants budgets will depend upon the size of individual payments. This will be determined by the amounts applied for, and the decisions of individual social fund officers in accordance with the law and directions and in the light of the guidance. No firm estimates can therefore be given until the new scheme is in operation.

Social Fund

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what method will be used to establish the size of the budget for the social fund administered by his Department's Brighton office; what will be the budget for the fund for the first year of operation; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if it is his intention to allocate funds to the social fund for *(a)* Greenock, *(b)* Port Glasgow, *(c)* Strathclyde and *(d)* Scotland as a whole, in line with the total of single payments made in the financial year, 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: The grants and loans budgets for all offices were listed in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 4 November. The allocations are based largely on single payment expenditure in the latter part of 1986-87 but also reflect estimates of the need for social fund grants and loans based on the number and type of benefit recipients in each office.

London Lighthouse

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be able to announce whether he will be allocating additional funding to allow London Lighthouse to complete its building programme.

Mr. Newton: We have already approved a capital grant of £500,000 to London Lighthouse. The Department is considering urgently the request for further support, and we shall announce a decision as soon as possible.

Benefits (Delays)

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services in which areas on Merseyside claimants are not receiving girocheques from his Department as a result of the postal dispute; and what steps are being taken by his Department to ensure claimants receive their benefits on time.

Mr. Portillo: I understand that Post Office staff stopped work for only a short period of time and returned at 10 pm on 4 November. Normal delivery services have resumed and disruption to the payment of benefit was minimal.

Fuel-Direct Payments

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants are on fuel-direct payments.

Mr. Portillo: In February 1986 there were 178,500 direct payment arrangements for electricity and 132,000 for gas. These figures, which are the most recent available, are taken from the annual statistical inquiry. Some people will have had both their electricity and gas paid directly and will therefore be included in both figures.

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what leaflets and other information concerning the availability of his Department's benefits are available for citizens advice bureaux to distribute to their clients.

Mr. Portillo: There are 70 leaflets covering all specific social security benefits. In addition there are 16 "client group" leaflets aimed at particular groups which provide details of all benefits for each group.

The whole range of leaflets is being amended to take account of changes in benefits and new leaflets are being produced to cover income support, family credit and the social fund. The Department is also assisting the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux in the updating and amendment of its own information packs which it issues to all citizens advice bureaux.

Leukaemia

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any information on links between cases of leukaemia amongst children in the northern area of Southport and contamination of Southport beaches by discharges of nuclear waste from Sellafield nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Currie: The latest available information in relation to the incidence of childhood leukaemia in the area served by Southport and Formby district health authority suggests no unusual trend. However, more recent data have been requested and I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply when these are received.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will express the value in real terms of the 1987 pensioners' Christmas bonus compared with its value in 1972, based upon movements in *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* average wages.

Mr. Scott: It is not yet possible to determine the real value of the 1987 Christmas bonus as compared with the 1972 bonus. At December 1986 prices, the 1972 Christmas bonus would have been worth £44·29. If increased in line with the increase in average male manual earnings, the 1972 bonus would have been worth £49·56 at December 1986.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make renal dialysis a qualifying condition for the proposed severe disability premium; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 2 November at columns *564-65*.

Benefit Regulations (Interpretation)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance the Chief Adjudication Officer has issued on the meaning of adult in paragraph 18 of schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983.

Mr. Portillo: The Chief Adjudication Officer's guidance on paragraph 18 of schedule 4 is contained in circular S 42/85, a copy of which is in the Library. Paragraph 1 of the circular says that any person aged 16 or over should be regarded as an adult.

Hospitals (Birmingham)

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the future of regional specialties of hospitals in Birmingham.

Mrs. Currie *[pursuant to her reply, 21 October 1987, c. 805]:* The development of regional specialties is the responsibility of the regional health authority working where appropriate within guidelines set down by the Department. I understand that the West Midlands regional health authority is currently reviewing its mechanism for identifying and funding regional specialties, to enable it to achieve the maximum possible benefit from the resources available. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority for further information.

Invalid Care Allowance

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of claims for invalid care allowance are abated wholly or partly by receipt of other state benefits.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* About 2·7 per cent.

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims from married women, cohabiting women and women separated from their husbands have been refused because the overlapping benefit they receive exceeds the amount they would have received in invalid care allowance.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* I regret that the requested information is not available. Since June 1986, when the allowance was extended to married and cohabiting women, some 2,270 claims from women have been disallowed on account of the payment of other social security benefits which equal or exceed the weekly rate of invalid care allowance.

Mr. John: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the additional cost to the public funds of paying invalid care allowance in full to all successful claimants, irrespective of what other state benefits they receive.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 2 November 1987]:* I regret that information on which an estimate could be made is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Nurses (Salaries)

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current average salary of a National Health Service nurse; and how much is spent on average, per annum, on hiring a private or agency nurse.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 4 November 1987]:* Information in the form requested is not available. The current basic salary scale for staff nurses, for example, is £7,300 to £8,600, and in addition they receive additional payments mainly for working overtime and unsocial hours. Present average earnings (excluding London weighting) of full-time staff nurses are estimated to be about 17 per cent. greater than basic pay. However, the maximum payment to a nurses' agency for work undertaken by an agency nurse is calculated on the mean of the appropriate NHS nursing and midwifery staffs' pay scale plus the agency's commission and employees' national insurance contribution, but information on additional payments made to such staff is not available and a direct comparison with a NHS nursing staff is not therefore possible. Moreover, agencies' commission varies and a number of assumptions have to be made, for example, as to the benefit to NHS staff of annual leave, sick leave, public holidays, uniforms and also additional management and administrative costs. Taking these factors into account it has been estimated in very broad terms that the cost of an agency staff nurse would be little different from that of a NHS staff nurse on the mid point of the pay scale and in some circumstances could be up to 12 per cent. less.

Blood

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services how many units of blood have been supplied by the National Blood Transfusion Service to non-National Health Service hospitals for each year since 1982.

Mrs. Currie *[holding answer 6 November 1987]:* From 1982 the total number of units of blood supplied by regional transfusion centres to non-National Health Service hospitals is as follows:

	Number
1982	31,437
1983	40,786
1984	49,232
1985	54,327
1986	64,040

Social Security Bill 1987

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Services what the status of women aged 16 to 18 years who are also parents will be under clause 4 of the Social Security Bill 1987.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 6 November 1987]:* Whilst clause 4 of the Social Security Bill 1987 removes general entitlement to income support from persons under the age of 18 it provides that, in prescribed circumstances, certain persons of or over the age of 16 are to be entitled. We intend that regulation will provide that a lone parent responsible for a child who is a member of his/her household will be entitled (as now) to benefit. The regulations will provide that, for couples, under 18, with a child, income support will be payable for the family group subject to the normal conditions of availability applying to one of the couple. Benefit will cease (as now) if the partner finds full-time work but will continue as a supplement to the training allowance if a YTS place is taken and the family income supplement is insufficient to meet its requirements by income support standards.

The status of women, under 18, who are also parents will not therefore be altered by the Bill.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 10 November 1987

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid to Africa

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, in view of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation's report that, for survival in 1987-88, Africa will need substantially more food aid, he will ensure that the percentage of gross national product which the United Kingdom spends on overseas aid is restored to 1970 levels by the end of the current financial year.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have seen the FAO report and agree that the problem of hunger in Africa remains. We have already provided relief assistance of over £25 million, including some £10 million of bilateral food aid to Africa. In addition, there is our substantial share of the European Community's food aid programme. The Government stand ready to respond swiftly and generously to appeals for further emergency assistance from within the substantial and growing aid programme announced last week.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites in England, Scotland and Wales are licensed for the dumping of radioactive materials; where they are located; and which local authorities are responsible for their safety.

Mr. Moynihan: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Green and White Papers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department uses any guidelines when issuing Green and White Papers, in deciding whether or not to invite respondents to allow their submissions to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. It is the Department's policy that on all major consultation exercises on matters of general public interest respondents are explicitly asked whether they agree that copies of their responses may be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and in the departmental library.

Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the effects of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 *(a)* in absolute terms and *(b)* as a proportion of each work force on the numbers of people of the following categories: women, black and coloured, mentally disabled, physically disabled, and over 50 years of age, employed by each authority to which the provisions of that Act apply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Department does not have this information.

Street Lighting (Luton)

Mr. Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to respond favourably to any requests from Bedfordshire county council for funds from the urban aid programme to improve street lighting in Luton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Luton district council and Bedfordshire county council are not among the authorities invited to submit proposals for urban programme funding. Street lighting expenditure would not normally be eligible for support except as part of an innovative scheme contributing to crime prevention.

Council House Sales

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek to extend statutory discounts to householders who are purchasing their homes under local authority equity sharing schemes.

Mr. Waldegrave: Secure public sector tenants who have the right to buy but cannot afford to buy outright already qualify for statutory discounts under the right to shared ownership. Local authorities may also offer substantial discounts to first-time buyers and other priority purchasers under voluntary equity-sharing schemes, but it would not seem appropriate to require a local authority to grant discount in a voluntary disposal.

Rateable Values

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the rateable value limits for the purpose of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 as a consequence of his proposals to replace domestic rates with the community charge in the light of the recent decision of the European Court.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have no plans at this stage to extend the scope of leasehold enfranchisement for houses, but I propose to issue shortly a consultation paper on the implications for the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 and other landlord and tenant legislation of the proposed abolition of domestic rates.

Rural Housing

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's rural housing policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proposals in the White Paper "Housing: the Government's Proposals" (Cm. 214) will provide opportunities for improving housing in both rural and urban areas. I have had a useful discussion with interested groups on the implications for rural areas; and will take them into account as the new approach is developed.

Rural Areas

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all areas in England which he has designated as 'rural'.

Mr. Moynihan: The areas of the following district councils have been designated, in whole or part, under section 157 of the Housing Act 1985 as rural areas:

Alnwick District Council
Berwick upon Tweed Borough Council
Caradon District Council
Carrick District Council
East Devon District Council
Eden District Council
Kerrier District Council
Mid Devon District Council
New Forest District Council
North Cornwall District Council
North Devon District Council
North Norfolk District Council
Penwith District Council
Purbeck District Council
Restormel Borough Council
Scarborough Borough Council
South Hams District Council
South Lakeland District Council
Teignbridge District Council
Torridge District Council
West Dorset District Council
West Somerset District Council

The areas are specified in the following orders:

The Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (England) Order 1981, S.I. 1980 No. 397;
The Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (England) (No. 2) Order 1981, S.I. 1981 No. 940;
The Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (England) Order 1982, S.I. 1982 No. 21;
The Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (England) (No. 2) Order 1982, S.I. 1982 No. 187;
The Housing (Right to Buy) (Designated Rural Areas and Designated Regions) (England) Order 1986, S.I. 1986 No. 1695.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether there is a formal methodology for identifying and assessing deprivation as appropriate to rural situations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government do not use any specific methodology for identifying and assessing deprivation in rural areas. However, the Development Commission is required to target its activities on those areas, referred to as "rural development areas", which it regards as having the greatest concentrations of problems, and to select such areas by having regard to the following criteria:

(i) above average unemployment;
(ii) inadequate or unsatisfactory range of employment opportunities;
(iii) adverse effect from population decline or sparsity of population;
(iv) net outward migration of people of working age;
(v) age structure biased towards elderly people;
(vi) poor access to services and facilities.

The Housing Corporation has targeted its resources for rural housing on "rural stress areas". In identifying such areas, one of the criteria the corporation has used is location within a rural development area.

A study of rural deprivation, jointly commissioned by the Department of the Environment and the Development Commission, was completed in 1986 by Brian McLaughlin (then at the Essex Institute of Higher Education), and copies are in the House of Commons Library and in the Department's library.

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are employed following application from a local authority in considering an area for designation as 'rural'.

Mr. Moynihan: Applications are considered on their merits, with particular regard being paid to population density and the number of second homes in the area.

Spectrum Arena

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place between his Department and the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation concerning the Spectrum arena within the last month; and with what results.

Mrs. Roe: The Department has recently confirmed to the Development Corporation that consent would not be given under the New Towns Act for a disposal of the Spectrum building at less than the best consideration reasonably obtainable.

Inland Waterways

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the level of Government grant in real terms to inland waterways for every year from 1979 to 1987.

Mr. Moynihan: The table shows in cash terms and 1987-88 prices Government grant to the British Waterways Board in the years 1979-80 to 1987-88 together with the board's external financing limit (EFL), which comprises both the grant and an element of borrowing from the national loans fund.

	Grant (cash) *£m*	*Grant (1987-88 prices)* *£m*	*EFL (cash)* *£m*	*EFL (1987-88 prices)* *£m*
1979-80	22·8	39·6	25·7	44·6
1980-81	25·6	37·5	30·0	43·9
1981-82	28·4	37·9	31·6	42·1
1982-83	37·6	46·8	39·3	48·9
1983-84	39·8	47·3	40·8	48·5
1984-85	41·8	47·6	42·8	48·7
1985-86	43·5	46·7	44·1	47·4
1986-87	43·9	45·8	45·0	46·9
1987-88	44·0	44·0	45·0	45·0

As a result of this year's public expenditure round, BWB's EFL will be £46·8 million in 1988-89 with guideline figures of £47·9 million and £49·1 million for the following two years.

Archaeological Heritage

Mr. Allan Roberts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to strengthen planning powers of local councils to ensure that Britain's archaeological heritage is protected and rescued when planning permissions are granted to developers.

Mr. Moynihan: No. I see no need to increase the powers of local planning authorities, which are already able to take into consideration the effect of a proposed development upon an ancient monument and its setting, and to impose appropriate conditions. Development affecting scheduled monuments also requires the consent of the Secretary of State, as well as planning permission.

Rating Reform

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, columns *39-40*, he will reproduce the table on the impact of the community charge in England using figures for 1984-85;

(2) if, pursuant to his answer of 26 October, columns *37-38*, he will reproduce the table on the regional impact of the community charge in England using figures for 1984-85.

Mr. Howard: No. I have already given my latest estimates in respect of these matters based on 1985-86 information. I intend shortly to publish further and more up-to-date estimates.

AIDS

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is aware of any research associating the contamination of drinking water by the AIDS virus with the flushing of used condoms into the sewerage system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I am not aware of any such research. I am advised that there is no risk of contracting AIDS from drinking water because the disease is not spread by ingestion and the virus is inactivated by chlorination and removed by water treatment.

Used Condoms

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has had any discussions with manufacturers of condoms concerning the possibility of including the Keep Britain Tidy symbol on the packets of those products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: I understand there have been discussions between the Keep Britain Tidy Group and the main manufacturers, and that the company has agreed to print the Keep Britain Tidy symbol on its packaging.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has given any advice on the environmental aspects of suitable methods of disposal of used condoms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: No. The Department's advice to local authorities and other waste disposal agencies on the disposal of clinical waste is contained in waste management paper No. 25, published in 1983. This does not deal specifically with the question raised, but the general principles of safe handling will apply. The need for Government advice to the users of condoms is a policy matter for the Department of Health and Social Security.

Hedgerows and Stone Walls

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to reduce the loss of hedgerows and stone walls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Hedgerows and stone walls are a dominant feature of the landscape in most parts of the country and it is the Government's policy to encourage their retention wherever practicable. Losses do, however, occur for a variety of reasons including, for example, the recent storm damage. When losses occur, grant aid is available from the Countryside Commission for replanting or reinstatement. Grants are also available to farmers from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, at the rate of 60 per cent. in less-favoured areas and 30 per cent. elsewhere, for hedge planting and laying and the erection of traditional stone walls.

Portraits

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has concerning the whereabouts of the portraits of the first chair of the London county council and the last chair of the Greater London council; and if he will arrange for the portraits to be displayed within the precincts of the House.

Mr. Chope: The portraits are in secure storage within the care of the London residuary body. Any question of displaying them within the precincts of the House of Commons would be a matter for the authorities of the House in consultation with the London residuary body.

Mobile Homes

Sir Eldon Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he considers, within the terms of his advice in the code of guidance issued under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, that park (mobile) homes provide satisfactory accommodation for housing homeless families with children; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Roe: The improved design and construction of modern park (mobile) homes can make them suitable for the accommodation of homeless families with children. My Department intends to discuss with the local authority associations and voluntary bodies the possibility of modifying the advice in the code on this.

Rented Housing

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is satisfied that housing associations will be able to raise sufficient private finance to make full use of the new arrangements under which they can provide housing for rent using a mixture of private and public funds.

Mr. Ridley: I believe the potential for housing associations to raise private finance will be greatly enhanced by the formation of a new body called the Housing Finance Corporation. This has been set up on the initiative of the Housing Corporation, the National Federation of Housing Associations and a number of City interests. I understand it will have as a primary object the giving of assistance in providing finance for registered housing associations. This is an objective the Government whole heartedly support as a means of bringing additional non-public sector resources into housing associations.

Until the development of the Government's new private finance initiatives, registered housing associations have been very largely dependent upon finance from the Exchequer for their development and renovation work.

This has been in the form of loans from the Housing Corporation and local authorities, partially refinanced by housing association grant (HAG) paid by the Exchequer. In future the Government hope that an increasing proportion of the loan finance needed by housing associations will come from the private sector. But Exchequer grant support will clearly continue to be necessary in many cases as well in order to enable registered housing associations to charge rents at a reasonably affordable level for their tenants, most of whom have low incomes. In future, therefore, a growing number of registered associations will need to look to mixed sources of finance to support their work, partly public and partly private.

The Housing Corporation is a non-departmental public sector body whose members I appoint. It already carries out certain functions in connection with the payment of public sector grants to registered housing associations and I intend that this role should be expanded under provisions to be included in forthcoming legislation. I commend the initiative of the Housing Corporation in helping to promote the formation of the Housing Finance Corporation as one particular vehicle to help raise private finance for registered housing associations. I know they have been able to rely in their endeavours upon valuable advice and assistance from CIPFA Services Ltd. and James Capel and Co. I understand that it is intended that the Housing Finance Corporation will have a particular role in assisting some of the smaller associations which may initially need more help in this matter.

I understand that the Housing Finance Corporation expects to operate by raising loan finance in the capital markets in substantial tranches and then lending to individual registered housing associations for identified schemes and programmes. In lending to housing associations it and other providers of loan finance will need security from the associations concerned, which will often take the form of charges upon the associations' assets, most of which are the housing they own. The Housing Corporation will need to approve the giving of such charges under its powers under section 9 of the Housing Associations Act 1985. I am asking the Housing Corporation to satisfy itself that associations do not over-commit their assets as security for private sector development loans, and to use its best endeavours to ensure that associations plan to generate sufficient income to service their loans and maintain their property adequately. On this understanding I have indicated that I am content that charges can be given by associations and approved by the Housing Corporation and that recovery of housing association grants will be subordinated to the private sector charges.

The Housing Corporation has proposed that it should be a member of the Housing Finance Corporation, and that the chief executive of the Housing Corporation should be one of its directors. It has proposed this in view of the importance of developing new channels of private finance for registered housing associations, and of ensuring that these are well harmonised with the Housing Corporation's own supervisory and grant functions. The Housing Corporation has, however, made clear that its involvement with the Housing Finance Corporation in no way implies any preferential treatment by it of housing associations dealing with the Housing Finance Corporation as against any other providers of private finance to housing associations, nor any financial liability towards it other than a £1 nominal shareholding. On that understanding, and having regard to the particular attention to be given to the needs of smaller associations, I have approved Housing Corporation participation initially on the basis proposed.

The Housing Finance Corporation has also asked me to approve the appointment of David Hopkinson as its first chairman. Mr. Hopkinson was formerly chief executive of the M and G Group and is currently a member of the Housing Corporation. He combines great knowledge and experience of finance and housing. I believe that he will be an excellent chairman, and I have gladly approved his appointment.

The Government welcome the creation of the Housing Finance Corporation and support its objectives. I am particularly glad that the new body is being established as a purely private sector body, formally constituted as an industrial and provident society. It will make its own commercial judgments about its borrowing and lending. It will not receive any grants or subsidies from the Housing Corporation or the Government; and neither the Government nor the Housing Corporation are guaranteeing or standing behind its operations in any way. It will not distribute any profits it makes, but I understand it will aim to build up some surpluses over time to enable it to expand further its support for housing associations.

I welcome this expression of confidence by the private sector interests involved in the prospects of the housing association movement and the potential for investment in it. I hope that increasingly other lenders will also come forward to support the expansion and diversification of housing associations.

Local Authorities (Financial Management)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for strengthening the financial management of local authorities.

Mr. Howard: My Department has today written to the local authority associations, the Audit Commission and the relevant accountancy bodies, explaining the action the Government propose to take on two related measures to extend the powers and duties of local authority treasurers and auditors.

Following the proposals in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", we propose that the local authority treasurer should be required by law to hold a specified professional qualification, and that he should have a duty to report to his council if in his opinion it is proposing to make an unlawful payment or incur an unlawful loss or deficiency, or if its proposed expenditure is likely to exceed its available resources for the year in question. The council will be obliged to consider this report at a meeting held within 21 days of the sending of the report, and determine what action it proposes to take. It will be prohibited from proceeding with the actions which are the subject of a report, or from incurring new contractual commitments if the report concerns prospective overspending, until it has held such a meeting.

My Department has also issued a consultation document on proposals to enable auditors of local authorities to take early action to secure compliance by authorities with the law governing their financial affairs. Copies of this document have been placed in the Library.

These proposals are based on recommendations made by the Widdicombe committee and on proposals for changes in audit legislation submitted by the Audit Commission.

I believe these proposals will strengthen the position of the treasurer and the auditor, and thereby discourage imprudent behaviour and prevent the erosion of sound financial management practices in local government. It is our intention to introduce provisions to this effect during the present Session of Parliament.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the date of expiration of the terms of office of the chief executive and deputy chief executive of the London Docklands development corporation, respectively, the dates when he expects reappointments to be completed in each case and the expected dates when they will be in post.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer, 9 November 1987]*: The chief executive's term of office expires formally on 1 January 1988. The deputy chief executive's departure date is to be in February next year.

I am advised that the dates on which successors will be appointed and take up post are not yet fixed.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Modern Language Teaching

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his Department's policy on the use of satellites in the teaching of modern languages.

Mrs. Rumbold: We encourage school teachers to make creative use of authentic foreign language materials, including sound recordings and broadcasts. The Council for Educational Technology is also currently examining the potential of satellite broadcasting for enhancing the primary and secondary curriculum, including the teaching of modern languages.

Universities (Funding)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, in the light of the increased university funding forecast in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, he will indicate what increase in funding will be proposed by the University Grants Committee for the University of East Anglia for 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what have been the reductions in funding received by this university in the last three years.

Mr. Jackson: Provisional allocations of basic recurrent grant to universities for the academic years 1988-89 and 1989-90 were announced on 19 February 1987. The University Grants Committee will be considering over the next few months the development of a targeted restructuring programme to meet the Government's objectives as set out by my right hon. Friend on 3 November, at columns 798-99 and the adjustments to be made to the recurrent grant allocations of individual universities. Recurrent grant allocated to the University of East Anglia over the last three years is as follows:

	£ million
1984-85	15·0
1985-86	14·7
1986-87	15·0

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Norwich, South on 3 November at columns 798-99, what will be the real percentage increase in university funding in 1988-89 and 1989-90; and what have been the reductions in this funding since 1981.

Mr. Jackson: Provision is being made to increase recurrent grant paid to universities on the advice of the University Grants Committee by 8 per cent. in cash terms or 3·5 per cent. in real terms taking account of the GDP deflator between the financial years 1987-88 and 1988-89, and to remain about level in real terms for 1989-90. Recurrent grant to the universities increased by 5 per cent. in real terms between 1980-81 and 1987-88. Such grant amounts to just over half universities' total recurrent income which, from the latest figures available, increased by 7·7 per cent. in real terms between the academic years 1980-81 ad 1985-86.

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Norwich, South on 3 November at columns 798-99, what procedures he has in mind to establish whether or not universities are run properly.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend agreed an appropriate programme of action with the University Grants Committee and the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in November 1986. This makes provision for regular reports on post-Jarratt efficiency gains, and other steps to encourage better management, including improved accounting procedures. In addition, the UGC now has each university's financial forecasts and academic plans, which enable the committee to take a view on institutions' financial prospects and the realism of their plans.

Access Courses

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to increase the funding available for access courses to higher education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The Government attach importance to the broadening of access to higher education. The White Paper "Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge" (Cm. 114) set out the Government's approach, which was reflected in the Government's expenditure plans announced by my right hon. Friend on 3 November. My right hon. Friend looks to local education authorities and institutions of higher education to take action within the resources available.

Financial Management Skills

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, when he will publish proposals for the training of head teachers in financial management skills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is considering the most useful way forward having regard in particular to the